

AbdulRahman Adebayo SULEIMAN, PhD, Rasheed ONAGUN, PhD & Lukman ADESHINA; Ethnic Groups' Relations In The Emergence Of The Fulani Dynasty In Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

**Ethnic Groups' Relations In The Emergence Of The Fulani Dynasty In Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

The foundation of co-existence in Ilorin Emirate is premised on nascent settlements of the Baruba hermit, Ojo-Isekuse, Laderin, Solagberu, Abdullahi, Bako, AbdulMumeen, Dose and Olufadi (al-Fahd) in different quarters of Ilorin between seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Each of the aforementioned personalities played socio-cultural roles that fostered relations. Some writers and traditional narrators, especially non-professional historians hardly see pre-Alimi Ilorin history as the foundation and inseparable part of Ilorin history, some writers emphasized a single ethnic group as the basis for the establishment of the Emirate. This work found the essentiality of pre-Alimi Ilorin history, ethnic collaborations and individuals' contributions to the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate in 1823. The Ilorin Emirate comprises five L.G.As of Kwara State, namely, Asa L.G.A, Ilorin East L.G.A, Ilorin South L.G.A, Ilorin West L.G.A and Moro L.G.A. This paper examines the contribution of all the ethnic groups' subjects and the earliest ward leaders of Ilorin to the survival of each settlement and the emergence of the Ilorin Emirate. Sources of data collection for this study involved primary and secondary. The methodology adopted in his work is historical hence, it relied on primary (oral interviews, praise songs and folklore) and secondary sources. The paper concludes that the administrative acumen of the early Ilorin settlers provided an avenue for the evolution and the heterogeneity of Ilorin as a community.

Keywords: Foundation, Ilorin Emirate, Relations, Co-existence, Sustenance

Introduction

Oral tradition shows that Ilorin was peopled largely by different ethnic groups before Alimi finally arrived. Each of the living quarters had a recognised leader, in whom the people reposed their trust. Based on this observation, intra-ethnic relations existed among the denizens of the then-Ilorin. However, individual leaders mobilised their followers during general community services. The appearance of

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early settlers in Ilorin is historically considered relevant because it was the basis for the establishment of the town. Individual early settlers demonstrated basic ideas, which became a basis for the evolution, growth and development of the town. The association of these individuals provided a foundation and a melting pot for the diverse groups and the establishment of political institutions. Indeed, it is the efficiency of the institution that actuated dynamic conditions for the thriving of co-existence among the early settlers of the Emirate.

The settlements of Ojo-Isekuse, the Baruba hermit, Bako and Laderin were central. Each of them settled within an enclave of socio-cultural activities. These respective settlements were less than one kilometre away from one another. During this period, the northern frontier of Ilorin lies between Sobi and Shao both towns are now in Ilorin East L.G.A. To the South, Ilorin extended to Oko-Eerin in present-day Ilorin West L.G.A. Ogidi, in present-day Ilorin West L.G.A. was the western extension of Ilorin, while the present location of Ilorin General Post Office in Ilorin South L.G.A was its easterly extent.

Worth mentioning are the groups which include Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Gobri, Kanneke, Malian and Tuareg among others. Their leaders were Ojo-Isekuse, Laderin, Bako and Solagberu. Under them, the people had the privilege to contribute their quota to the establishment and sustenance of the Emirate.

Intergroup Relations and the Contributions of Individual Groups in Early Ilorin Socio-cultural and Political Interactions

Ojo Isekuse Family

Ojo-Isekuse came from Oyo, while his mother was from (Ilesha) Baruba⁴³³ when Ilesha Baruba was under the Oyo Empire. He sojourned at Oke-Ikoko, Alaase and Idi-Ape near Shao before he advanced to Ilorin where he settled. He settled at Idi-Ape in Ilorin. Idi-Ape of Ilorin derives its name from the ape trees in the area at the time. Ojo Isekuse is said to have found seven *Ape* trees at the location (later known as Idi-Ape). The last *Ape* tree at Idi-Ape was destroyed in the 1970s as a result of expansion and modernization. Other three *Ape* trees that were found in Ilorin during the Ojo Isekuse's period included the one at Isale-Oja, Ile Adanduo and Gada. It is imperative to mention that, at those places where *Ape* trees (ten altogether, seven mainly at Idi-Ape) grew in Ilorin then, the trees have now been replaced with mosques vis-à-vis Isale-Oja, Ode Adanduo, Gada and ancient Ilorin Jum'at mosques.

