

INDELIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PALACES TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND SPREAD OF ISLAM IN YOURUBALAND, NIGERIA

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Abstract

History affirms it to be factual that many of the rulers and kings in Yorubaland have been catalysts of Islam from its inception. Some of them contributed to the entrenchment of Islam, the fortification of Shari'ah, the appearance of Islamic movements and the development of Islamic learning in their various domains became a reality. In the 17th century, mention was made of Muslims in Yorubaland. For example, A Muslim community, according to historical records had been established in Old Oyo by the middle of the 17th century. Areas like Songhai and Mali which were the already Islamized areas had already been visited by soldiers, traders and settlers even before the century mentioned above. By the 18th century, Islam had spread to some areas like Saki, Kisi Iseyin, Oyo, Ogbomoso and Igboho in Yorubaland. Efforts of the Yoruba kings in the introduction of Islam from their various palaces cannot be overemphasized. The Empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kanem- Borno later became seats of Islamic civilization. The old Oyo Empire with its capital at Oyo Ile witnessed Islamic scholars who lived to emulate Abdulkareem al – Maghili from Tilmisan in modern Algeria. These habitually travelling scholars and their students introduced Islamic learning to Jenne, Niani, Kawkaw (Gao), Timbuktu, Kano, Kanem Borno, Katsina and other parts of the then Bilād – al – Sudān where Yorubaland was situated and accorded a reputation of having a mosque at the palace around 15th/16th Century. The paper employed historical method which attempted to trace the introduction of Islam to Yorubaland and its spread through the Yoruba kings and rulers in their various domains. Their contributions in the entrenchment of Islam and how it came to fruition were all examined.

Keywords: Islam, Palaces, Osogbo, Yorubaland, Nigeria.

Introduction

In light of the fact that emphasis is laid on the symbolic relationship between politics and state, Islam could be described as a religion of the palace. “Palace” in this context refers to mosque like that of Madinah which was introduced by the Prophet. From the mosque, the Prophet was performing the roles of a judge, a commander in battle, a law officer and an administrator. From the city of Madinah which was known as Yathrib, Islam started to spread like wildfire to the whole world and encompassed the two well-known empires to Persians and Romans within few centuries of its take – off. The empires have become the seats of Islam today. Persian Empire has been transformed to the present state of Iran while Roman Empire in Constantinople has also become an Islamic city of Istanbul in Turkey. Many parts of Western Europe, like Southern Portugal and Spain, enjoyed centuries of the presence of Muslim merchants, explorers and scholars who travelled across the land and the seven seas

through the parts of the Atlantic to the Mediterranean Sea, the Red sea and onward to the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. Gradually, Islam became the religion of crème de la crème in Spain and got the attention of China (Abubakre, R. D; 2018).

The Yoruba cosmology which has some links with Islam as established by Samuel Johnson is that of the ancestral father of the Yoruba, Oduduwa, who was said to have migrated from Makkah (Johnson, S: 1921). Meanwhile, Adeyemi asserts that Oduduwa came from Madinah while he relies on oral interview and writes on Yoruba history and mythology (Adeyemi, 1914). The origin of Yoruba has also been traced by Muhammad Bello to one of the princes of the progenies of the family of the Kan'an in Iraq (Bello; 1964). The relevance of these historical accounts to our study is the fact that certain connections existed between Islam and the palace from time immemorial.

