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BREAKERS OF THE ILORIN CITY WALL

A socio-economic and political history of the Aliagans and their neigbours



Ismail Salihu Otukoko (ed)

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INTRODUCTION

The past always affords historians and others concerned with human societies with ample field of study. Although often considered as 'dead' in some quarters, the past not only continues to be a reference point in the present, but more often than not, also influences the course of present developments and the future. As broad and vast as the past is, however, the historian, in particular, is concerned not just with anything that ever happened, but with those events and developments that have had a significant and lasting impact on a significant number of people. At times, however, the 'significant' in the past only becomes so when the historian brings its importance into limelight, based on available evidence. This may explain why a number of events that have happened in the past are usually taken for granted until connections are established between them and contemporary developments.

Today, we often hear a number of words and names that had been of historical significance, but about which we know next to nothing or we just don't take cognisance of their historical relevance in the development of our societies. In Ilorin, for instance, we, on daily and regular basis, hear, mention or make references to such places and names as "Inu Odi" (i.e. 'within the fortification' or 'walls'), "Ehin Odi" (i.e. 'outside the city wall'), "Oke Kura" ('Kura's Arena'), "Ita Kudimo" from 'Ita-ti- Iku-di-won-mo' (i.e. 'the Arena, where death caught up with them'), "Ita Ogunbo" (i.e. 'The Arena, where charms fell off'), "Ita-Goma" ('The Arena, where Ten babies were at once delivered'), "Oke Ebo Alaso" ('Whiteman-Weavers Quarters'), etc. with very few paying little attention, or majority paying no attention at all, to the etymologies and the history of those places and names! This same attitude applies to the traditions of the origin and history of various families as the culture of transmitting family genealogy and history is virtually becoming a forgotten heritage. Similarly, with the ageing and the departure of the aged in our societies, the past is gradually getting lost to obscurity and unless timely rescue efforts are made to retrieve and preserve it, future generations might find it difficult comprehending and appreciating the

struggles and sacrifices of our past heroes and heroines!

With particular reference to the subject of this book, it is on record that the Ilorin city walls ('Odi Ilorin') were first built, then broken, and expanded a number of times by the first emir of Ilorin, Emir Abdulsalami Ibn Shaikh Salih Alimi Ibn Janta. This is, today, noted as one of the achievements of the emir as this was an initiative taken, first to provide security for the people, and thereafter to provide, within that security, accommodation for the 'population explosion', which Ilorin witnessed following the establishment of the emirate in the early 1820s. Mallam Aliyu, the ancestors of the Aliagans, was one of such personalities who arrived with a large retinue of followers and kinsmen and for whom the emir had cause to allow the breaking of the city walls in order to make room for his settlement and that of his entourage. This book, therefore, among other things, traces the background of the Aliagan family, whose history is closely linked with an important strategy and achievement of one of the builders of Ilorin Emirate, Oba Dingi Aiye Abdulsalami, the first Emir of Ilorin (reigned c.1823-c.1836).

Like every other fresh attempt at reconstructing the past, the writing of this book was faced with a number of challenges, one of the most serious of which is the dearth of written works on both the question of the Ilorin city walls, those associated with its construction and reconstruction as well as old people who could provide eyewitness accounts. As a virgin work, therefore, the work relies heavily on oral evidence systematically and painstakingly collected from aged informants, and carefully documented over a period of more than two years. As much as possible, oral interviews were conducted with the heads of the families (Magajis) whose compounds make up the Aliagan 'quarters' and some of those in its environs. Other elderly persons whose lives and activities are relevant to the work were also interviewed. In other words, people who, by virtue of their age and socio-political status and positions, are quite qualified to provide oral evidence were contacted and interviewed. In some instances, other individuals who were 'recommended' or authorised to attend to the authors were consulted and formally interviewed or interacted with informally.

Our sincere gratitude, therefore, goes to all those who granted us their audience

and provided the necessary information required. We equally thank all those who have contributed in various other ways to the success of this work. It is important to stress that, between the time of the collection of oral information for this work and the time of publication, a number of oral informants had passed on to the great beyond. We pray Allah to grant them eternal rest.

In writing this book, the authors have tried as much as possible to present and analyse the information, especially oral accounts, as presented and articulated by our informants. Although the authors tried to probe as much deeper as possible, but we could not go beyond the information made available both by the informants and from extant literature available to us. This explains why some grey areas might be spotted here and there and to which we also draw attention. Similarly, where obtaining oral information proved quite difficult or impossible, the authors had no option than to leave such areas after several unsuccessful attempts. We hope this work will encourage more research to be carried out at other micro-levels and in other areas and aspects of Ilorin history.

The book, *Breakers of the Ilorin City Wall: A Socio-Economic and Political History of the Aliagans and their Neighbours*, is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one opens with an examination of the history of migration, settlement pattern and the transformation of Ilorin. In chapter two, the origin and settlement pattern of the Aliagans and their neighbours are discussed. A political history and a history of Islam and Islamic scholarship in the Aliagan quarters are examined in chapters three and four while the socio-economic history and the phenomenon of inter-group relations among the Aliagans and their neighbours are treated in chapters five and six. Chapter seven deals with biographical sketches of some notable personalities in the Aliagan quarters, while the last chapter presents short biographies of individuals considered as pacesetters in the Aliagan area.