However, it is a well – known fact that Ifa divination is very essential to life in Yoruba tradition while discovering issue relating to palace and by denotation the traditional Yoruba society as a whole. It is noteworthy to observe that the Arab system of geomancy has a strong resemblance with the Ifa of the Yoruba people which is mathematical and at the same time rich as a literary corpus, also which *Fa* in Dahomey (Benin Republic) and the *Sikidi* of Malagasi. Therefore, whenever Muslim clerics reached Yorubaland, they introduced this practice which was found out to be more effective and completely without human sacrifice, to the service of the Yoruba communities. Hence, rather than using cowries or *Iyere–Osun* (Divination powder) for the practice of divination, the Muslim cleric of that time utilized sand–cutting or pen and paper to calculate the numerical strength of the components of the name of the client or that of the problem that needed solution. They, as well, used the practice as tools to gather information bit by bit. The Muslim clerics also specified sacrifices for their customers to ward off evil and to attract fortunes, provision of medicine for healing through consultation of books on medicine written in Arabic language in conformity with the Hadith which says: “Seek healing through herbs for Allah has not created any disease without providing a means of cure for it”. (al–Bukhari). (Abubakre, R.D.,:2018)

The connection between Muslim Clerics and Ifa Diviners in the Kings' Palaces in Yorubaland

The importance of Muslim geomancy in the Yoruba Palace cannot be underestimated. An established example of this was Shaykh Abubakr Aremo who came from a royal family in Ikirun. Prince Abubakr, an erudite scholar who was well trained in Sokoto, came back to his town, Ikirun, and started teaching future Imams of the Fulani origin and princes. His father, the Akirun of Ikirun, was childless before a Fulani Muslim cleric travelled down to the town and was introduced to the king in the palace. The Fulani cleric promised to pray for the king and by Allah's Grace, the king would be blessed with a male child. He gave a condition that if the prayer was granted, the child should be released to take him along with him. The Muslim cleric assured the king that the gate of procreation which was locked would have been opened to him. The prayer came to fruition and the child was taken to Sokoto province where the prince was trained under the Fulani cleric. The prince was brought up with Fulfude language and he became very fluent in the language. After his maturation, he was allowed by his teacher to travel back home. The prince returned to his origin, Yorubaland (Abubakre, R.D.,:2018).

With profound knowledge acquired from learning and scholarship and his ignorance of Yoruba language notwithstanding, the prince, who was well trained in the Fulfude and versed in the language, was advised by Ilorin rulers to stay in Ilorin instead of going back to his

hometown, Ikirun, where he would not be understood and his wealth of knowledge would not be valued. The prince finally settled at Isale-Koto in Ilorin where he became a teacher to the children of the Fulani rulers and future prominent scholars of the city who were trained in Fulfulde language. It is didactic to remark that when Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori concluded to establish an Arabic school in 1962 as requested by the then Emir of Ilorin, Zulu Gambari, the school was established at Isale-Koto as a replica of that of Agege, Lagos State. The area has been transformed to the point of convergence of Islamic tradition between the North and the South–West in Nigeria. The products of the Arabic school are the reference point to affirm the academic standing of the institution. Among the products are Professors, Lecturers and administrators of repute in Nigeria (Abubakre,; 2018). The warm reception of the Akirun and his kind gesture towards the Muslim cleric and his resolution to grant the cleric’s request on his son demonstrated the commencement of good fortune for the town.

Fostering Islam In Yorubaland Through Palaces

There were instances where some kings in Yorubaland invited Muslim clerics to their palaces to render assistance on one problem or another for them (Adebayo,; 2013). An illustration of Ifa Oracle and the method adopted by Muslim clerics was made by Abubakre:

It is curious to find that Arab system of geomancy agrees in toto with the Ifa formula, the difference being in the verbal forms. There is another type of Arab divination which is purely a mathematical calculation based on the letters of personal names of clients and those of their mothers ...A *babalawo*, Ifa priest uses *Iyere-Osun*- dust from *Iroko* tree or palm knots or a string of flat pebbles to divine while the *Alufaa*, Muslim cleric uses sand in the type of divination which has a similarity with *Ifa* A *babalawo* cites from *Ese-Ifa*, verses of *Ifa*, to give interpretation for *Ifa* revelation while an *Alufaa* consults his Arabic books of divination..... (Abubakre,; 1993).

However, history affirms that majority of Yoruba kings and rulers across histories have been cultivators of Islam in their various towns and cities. Examples of this is Timi of Ede when the new Ede was established in 1817. Since that century, Islam had been established in the town and the religion gained more prominence during the outburst of the war between Ibadan and Ede forces. The Timi of Ede, Gbamigboye Adeniju, who was on the throne between 1816 and 1841 invited a Muslim cleric from Nupeland to use his extraordinary power to defend his town against invasion. Buraimah Owonlarogo from Nupeland did his best and Ede town became safe. The Timi of Ede then demanded from the Muslim cleric a stay at a quarter in the town which is called Owonlarogo’s house which later became a shield for Muslims who were persecuted and were searching for shelter and security. The house was later given a new name “Muslims’ Quarter” Ile Imale during the reign of Timi Habibu Olagunju in 1850 (Abubakre,; 2018).

The king, Habibu Olagunju enrolled himself in an Arabic school in Bida where he met his colleague named Nuhu who was later given an epithet “Adekilekun”. During their studentship in Bida, Nuhu had predicted that his friend, Prince Habibu Olagunju would become an Oba (King) in the future. For this prevision to come to fruition, they both visited one Imam Gambari, the deputy to the commander-in-chief in the hierarchy of the Ilorin Imamate system during their period, who arranged a special prayer for the Prince. They all

had the opinion that if the prayer for Habibu Olagunju was accepted and he ascended the throne of Timi of Ede, certainly Islam would prosper in that part of Yorubaland where Muslims were being pursued and harassed by the traditionalists. To fortify himself more, Habibu Lagunju allured his friend at Bida, Alfa Jumada Isado, A Nupe man who was an Islamic scholar to accompany him to Ede and his classmate, Alfa Jumada Isado obliged. This development gave Isado the opportunity of becoming the first commentator of the Qur'an (Mufassir) of Edeland). The contributions of Timi Olagunju led to the establishment of a strong basis for the application of Islamic law of conflicts among Muslims in his domain and nurtured a small Islamic community where Islamic principle was upheld. All these would have been difficult to establish had it been the town was ruled by a non-Muslim king (Abubakre,: 2018)

It is on record that the kings and rulers of Ikirun across histories have been cultivators of Islam. For instance, Oba Aliyu Oyewole then, succeeded by Oba Akadiri Oyewole and followed by Oba Kusamotu Oyewole through whose reigns the consolidation of Islam, the reintroduction of Shari'ah, the appearance of Islamic movements and the development of Islamic learning in the town were fulfilled (Akinjobi, 2012). The struggle of the succeeding Akiruns were also fruitful going by the successes of Arabic and Islamic scholarship in the town. One of the prominent Arabic scholars produced by the town was Shaykh Ya'qub bn. Muhammad Mukhtar (1876 – 1965), a prolific author popularly known with an epithet "Omo lemomu" (the son of Imam) who was distinct among 'Ulamā' being a pacesetter in the teaching of oral Arabic and letter writing since 1943 (Abubakre, 2004). This town also produced a great teacher and Arabic scholar, Shaykh Mustafa Zughlul as Sunusi (1937 – 2017), a prominent student of Shaykh Adam 'al – Ilori.

Another town which is the cradle of the Igbomina ethnic group and one of the ancient Yoruba kingdoms is Ila–Orangun. The story of the introduction of Islam to Ila–Orangun is similar to the stories of the introduction of Islam to towns and cities in Yorubaland. It involved disputes and struggles between the Muslim scholars and the traditionalists. It is on record that one woman who was the daughter of a Muslim leader called Abdul – Khaliq, Awawu, was barren. She was instructed through divination to go and settle at a forest region where she would be blessed with children. She did according to the instruction and settled at Ila. She got married to the primogeniture of Orangun Akomokasa known as Akingboye Obasolo Tako. The marriage was fruitful and Awawu gave birth to a male child named Olajobi Agboluaje. The husband allowed his wife to practice her religion and the child later became Orangun of Ila between 1745 and 1820 (Adebayo, 2015).