Ismal Salihu Otukoko
January 31, 2016

Chapter 1

MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND TRANSFORMATION IN ILORIN HISTORY

BY ISMAIL S. OTUKOKO

Introduction

Ilorin was one of those settlements whose population got a tremendous boost as a result of the disintegration of the Old Oyo Empire and the population movements that the collapse triggered. Other settlements that shared a similar history included Ogbomoso, Ago-Oja (New Oyo), Osogbo, Saki, Ikirun, Oke-Iho, and the small Egba settlement of Ibadan. From around the 1790s, the internal crisis within the Old Oyo Empire, which eventually led to its collapse precipitated the gradual dispersal of population which became intensified especially between c. 1800 and c.1836 when the Old Oyo finally collapsed and new Ilorin Emirate became stabilized. It has been suggested that by the 1830s, there were more than 500,000 people involved in the dispersal of the population within the collapsed Old Oyo Empire.[1] These internal migrations were characterized by southward movement of refugees from northern Yorubaland to more secure areas in the south, the establishment of new settlements, concentration of large population in old ones, and intensified mixture of people.[2] Apart from the southward movement of refugees and

asylum seekers from the defunct Old Oyo, there were also the usual, normal internal migrations and southward movement of long-disntance traders and other migrants from the north that had been ongoing for centuries. Given its geographical and strategic location, Ilorin was also affected by these migrations as it gradually took over Old Oyo's position as an entrepot and major terminus for the long-distance caravans.

What was "Ilorin", by the late 1790s, is often described as 'a small settlement' in the 'northern Yoruba region'. However, as a result of the migration of peoples into the Ilorin region, by the end of the second decade of the 19th century, no less than four clusters of settlements had emerged and these were organized around the leading personalities of that era. These settlements included a military stronghold of the Yoruba Aare-Ona-Kakanfo Afonja based around Idi-Ape; a multi-ethnic Muslim trading settlement at Oke Suna headed by Sholagberu, a Kanuri; the pastoral Fulani settlement at Gaa (now Ago area) under Olufadi, a Fulani, and the Gambari quarters inhabited by the Hausa and Hausa-speaking traders and artisans under Ibrahim Bako, the Sarkin Gambari. By mid-1820s these clusters of settlements had come to be transformed into an emirate that was formally incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate by 1829 and by then "Ilorin" had become 'a considerably large and formidable town of prodigious size ["the largest and most flourishing city in Yarriba"] whose extent, population and wealth had surpassed those of the Old Oyo Empire.'[3]

The history of migrations into the Ilorin area can be analysed under two broad periods, which, for convenience, are here identified as the "Pre-Islamic", that is the ancient, 'prehistoric' period lasting up to c. 1817; and the "Islamic Period", that is the more historical period beginning from c. 1817 through c.1823 to the present. It should be pointed out that this division of the history of Ilorin is not suggesting that Islam was introduced to the settlement in c.1817 as it is well known that the presence of Islam and of Muslims in the Ilorin region belonged more to decades if not centuries prior to c.1817. Rather, it was as from

c.1817, the year Shehu Alimi finally settled in Ilorin, that Islam started to play significant and defining role in the socio-political history of Ilorin. Thus, the two eras can further be subdivided into five sub-eras or phases, four of which fall within the pre-Islamic period. This chapter, while giving a background to both periods of Ilorin history, will attempt a short review of the evolution of Ilorin up to 1900.

The 'First' and 'Second' Phases of Migration and the Origin and Founding of 'Ilorin'

Accounts of the pre-Islamic Ilorin is replete with stories of the migration, exit, disappearance or relapse into obscurity of some personalities, each of whom had come to be identified as the "founder" of the settlement known as Ilorin. Thus, while the first of the periods of migration and settlement of people in Ilorin had to do with the origin and founding of the settlement, historians and scholars of Ilorin history are yet to agree on the actual identity of the founder(s), the date and circumstances that surrounded the founding and the naming of the settlement "Ilorin". Hence, various individuals who had been identified as the 'founder' of, or 'earliest' settler in Ilorin included an unnamed Baruba hermit, Ojo Isekuse, Ayinla ("*Engla*" or Eminla?), one Asaju (in an account), Laderin, and Afonja. These personalities were believed to have migrated to Ilorin for one reason or another in the period before 1800. Analysis of available information on four of these individuals makes it plausible to identify the era of each one of them as representing a particular phase in the evolution of Ilorin. Thus, what may be referred to as the 'first', 'second', 'third' and 'fourth' "Ilorin" refer to the periods of the Baruba hermit, Ojo Isekuse-Eminla, Laderin-Pasin-Alugbin and Afonja respectively.

The disparities in the accounts of the migration and settlement of those four personalities in "Ilorin" have brought about various suggestions on the date of the founding of the settlement. These include Wikipedia's "1459"; Onikoko's "16th century"; Osogbue's "18th century"; the view expressed by Lethem, a

colonial officer, that Ilorin, as of 1912, was 'not an old town'[4] and recently the submission that Ilorin "had been a very important centre in northern Yorubaland for many centuries before the beginning of the 19th century."[5] However, how this was so is yet to be fully analysed or accounted for. It can, however be explained that the 'earliest' settlers in what can be considered as the 'first' or 'ancient' 'Ilorin' were attracted, apparently at different times, to the area due to its physical, natural and ecological resources and potentials. Based on available account, the first among these 'earliest' people would appear to be the Baruba hermit(s) as posited by Jimoh, followed by the Yoruba (Ojo and Eminla). Such resources that informed their migration into "Ilorin" must have included abundant forest for game (i.e. hunting), fertile land for farming, raw material(s) for iron working, including lateritic stones used in ancient times to produce quality iron; abundant water supply, conducive environment and climate for the survival of human existence. The availability of these resources and perhaps the attempts by different individuals and or groups to exploit them at different points in time may be said to be reflected in some of the popular suggestions that have been offered on the origin of the name "Ilorin". These included "Ilu Erin" ('land or forest of elephants'), "Ilọ Irin" ('the object for sharpening iron'), "Ilu Irin" ('the land of iron'), "Ilọ Irin" ('grinding of iron'), and "Irọni" (Baruba word for 'alligator pepper').

As indicated in Samuel Johnson's account, the origin of the name "Ilorin", suggests that the town was an early iron-bearing and iron-working centre, while the activities of the iron-worker(s) apparently gave rise to the name Ilorin, from ilo irin, 'iron grinding', just as Eleta, a district of Ibadan, "Eta being the term for iron ore."[6] Also, in his *Ta'lif Akhbar al-Qurun min Umara bilad Iluri*, Ahmad Abubakr Ikokoro reports different traditions he obtained on the 'circumstances for the naming' of the town though he seems to have subscribed to the "Ilu Erin" theory, which he describes as the "soundest." Ikokoro also presents another tradition, which was current

in the 19th century and which suggests that "Ilorin" might have been derived from the "prospecting for iron." According to Ikokoro, Ilorin was explained by some people to have been derived from "Ilu-irin" which means 'a place where a search was made for an iron by a man though he did not find it'.[7]

Although the Ilorin tradition, which identifies Ojo Isekuse, a hunter, as the founder of Ilorin does not describe him as an iron worker or a blacksmith, his association with the 'sharpening of iron weapons or tools' (i.e. ilọ irin) for hunting and the naming of 'Ilorin' has little or no bearings with Johnson's postulation that Ilorin was derived from an iron working activity, which he describes as 'grinding'. On the one hand, the legendary lateritic "Okuta-Ilorin", from which Ilorin is said to have been derived (though neither Johnson nor Ikokoro mentions the stone), does not appear to have been suitable or used for "sharpening iron implements" or "iron grinding". However, evidence of activities related to presence of iron work activities in the region within which ancient Ilorin was located, including use of lateritic stones for iron production abound in some other studies.[8] This suggests that it was not impossible that some of the earliest migrants to "Ilorin" were attracted to the settlement in order to prospect for iron-ore. The same applies to the views, which contend that ancient Ilorin abound with elephant species. Thus, it seems to have been widely accepted that the Ilorin area afforded opportunities for hunting wild animals such as elephants in the 'early' times and that such personalities as Ojo Isekuse, Eminla, and Asaju migrated to and settled in Ilorin for the purpose of hunting adventures.[9] It is not unlikely that the earliest non-Yoruba settler(s) in Ilorin, the Baruba, were also hunters of wild animals attracted to "Ilorin" due to its game potentials just as the founder of Ogbomoso, a settlement some few kilometres from Ilorin, has been identified as a Nupe elephant hunter.[10]

There is, however, no evidence to date the migration and settlement of those 'early' settlers in Ilorin. Also, it should be pointed out that the various traditions are not agreed as to the original homes or places from where these 'early' settlers immigrated to Ilorin. Ojo is believed to have migrated from Oyo-Ile

or Gambe-Ilota, while it is suggested that Eminla migrated from Oyo-Ile or Ila-Orangun. However, no suggestions or linkages with iron working, hunting, farming or connections with Oyo-Ile have been provided for the arrival of the Baruba hermit(s), herbalist(s), hunter(s) or warrior(s) who has/have equally been suggested to be either the "founder(s)" or "earliest" pre-Yoruba settler(s) of Ilorin[11].

Thus, while the name "Ilorin" is associated with the activity of Ojo, the naming of a sub-section of the 'Ilorin core' as "Baruba" is claimed to be a strong evidence of the presence of the Baruba group or individual(s) in the area "prior" to the arrival of the earliest known "Yoruba" settlers. Jimoh also informs us that the legendary Okuta Ilorin was located close to the hut where the Baruba hermit had lived, although he does not say that the Baruba 'sharpened' any tools on the stone. It has also been suggested that "Ilorin" might have been derived from "Ironi", a Baruba word said to mean "alligator pepper."[12]

In addition, the disappearance of Ojo, Eminla and the Baruba from "Ilorin" is a matter of much controversy: while some traditions claim that Ojo escaped or fled from Ilorin when Eminla 'invaded' the settlement in order to punish him for tarnishing the image of fellow hunters due to an alleged incest, another tradition indicates that both Ojo and Eminla had lived peacefully in Ilorin until the former decided to leave due to humiliation and disrespect he suffered in the hands of Eminla's son because of Ojo's childlessness[13].