In Ila Orangun, the first century Mosque was constructed at a place called Olori Awo Quarters and later, several other local (Ratibi) mosques were constructed in different parts of the town. The foundation of the present Central Mosque was laid on the 15th July, 1948 and was constructed during the reign of Orangun Gbadamosi Adedapo Agboluaje II (1947 – 1960) (Adebayo, :2015). It has to be mentioned that the extension of the mosque which later served as a motor park was donated by a Christian, Orangun Williams Ayeni Adetona (Abubakre, 2018).

The story of Abeokuta has to do with one of the three scholars who initially visited Osogbo, Shaykh Muslim was selected to go to Abeokuta whose arrival in the town was a good omen for the coming of both Shaykhs Tajul – Adab and Adam Abdullah Al- Ilori. The latter came to the town to establish Markaz in 1952. By 1825, Islam has started flourishing in Abeokuta

and the fall of Owu and the exodus of the people to the Egba forest in the 18th century indicated the commencement of Islam in Egband (Gbadamosi, 1972).

At Ikare Akoko in the Eastern axis of Yorubaland, Islam was very strong in the town due to role of the Nupe and Hausa kolanut traders in the area. The introduction of Islam in the town could be traced to the time of Olukare Olonaola whose son, Muhammad (Momoh) accepted Islam during the reign of Olukare Ajagunna. The Muslim palace can be described as an official settlement for the Nupe administration in Ikare (Agbetola, 1984). When Prince Momoh I became the Olukare, all his successors have been Muslims. For instance, Olukare Adu (Abdullah), Alasan (Al – Hasan) and the Olukare who passed on in 1980, Amusa/Hamzah Momoh III). Ikare Akoko was fertile for the cultivation of Kolanuts which was liked by the Hausa – Fulani Nupe extractions just like it is to the Yoruba. There was the presence of military adventures in Ikare-Akoko from Nupe, Ibadan and Ilorin who were interested in war booties among which were slaves. Their settlement in the area was put under the control of an officer known as Ajele for the sole aim of collecting tributes. Islam was deep rooted in this environment to the extent that the king of Arigidi, a suburb of Ikare-Akoko, is ‘Saaki’ which is a greeting in Hausa language for an Emir. On the other hand, a prince in the extensive Yoruba society is ‘Dan Saaki’ (Omo Oba) i.e. Son of Kabiyesi.

As palace played a significant role in the cultivation and consolidation of Islam in Yorubaland, the case of Old Oyo was not different in this direction. Alaaḥin Ajiboyede (1560 – 1570 C. E) had relationship with one Nupe Islamic scholar popularly called Baba-Kewu. The latter sent his son known as Baba Yigi to Oyo to counsel Alaaḥin to stop his despotism over his people (Gbadamosi 1978). The introduction of Islam in Alaaḥin’s palace was not totally devoid of violence. Alaaḥin Adeniran was said to have suffered persecution for being the President of Nigerian Muslim Council and a strong stut of Adegoke Adelabu in the First Republic. Alaaḥin of Oyo faced hostilities for the hatred for Islam by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Alaaḥin’s support for Adelabu. He was later dethroned as Alaaḥin when Chief Obafemi Awolowo was the Premier of Western region. Alaaḥin later died in exile but was brought to Oyo for interment. The persecution that Alaaḥin faced was as a result of his strong support for Islam and Muslims which was openly demonstrated by throwing his weight behind Alhaji Gbadamosi Adelabu Adegoke against the wish of the Premier, Chief Awolowo. The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adesoji Aderemi was spared by the Premier during the same time when he was at loggerhead with Ife Local Council Chairman, Remi Fani Kayode just because the Ooni was a Christian King (Abubakre, 2018).