Historically, the reported 'disappearance' of these early migrants and settlers can be said to have marked the end of the different phases of the earliest period of pre-Islamic Ilorin history as it is often widely concluded that Ilorin sank into oblivion after Ojo and Eminla had left[14] just as it must have been in obscurity before the Yoruba expelled the Baruba.[15] Such conclusion implies that what was known to be "Ilorin" during this period was no more than the settlement cluster in and around Idi-Ape and perhaps including Okelele where Mallam Sulu reports that Ojo and Eminla had stayed. The possibility

of the early existence of other clusters of settlements around the larger Ilorin region, especially in those areas that are often presented as having made up constituent 'quarters' of what is usually termed an 'Ilorin conglomerate' such as Oke Suna and Gambari is not usually accounted for. Today, some have tried to associate the emergence of these 'quarters' and Olufaid's Gaa under their known early 19th-century leaders with an 'earlier' period like the era of Laderin.

Mallam Sulu's 'History of Ilorin', which does not list Laderin, Pasin or Alugbin as having settled in Ilorin, indicates that Sholagberu "arrived at Ilorin and put up at Oke Suna" prior to Afonja's arrival. This suggests that Oke Suna, of which Sulu does not describe Sholagberu as the 'founder', was in existence prior to the late 18th century when Afonja arrived. It would seem that, as it was in some other West African societies, some of the earliest Muslim migrants and local converts such as traders and clerics had established Oke Suna as a separate and an exclusive Islamic settlement independent of the Yoruba settlement around Idi-Ape long before the 1790s. And this may explain why such settlements as Oke Suna, Agbaji, as well as Oloje, are always said to have been originally located "on the outskirts of Ilorin" and are not usually reckoned to be part of "Ilorin" until the process of Islamisation in the early 19th century. And this may explain why Sulu writes that 'Mallam Alimi met only nine houses in Ilorin when he arrived'.[16] It is on this note that the periods of the Baruba hermit, on the one hand, and that of Ojo and Eminla, on the other hand, are here taken to have represented different phases (that is, 'first' and 'second') in the evolution of "Ilorin".

The 'Third Phase': The Era of the Laderins

Virtually all extant early traditional accounts of Ilorin history are silent on the arrival and era of Laderin in Ilorin. However, Johnson's account on the founding of Ilorin, which identifies Laderin as the "founder", has come to be admitted into various recent reconstructions and interpretations of Ilorin

history. This makes it plausible to consider the advent of Laderin as probably the beginning of another phase in the evolution of Ilorin after the blank period that followed the disappearance of the supposed "earliest" Yoruba settlers, namely Ojo Isekuse and Eminla whose initial arrival had eclipsed the presence of the unnamed Baruba hermit. This is based on the fact that there is no recognisable historical link between Laderin and those legendary personages and it is important to note that Johnson has no information on the era and the presence of Ojo and Eminla in Ilorin. Consideration of Laderin's era as the beginning of the third era in the history of migration and settlement in Ilorin, however, does not imply an acceptance of Samuel Johnson's assumption that Laderin was 'the founder' of Ilorin or that which claims that the name of the town was derived from "Ilu" or "Ile Oladerin"[17].

Apart from Samuel Johnson, another recent account linking Laderin with the founding of Ilorin states that Laderin "migrated to the present site of Idi-Ape in search of farmland."[18] It would appear that the postulation that Laderin was a "farmer"[19] was mooted to provide a rational basis not only for the claim of his being among the 'earlier' settlers but also to justify the claim made that his arrival marked a turning point in Ilorin, as it heralded the advent of permanent settlement or that it made the 'hitherto scattered settlements to be aware of their existence' and thus brought about their 'unification' into one Ilorin.[20] The latter submission is based on a claim that Laderin was a 'Resident' (Ajele) posted to Ilorin to protect the Alaafin's interests[21]. However, available materials on the Old Oyo and Ilorin history have no indication of any military subjugation or conquest of Ilorin by Old Oyo that would have informed the posting of an Ajele to the settlement by the Old Oyo authorities. Also, a history of Ilorin compiled by Mallam Sulu in 1953 does not list Laderin as having been a founder, resident or ruler of Ilorin.[22]

How long Laderin stayed in Ilorin is not clear. However, the relative date derivable from Johnson's and Jimoh's accounts (based on Johnson's) that Pasin, Laderin's 'son and successor', revolted against Basorun Gaha "at the peak

of his power" and that Alugbin, Pasin's son, was involved in the overthrow of Basorun Gaha, indicates that the era of the Laderin's two 'successors' in Ilorin was between the mid-1770s and early 1780s since the Basorun is now known to have been overthrown in c.1774.[23] Added to the lack of clarity surrounding Laderin's period in Ilorin history is the fact that virtually all earliest sources of Ilorin history such as Imam Umaru's 1901; Ikokoro's 1912; Elphinstone's 1917; Hermon-Hodge's 1929; Magaji Are Saliu and Baba Isale Bello's 1936 and Mallam Sulu's 1953 accounts[24] are largely silent on Laderin or his supposed successors.

Johnson's account further states that the 'rebellion' of Pasin, Laderin's son, against Basorun Gaha, caused an invasion of Ilorin by Gaha's troops. Although the invading army got hold of Pasin and killed him at Ola (outside Ilorin), it was not reported to have attacked or destroyed Ilorin, whose rulership, according to Johnson, passed on to Alugbin, Pasin's son. Alugbin, based on Johnson's report, remained in Ilorin until when Afonja appeared on the scene around the mid-1790s and ushered in another era of Ilorin history. These postulations by Johnson have, however, remained some of the controversial aspects of the early Ilorin history.

The 'Fourth Phase' of 'Ilorin': The Era of Aare-Ona-Kakanfo Afonja and the 'Transition' from War Camp to More Camps c.1797-1817

Afonja's arrival in Ilorin marked the advent of another phase of 'Ilorin' history that came to be known as "Ilorin Afonja", that is, "Afonja's Ilorin", perhaps as different from the Laderins' Ilorin. Like the 'third Ibadan', Ilorin began its own fourth period as a war camp, a military stronghold for the rebellion of Aare-Ona-Kakanfo Afonja against Old Oyo. And like Ibadan also, which eventually became known as "Ibadan Oluyole" (although Oluyole was not its founder), Ilorin during the period became known as "Ilorin Afonja". Although available sources do not agree on the factors or circumstances of Afonja's migration to and settlement in Ilorin, there is some reliable historical information to

date the advent of Afonja to the 1790s. These include Ikokoro's Ta'lif (1912), a petition by the then Magaji Aare Saliu and Baba Isale Bello (1936), both descendants of Afonja and his brother Agbonrin, an account of Ilorin history by one Imam Umaru and various analyses of late 18th and early 19th-century history of the Old Oyo.

In their 13-paragraph petition to the colonial authorities in Ilorin during the famous "Baba Isale Coup"[25], the two traditional chiefs claimed that Afonja and Agbonrin had "migrated from Oyo-Ile and settled in Ilorin, 140 years ago." This suggests a date around 1796, which was possibly the period shortly after the Iwere incident and the violent overthrow of Alaafin Aole in which other sources place the settlement of Afonja in Ilorin.[26] The aborted invasion of Iwere ordered by Alaafin Aole is now dated to c. 1796 and this agrees with the period for the migration and arrival of Afonja in Ilorin given by Magaji Aare Saliu and Baba Isale Bello in 1936. This record corroborates Johnson's information that Afonja was born and brought up in Oyo-Ile, and those Ilorin accounts that report that the Aare-Ona-Kakanfo left Oyo-Ile for Ilorin after the Iwere incident.[27]

Based on available historical records, it can be stated that Afonja migrated to Ilorin around the late 18th century and that the period of his migration coincided with the beginning of the turbulent period in the Old Oyo, which already had by c.1790 triggered the exodus of populations from Oyo-Ile and other areas in northern Yorubaland to more secure areas in the south. The mass movement of people was further accelerated by the revolts and military activities of leading Oyo's provincial-military chiefs such as Afonja, the Aare-Ona-Kakanfo, Adegun, the Onikoyi of Ikoyi and Opele, the Baale of Gbogun[28].

Ilorin, located south of Oyo-Ile, was one of the areas where people moved into in their search for new homes, security and new opportunities. Thus, unlike the previous phases, the 'fourth' Ilorin, like the 'third Ibadan', witnessed the influx of immigrants from different places within and outside Yorubaland. In

Ilorin's case, such influx began in the late 18th century and continued well into the 19th century[29], although there were different reasons or factors responsible for the migration in the different epochs.

As earlier explained, there are indications that the establishment of Oke Suna, described as an exclusively Muslim trading settlement, predated Afonja's arrival in Ilorin. It must have been a major centre or at least one of the centres of commerce in the region. In addition, Sholagberu's Oke Suna was among the settlements noted to have received waves of immigrants, refugees, as well as asylum and freedom seekers from 'towns and villages' in the Old Oyo kingdom when the process of its collapse began in the late 18th century[30]. Afonja's war camp was another such settlement in the Ilorin area, although while the Muslim migrants were attracted to Oke Suna, non-Muslim elements settled down in the non-Muslim quarters in Ilorin.

Gradually, by the beginning of the 19th century, two major camps or clusters of settlements had emerged in Ilorin area, namely Afonja's and Sholagberu's settlements. While some sources treat these camps either simply as Afonja's and Solagberu's "sides" of "Ilorin", others tend to indicate that both camps were separate 'independent' settlements variously described as "quarters", "towns" or "villages" 'at no great distance from each other' but in alliance for some mutual benefits.[31] In the period between 1800 and 1817, two more camps, at least, emerged, namely Gaa Olufadi and the Gambari quarters, both with their recognized ethno-political leaders. The emergence and growth of these latter two quarters as well as the growth of the initial two quarters resulted from the influx of people into the Ilorin area from near (the Old Oyo area, Nupeland, Barubaland) and far (Hausaland, Borno, and other areas outside the Nigerian area).

Two important developments, which encouraged more people to settle in Ilorin during the period between 1797 and 1817, were the successful repulsion of Ojo Agunbambaru's invasion of Ilorin and the declaration and sustenance

of Ilorin's independence (and hence the advent of what is known as "Ilorin Afonja"). These events took place in the period between 1797 and early 1800s and strongly indicate that by that period, there were a number of non-Yoruba elements (groups and individuals) in Ilorin and with whose support and cooperation both historical developments were achieved. These non-Yoruba elements included (1) Shehu Alimi and his initial group of Jama'a, which must also have included Yoruba elements (2) a group of Hausa or Hausa-speaking mercenaries (several of whom had been in servitude in the Oyo kingdom), which formed the nucleus of what became known as "Afonja's Jama'a"[32] (3) the Kanuri and other non-Yoruba individuals resident at Oke Suna under Solagberu, a Kanuri scholar, soldier, trader and leader hitherto resident at Kuho where he was a "chief"; (4) two groups of Fulani under the leadership of Olufadi and Jagbara and (5) a large group of Hausa traders, artisans, clerics, etc. led by Ibrahim Bako, the Sarkin Gambari, which arrived Ilorin in c. 1812-1813. All these played one role or the other in the survival of Ilorin during the twenty-year stalemate (1797-1817) between Ilorin and Oyo-Ile[33] and, thereafter, in the internal success and consolidation of the Islamic movement in Ilorin.