Adele 1 (1775 – 1780), the Oba of Lagos was dethroned because of his love for Islam and Muslims in his domain. In 1832, he regained the throne until 1834 when Oba Kosoko who was the Eleko of Eko was also dethroned and he later settled in Epe in 1852. His settlement in Epe gave birth to the cultivation and solidification of Islam in the town. Muhammadu Adu, a Hausa palace attendant followed the King to Epe. He later became the Imam of the first Central Mosque in Epe whose land was donated by Balogun Ajeniya, a wealthy Chief of Kosoko. Aliru, who was a palace guard became an Arabic teacher in the town (Jimoh, 2016). Aliru laid a solid foundation for Islam in 1852 on which a strong edifice of Islam was erected which turned Epe to the like of Ilorin and Iwo, the well – known cities of ‘al – Qur’an.

As a follow – up to the migration of Oba Kosoko’s followers to Epe from Lagos, Ijebuland was the next point of call where the people settled. During the reign of Awujale Afidipote (1879), an Ijebu merchant known as Tobogun allowed Ali, an Ilorin servant to practice his religion – Islam, as he desired. This might be so, as a result of his master’s familiarity with

the activities of Salu who was and Imam in Lagos and followed Kosoko to Epe. Some of the associates of Awujale Atunwase (1886 – 1895) converted to Islam and a piece of land was secured for Eid prayers. Chief Kuku Oduyingbo who converted to Islam also donated a huge amount of money towards the construction of Etitale Central Mosque. In appreciation of the kind gesture, a visitation to Awujale was organized by the Muslims and this was the core of the memorable, captivating and indelible Ojude Oba festival, which is now being celebrated every third day of Eidul – Kabeer every year. The festival is already over a century old.

Iwo's story on the introduction and consolidation of Islam is similar to that of Ikirun. It started in Ogbaagba, a small town near Iwo when some learned Muslim scholars from the outer boundary of Yorubaland came to settle for teaching and propagating Islam. The eldest son of the Oluwo aroused the interest of the settlers and moved closer to them to learn about Islam. He later converted to Islam and was named Mondu (Mahmud). The Oluwo later invited the prince to know the reason for his acquaintance with the people in the suburb of Iwo. After hearing from him, the king directed the itinerant Muslim scholars to move closer to him in the palace for the convenience of his son to attend their sittings as he desired. For this gesture from Oluwo, he was given an epithet 'Oba Alausa'. Nevertheless, his son refused to succeed him because of the idolatory practices attached to the throne. On the contrary, he faced the study of Islam and his children followed suit. Alfa Katayeyanjue was one of his progenies. Though, their family is a royal one but well known for Islamic scholarship. Iwo is popularly known for sustaining linkages between Islam and the palace right from the time immemorial. The present Oluwo, Oba Abdul-Rasheed Akanbi Telu is not exceptional in sustaining the already established Muslim kingship in the town.

Ibadan is popularly known as a permanent war centre where the people of old Oyo and Ife dominated before the fall of the former. It has had its own portion in the ranks of the military. In 1860, an evangelist of the Church Missionary Society, perceived Ibadan as a Muslim state and this frightened him because of his conviction that it would slow down the advancement of Christianity in this domain (Ayandele, 1966). The third in command in the Ibadan military, Osi Balogun, in 1850s, Ogundina was a practising Muslim which also constituted a hindrance to the furtherance of Christianity in Ibadan. Also, in the infantry of the garrison centre and in the camp of Balogun Ogunmola was Muhammad Latosa, a well acknowledged Muslim who became the Aare Ona Kakanfo of the Yoruba Army in 1871. He was reported to have a strong belief in Islamic prayer and he would take his army to Oluwo who would pray for his troop whenever he wanted to engage in a battle and Oluwo of Iwo would give a forecast of what would befall them at the battleground. This was as a result of the affiliation of Basorun Ogunmola with Iwoland in demonstration of sustaining his connection with his birthplace.