The 'Fifth Phase': The 'Islamic Ilorin' or "Ilorin Garin (Geri) Alimi": The Transformation from a 'Conglomerate' to an Emirate

The earliest involvement of Shehu Alimi in the survival of Afonja's Ilorin can be dated to the period between 1797 and early 1800s based on the association of Afonja's request for the Shehu's help (spiritual, military, or both) in his military engagements with Ojo Agunbambaru, a son of Basorun Gaha, who invaded Ilorin during the brief reign of the two successors of Alaafin Aole, Maku and Adebo. The military encounters, three of which Afonja lost, must have taken place between c.1796/1797 and 1800.[34] The final victory over Ojo is widely acknowledged to have been won as a result of 'alien help' apparently provided by various non-Yoruba groups, including members of those highlighted above but significantly by Shehu Alimi's "assistance". The period from c.1800 and

c.1817 witnessed the influx of more migrants and settlers into various 'sides' of Ilorin. Among others, such groups as the Olufadi's pastoral Fulani from Iresa and the Sarkin Gambari's community of professional long-distance "Hausa" traders and artisans from Hausaland settled during the period.

After his initial contacts with Ilorin when he had a brief stay at Oke Suna and, most possibly, some occasional or "casual visits to Ilorin from Kuho,"[35] Shehu Alimi finally settled in Ilorin in c.1817. His settlement marked a turning point in Ilorin history as it heralded an era when Islam began to be a major factor in the transformation and subsequent history of the settlement. In addition to Islam and the Islamic movement initiated by Alimi, other factors that aided the transformation of Ilorin included the heterogeneity of the large following that arrived Ilorin with him; the population influx into Ilorin from Yorubaland, Hausaland and elsewhere, which his presence attracted; the gradual unification of the emergent 'quarters' or 'sides' of Ilorin conglomerate into an Ilorin Muslim community under Alimi's spiritual and religious leadership and then the move made towards establishing an Islamic system of government both before and following Alimi's death, which created a leadership vacuum in the town by c.1823.

By the early 1820s, other groups of people began to arrive in Ilorin. Prominent among these were the Fulani who came from Sokoto and those that came from Nupeland. The former group included Shehu Alimi's children, Abdul-Salami and Shitta who were requested to join their father in Ilorin; those who accompanied them from Sokoto, and those scholars invited by Shehu Alimi to join him in building an Islamic community in Ilorin. The other group comprised Fulani fugitives who sought refuge in Ilorin after their expulsion from Nupeland. This particular group was made up of about seven different sub-groups led by Maliki, Manzuma, Musa, Bawa, Baba, Dendo and Idrisu.[36]

Shehu Alimi's sons and others with them from Sokoto were said to have been "active in the army of the Sokoto Caliphate"[37] while the Nupe Fulani groups

had been actively involved in the political conflict in the kingdom. Both groups began to arrive in Ilorin in c.1820\1-1822, that is after the civil war in the Nupe Kingdom[38]. They therefore belonged to the category usually described as "fanatical Fulani Jihadists". These and other Muslim groups already with Alimi eventually transformed the Shehu's religious movement, which has been suggested to belong to the Tajdid tradition, into a full-fledged Jihad movement that transformed Ilorin to an Islamic Emirate in c.1823[39]. The Fulani from Nupe kingdom did not, however, stay long in Ilorin as they returned back to Nupeland following the successful repulsion of an invasion of Ilorin shortly after the fall of Afonja in c.1824. This invasion is described in some sources as the Adinimole or Sobi War and resulted from a joint invasion of Ilorin by the Oyo Yoruba in alliance with a Nupe king named Majiya II. Johnson names this as the Mugbamugba War, which can now be dated to c.1824/5.[40]

The above analysis shows that the migration into the Ilorin area of various groups of northern origin—"Hausa", Fulani, Kanuri, Baruba, Gwari, and Nupe—as well as Yoruba from within Yorubaland had been well underway before the year 1817 and continued up to the early 1820s. These groups included charm makers, warriors, grooms, rope-makers, cowherds, traders, scholars, preachers, etc. Their presence changed the population make-up of the Ilorin area, and transformed Ilorin's socio-economic and political situation and structure in the early 19th century. The presence of these various northern groups in Ilorin helped the town, in the course of the 19th century, to replace the Old Oyo not only as a centre of power and successor state but also a centre of transnational commerce, at least in northern Yorubaland. With reference to trade, the Gambari ward and its market in Ilorin were known to be the Emirate's major centre of transnational trade after the fall of the Alafinate. The population of this ward had always been made up of various groups of northern origin, including the Hausa, Baruba, Nupe, Kanuri, Gwari, etc. all collectively referred to as "Gambari" and many of whom remained very prominent in Ilorin's trade and economy in the 19th century.[41]

During the period from c.1824 to the 1870s, which witnessed the survival, consolidation and expansion of the nascent Ilorin Emirate, a number of other factors contributed to further movement of populations and their settlement in Ilorin. One of these was Ilorin's successful repulsion of all attempts made by the Oyo Yoruba and their allies to destroy the new emirate. Such unsuccessful invasions, which strengthened the bond of unity and consolidation of Ilorin and the Ilorins and encouraged more people to relocate there, include the Ogele, Pamo, Sobi or Adinimole/Mugbamugba, and the Eleduwe/Worukura wars all fought between c.1824/5 and c1835/6. The latter war was finally fought and won within Ilorin and its aftermath led to the final collapse of the Old Oyo Empire and the abandonment of its capital at Oyo-Ile in c.1836.

In spite of the convenience and choice among some scholars to describe the Ilorin that fought these and other wars against various groups of the Yoruba from the south as "Fulani", none of the wars by Ilorin from c.1797 till 1897 was fought entirely by a "Fulani", "Sokoto" "Gambari" or "Hausa" army; rather it was by a "synthesis of fragments" of peoples from Yorubaland, Hausaland, Nupeland, Barubaland, Kanuriland, Mali, Sudan, Nigér, Burkina Fasso, etc. who fought the wars as "Ilorins" and indeed as Muslims.

The active involvement of Ilorin in 19th-century Yoruba warfare from the Owu Wars of the 1820s to the Ekitiparapo War of the 1870s and 1880s was another factor that brought about the influx and settlement of people into Ilorin. The wars had intensified the problems of refugees and occasioned the search for new homes. Thus, many who were Muslims, including traders, artisans, warriors, etc. found their ways to Ilorin courtesy of the Ilorin warriors, rulers, scholars, trading counterparts, friends and itinerant preachers under or with whom they eventually settled down on arrival in Ilorin.

Another important factor that attracted people to Ilorin during the course of the 19th century were the policies and strategies adopted by successive emirs of Ilorin. One of such policies involved the invitation and encouragement of

Islamic scholars to settle in Ilorin and the provision of material conditions and enabling environment necessary for their religious and educational activities. For instance, the reigns of the first, second, third and fourth emirs of Ilorin: Abdulsalami (c.1823-c.1836), Shitta (c. 1836-1861), Zubayr (1861-1868) and Aliyu (1868-1891) witnessed the arrival and settlement of many Islamic scholars from within and outside the Nigerian area.[42] In addition, successive emirs also pursued policies that encouraged and facilitated the settlement of other professionals such as warriors, traders, and artisans.[43]

The transformation of Ilorin into an emirate under the Sokoto Caliphate further facilitated the continuous movement of population, especially of Muslims, into Ilorin. From the 1780s and 1790s, the arrival and settlement of various groups and individuals changed the population make-up of the Ilorin area, and transformed Ilorin's socio-economic and political situation and structure in the 19th century. With the dominance of Islam as a major factor in the socio-political, cultural, economic and inter-group relations among the peoples of Ilorin, a distinct identity that has come to be known as "Ilorin" was evolved and has continued to be sustained over the years.

From extant traditional accounts of the early history of Ilorin up to early 1800s, it can be inferred that the earliest settlement patterns involved the erection of small, simple temporary shelters, which are usually referred to as "tent" or "hunter's hut".[44] This would imply that such earliest arrivals were few in number (Sulu describes Ojo as "lonely" at a time) and probably never intended settling down permanently but, as hunters, had hoped to use their 'tents' and 'huts' as transit or resting camps for their gaming expeditions. However, such initial tents and huts later developed into bigger and more permanent structures or "houses" perhaps with the arrival of more hunters and settlers, who probably engaged in other activities such as farmimg and iron-working, which required more relatively permamnent settlement. According to Sulu, Ojo and Eminla's houses at Okelele were "the foremost buildings in Ilorin" while Ikokoro indicates that Ayinla, whom he describes as the hunter-founder

of Ilorin and Afonja's host when the latter arrived, had to leave his house to allow Afonja settle while he went to stay in his 'hunter's hut in order to seek game such as elephants'. The tradition of first erecting temporary huts and then building of permanent houses seems to have continued until the settlement of the Olufadi's Fulani group and Shehu Alimi's retinue. Their initial settlement pattern is described respectively as "tent" and "hut" although Sulu names the latter as "Akata" erected at Da'ani or Eri-Oke.[45] Sulu also informs us that Shehu Alimi "met only nine Houses when he arrived in Ilorin" although it is not clear whether by "Houses" he means to say large compounds made up of several houses or just single buildings. Be that as it may, the influx of people following the settlement of Afonja and Alimi, among other personalities, led to changes in settlement pattern both in terms of an increase in the number as well as the nature of houses built.

Traditionally, new arrivals were lodged in the houses of their host with whom they might or might not share ethnic affiliation. As time went on they were allocated land for their own houses usually close to their hosts' or at times, some distance away within the ever-expanding headquarters of the nascent Ilorin emirate. There, following a process known as "Yiya-Ile", the new arrivals, just as members of an expanding family, erected their own houses based on the size of their families and followings. This pattern of arrival and settlement was common in Ilorin throughout the 19th and early 20th century. On arrival, the immigrants initially retained much of their socio-cultural identities and traits, but eventually most of these dissolved into an Ilorin identity that had emerged by 1900. Thus, in many cases in Ilorin today, the original identity of the people can only be guessed or assumed from the names of their compounds, residential area, street or quarters' names. This explains the reason why one finds in Ilorin such names as Koro Guruma (from Gurma in what is today's Burkina Faso); Agbaji and Ile Ara-Agbaji (from Arbaji in the Sudan), Ita Egba and Ile Egba (from Egbaland or Abeokuta), Ile Iwo (from Iwo), Ile Kuho (from Kuho), Ile Ara-Oyo (from Old Oyo), Ile Gobiri (from