Shaykh Abu Bakr Qasim came to Ibadan with Prince Harun Matanmi, his student in the mid-19th century. Matanmi became a prominent scholar in Ibadan while Abu Bakr Qasim became an Islamic leader. Abu Bakr Qasim was a native of Ibadan but he was trained in Ilorin and later well-known as Alfa Alaga after his resolution to stay in Ibadan (Reichmuth & Abubakre 1995). In 1875, he established an Arabic school at Oke Aremo during Latosa's reign and after his demise in 1882, his student, Prince Harun Matanmi took the mantle of leadership of the school and he eventually became the Chief Imam of Ibadan in 1922 till 1935 when he departed from this world. Matanmi had harmonious relationship with Basorun Sunmonu Apanpa who reigned between 1907 and 1910. Basorun Sunmonu was a Matanmi's student and a product of Oke Aremo Arabic school. Shaykh Ahmadul- Rufai bn Muhammad Bello (1851 – 1971), a popular Islamic scholar and a junior contemporary of Prince Harun

Matanmi also had a good and close relationship with Olubadan Sunmonu Apanpa and Abass who ruled between 1930 and 1946. Oba Sunmonu Apanpa's reign witnessed the substitution of Ifa divination with Islamic geomancy. The Yoruba *Ifa* system of annual divination was changed to Wiwo Tira Odun (Gbigbohun Tira) – annual Islamic divination (Peel, 2016) which was rampant and supported by some prominent Islamic scholars among whom was Alfa Oke Are. Though, this practice was refuted by some Islamic scholars such as Shaykh Murtada Abdul Salām of Isale Osun in Ibadan. This was the scenario when Olubadan Abass Aleshinloye Isaac Akinyele became the Olubadan. He was a strong member of the Christ Apostolic Church and his reign as the Olubadan was between 1935 and 1964, who later proscribed the practice.

It has to be mentioned that the reign of Olubadan Abass Aleshinloye (1930–1946) was full of activities of his historical value which indicated the rapid development of Arabic and Islamic learning in the palace. When Harun Matanmi became the Chief Imam of Ibadan in 1922, a man from Offa, Kwara State, Muhammadu Sanusi bn Harun, became the Principal of the Arabic school at Oke Aremo. He was nicknamed Alfa Katibi because of his service to both Basorun Sunmonu Apanpa and Olubadan Abass Akinyele as their scribe. When Basorun Sunmonu died in 1910, he wrote an elegy in Arabic poetry for the deceased to show his competence in Arabic. It also demonstrated his familiarity with the king whose reign was a testimony to the efflorescence of Arabic and Islamic learning and his support for Islam in the palace of Olubadan more than ever before (Abubakre, 2002). Olubadan Aleshinloye wrote to the Oluwo of Iwo and the Emir of Katsina on issues about Islam and Muslims. He referred to himself as Sultan of Ibadan in his correspondence to 'al – Hassan bn. Mu'adh bn. Muhammad Bello, the Sultan of Sokoto who passed to the afterlife in 1938. He also wrote a letter in Arabic to the Muslim Community in Ilesa. He donated for the construction of Ibadan Central Mosque as his name featured on the list as one of the donors till 1937. These were contained in the attractive Arabic Calligraphy by Shaykh Muhammad Salahud-Deen (Abubakre, 2018).

Islam and the Palaces in Osogbo

There is no gainsaying the fact that Islam gained dignity and reputation and at the same time attracted decorum to the Yoruba palaces which are of mutual advantage to the religion down the ages. The Yoruba Obas, more consistently, adopted Islam as a state religion. This is obvious in the construction of central mosques directly opposite or close to king's palace. Also, it has been a usual practice that many kings in Yorubaland provided rams to be slaughtered to commence Ileya festival (Eidul – Adha). Central prayer grounds for the Eid or Jumat services once given the appellation 'Yidi Oba' or 'Jimoh Oba' respectively (The King's Prayer Ground or the King's Central Mosque). It is also a tradition that prayers are not started until the arrival of the King. In some Yoruba towns, Kings appoint the Chief Imam and in some others, they have to give their consent before a Chief Imam is appointed. The king and the Chief Imam work hand in hand as the Imam derives his authority from the king, the king also seeks spiritual strength from the Chief Imam.