Gobir), Ile Kannike, etc. Of course, in several cases, each of these and other similar names only reflected the last 'bus stop' from which a particular family relocated to Ilorin and not necessarily their original homes.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is clear that within a period of about four decades, c.1797 to 1837, "Ilorin" witnessed a dramatic transformation from what is believed to have been a largely 'Yoruba' settlement into a multi-ethnic settlement for various groups of people such as the Yoruba, Kanuri, Hausa, Fulani, Baruba, Nupe, Gwari, Malians, Sudanese, Dendi, among others. These were eventually united by the strong bond of Muslim brotherhood and incorporated into the Ilorin Emirate whose establishment, a result of another transformation, was greatly influenced both by the ideology of the Islamic reform movement initiated by Shehu Usman Dan Fodio in Hausaland and the religious movement championed by Shehu Alimi in northern Yorubaland. The survival, expansion and consolidation of the strategically located nascent emirate, against all odds, further attracted a steady influx of different groups of people and individuals, comprising Islamic scholars, Muslim warriors, traders, artisans, students, preachers, asylum seekers, etc.

This influx continued well into the 20th century when new socio-political and economic forces and developments further accelerated internal migrations into Ilorin as the administrative headquarters of the colonial Ilorin Province and of Kwara State in the post-independence period. During the period covered by this chapter, successive emirs of Ilorin evolved a tradition whereby when a new personality or group arrived in town, he or the group would be referred to another family with whom he or the group had ethnic or other ties for accommodation or permanent settlement. Such tradition was employed when the progenitor of the Aliagan family arrived during the reign of Emir Abdulsalami (c.1823-c.1836) and he was referred to Magaji Agbadamu for lodging. Aliagan's large followings necessitated the royal permission granted him to break the first Ilorin city wall in order to found a new settlement that

extended the frontiers of the headquarters of the expanding emirate of Ilorin. As Jimoh informs us, the Ilorin city walls had to be broken and shifted a number of times to make room for the expansion of the city to accommodate more arrivals.[46] With particular reference to the Aliagans, one of such historical events form the inspiration for this new work on *Breakers of Ilorin City Wall: A Socio-economic and Political History of the Aliagans and their Neigbours*, and serves as background for the explorations in subsequent chapters of this book.

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37. Reichmuth Stefan and Razaq D. Abubakre, "Ilorin and Nupe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" in John O. Hunwick (comp.) *Arabic Literature of Africa*, Volume II, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1995, pp 439-458.

38. Law, "The Chronology"; Idris, Political Change, p. 28; Mohammed, *History of the Emirate*, pp 88-90; Ajayi, J.F.A., "Samuel Ajayi Crowther of Oyo", in Philip D. C. (ed.) *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Afri-*

cans from the Era of the Slave Trade, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., Long Grove, 1997, pp 289-316

39. *Cf.* Sulu, "History"; Smith, "A Little New Light"; Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p. 194; Danmole H. O., "The Frontier Emirate: A History of Islam in Ilorin", unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980; Balogun S. A., "Gwandu Emirates in the 19th Century with Special Reference to Political Relations, 1817-1903", unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan-Nigeria, 1970, pp 129-161.

40. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, pp 201-202; *Cf.* Elphinstone, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, pp 30-31; Herman-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin*, p. 103; Sulu, "History"; Jimba, *Iwe Itan*, pp 43, 64; Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey*, pp 82-84, 86-88 and 356-7; Idris, *Political Change*; Mohammed, *History of the Emirate*; Dupigny, *Gazetteer of Nupe Province*, 1920, pp 30-31 and Law, R.C.C., *The Oyo Empire c.1600-c.1836*, p. 285. Jimoh L.A.K. dates the Nupe invasion to "about the year 1808" (pg. 82); this dating appears inaccurate in view of the convergence of other sources on c.1824, i.e. 'shortly after Afonja's death'.

41. "Gambari", as already discussed elsewhere, seems to have been a term that originally applied to long-distance traders of Kanuri origin but eventually came to be a general term for professional long-distance traders of Northern Nigerian origin. See Salihu Ismail, "Gambari: Towards a Historical Exploration of the Etymology of a Term", in Ilorin Annals, (Ilorin: Ilorin History & Culture Bureau, Vol. 1, No. 1, Special Edition, November 2006.

42. Reichmuth and Abubakre, "Ilorin and Nupe", op. cit.; Reichmuth Stefan, "A Sacred Community: Scholars, Saints and Emirs in a Prayer Text from Ilorin", in *Sudanic Africa*, 6, 1995, pp 34-54; Moshood Mahmood Jimba & Ismail Salihu Otukoko (ed.), *'Ulama' al-Imarah (Scholars of the Emirate)*, Volume One, A Publication of the Centre for Ilorin Manuscripts and Culture, Kwara State University, Malete; Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Araby, 2015.

43. See Ann O'Hear, "The Economic History of Ilorin in the 19th and 20th Centuries: The Rise and Decline of a Middleman Society", PhD thesis, Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 1983.

44. Ahmad A. Ikokoro, *Ta'lif*; Sulu, "History".

45. Sulu, "History".