Osogbo is not exceptional as it is interwoven with the growth and development of Islam in Ibadan and Abeokuta. It is evident that one has effect on the other. Various Islamic preachers and scholars had visited Osogbo to propagate Islam but the actual introduction of Islam in Osogbo was accomplished by three itinerant Shuwa Arabs from Borno axis whose names were Muslim, Uthman and Qasim (Abubakre, :2018). The 8th Ataoja of Osogbo, Matanmi I, Oba Oladejobi Oladele Matanmi (1854–1864) gave hospitality to the visitors who benefited from the spiritual assistance extended to him. Prior to the arrival of the clerics, the king's

wife was barren and he approached them for prayers. The prayer to Allah to grant the King a male child was eventually granted. In 1837, the child was given birth to and was named Harun. This occurrence made Islam precious to the Ataoja of Osogbo and he subsequently accepted Islam. One of the itinerant scholars, Qasim, sought the permission from the king to take Harun to his next destination, Ibadan and they both set out on a journey from Osogbo and finally settled at Ibadan (Abubakre, 2018).

Uthman, one of the scholars, became the first Chief Imam of Osogbo in 1854. His full name was Shaykh Ismāil Uthman Idi – Ako. Idi – Ako is the place of their settlement on their arrival in the town. The cultivation of Islam in the palace started with the adoption of Islam by the Ataoja of Osogbo, Oba Oladejobi Oladele Matanmi I. The relationship between the Chief Imam and the Ataoja was later consolidated by the marriage of the daughter of the king and Shaykh Uthman which was a fruitful and successful union. Hashir was one of the children of the marriage who later succeeded his father as the 11th Chief Imam of Osogbo. Eventually Imam Muhammad Hashir Idi – Ako was the Imam between 1964 and 1969. This means that two of the descendants of the Ataoja Matanmi I, Harun, his first son and Hashir, his grandson, became Chief Imams in Ibadan and in Osogbo separately, in their lifetime (Abubakre, 2018). With the adoption of Islam in the palace by the king, Islam activities which were concentrated in the central mosque only at the initial stage with the observation of Jumat Prayer on Friday started to grow and more converts came into the religion. Later on, the town began to witness the emergence of Islamic societies and organisations including free establishment of Quranic/Arabic schools. Today, the town is witnessing the efflorescence of Arabic and Islamic scholarship which also extends to its environs. Many ‘Ulamā’ are now in Osogbo with various areas of specialization. Some are Sufis, some are Proprietors of Arabic schools, there are those who specialized in Da‘wah, some are Arabic teachers (Asāfīdh) while many are spiritual consultants (engaging in Jalabi). They have become Imams of various mosques in the town.

Conclusion

The warm reception and hospitality given by Yoruba kings attracted them and endeared them to the palaces by rendering spiritual assistance to the kings and all those around them with all their hearts. This was also an important reason why the kings willingly embraced Islam and contributed to its propagation. At the same time, the upright behaviour of Muslim visitors which portrayed honour and recognition for constituted authorities made the cultivation of Islam from the palace an easy task. Their services to the kings, such as spiritual assistance, playing the role of secretaries, teachers and counsellors, made Islam beautiful to the kings and eventually they accepted it. The Yoruba kings that accepted Islam made a lot of sacrifices to sustain the religion, including persecution, hostility and dethronement. It is the opinion of the researcher that the role of Yoruba kings in consolidating Islam in the present times needs further examination. Simply put, researchers have to focus on the continuity or otherwise in the work-flow between Yoruba palaces and Islam in the contemporary times.

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