Ojo Isekuse was an itinerant hunter. He combined traditional healing of diseases with hunting. He is said to have possessed *Opan-Ifa* (the template of *Ifa* divinity), which he used to consult, about the bearing of his movements across the place that was later known as Ilorin. Ojo Isekuse retained a spiritual contact with *Iyemoja*

433 Interview with Ibrahim Ahmed, Magaji Alaase, Occupation: trading: Age: 53, Ile Alaase, Idiape, Ilorin, 13/5//18.

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Yalumo, which is located presently around Maadi area of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. He performed rituals as well as making sacrifice to *Iyemoja Yalumo*. Indeed, *Iyemoja Yalumo* was worshiped by Ojo Isekuse. Other river worship, connected to *Iyemonja* since the days of Ojo Isekuse in Ilorin, included *Iyemoja Eleyinla*, *Iyemoja Idado* and, *Iyemoja Aikore*. All these *Iyemoja* were sacrificial streams (in the pre-Emirate period) located in Ilorin areas. At Shao, Ojo was a compatriot of "Ajanki and Boo" of Shao. According to the traditional history of Shao, Ajanki and Boo were the earliest settlers of Shao. They arrived the same day, Ajanki in the morning while Boo arrived in the evening.

Ojo arrived in Ilorin in the late seventeenth century. History proves that Ojo used to file his hunting implements at the abode of a Baruba hermit. It is inferred that relations between Ojo-Isekuse and the Bruba hermit were cordial and perhaps relative because Ojo Isekuse's mother was from Ilesha Baruba where the Baruba hermit came from. Ilesha Baruba was under the old Oyo Empire during the Ojo Isekuse migration. One cannot take exception that Ojo-Isekuse co-existed with Emila because the latter was a priest. It is equally important to stress that blacksmithing, farming and hunting were, the then prominent lines of work in Ilorin areas. In the traditional history of Ilorin, the hunting profession was popularly declared with Ojo-Isekuse, while Emila (a priest) was known to have combined hunting with farming. The cardinal point of Ojo-Isekuse and Emila relations requires future elucidation because their occupational relations created the arena of exchange of professional ideas between themselves. According to Jimba, S.,⁴³⁴ Ojo-Isekuse had no son. He is however said to unavoidably sending Emila's son on errand, which the latter may or may not discharge according to his own volitions. A faction of Ilorin tradition also posits that Ojo-Isekuse had no child. Contrary to this, Ojo Isekuse is said to have born Adeyemi, Olanipekun, Olalekan and Odeponle (the only daughter). Ojo got the appellation of "Ojo 'Isekuse'" (licentious Ojo) from spiritual encounter with his only daughter, Odeponle. Ojo possessed a spiritual power, which he used to relinquish to Odeponle through immersion, whenever he was not on hunting or going for his leisure time. The spiritual means of transferring the power to the daughter was through being (both of them) in lying position.⁴³⁵ On this action, many people who had no knowledge of the spiritual transmission of the power between Ojo and his daughter ran into conjecture that Ojo was committing incest, thus he was stigmatised Ojo Isekuse (licentious Ojo). As acclaimed by Jimba, Ibrahim Ahmed also affirmed that Ojo-Isekuse's life ended at Shao, where he intentionally chose to be self-interred at Idi-Oro.⁴³⁶

The progenitors of Ojo Isekuse inherited Idi-Ape, Alaase village along Shao-Ilorin express way as a result of the demise of Ojo Isekuse. They also inherited Idiko,

434 Jimba, S., A, *Chronicle of Ilorin*, Samaki Publisher, Nigerian (Ltd), Ilorin\; 2009, pp. 2-3

435 Interview with Ibrahim Ahmed.... 13/5/18.

436 Jimba, S., A *Chronicle of Ilorin*,... Also, Interview with Ibrahim Ahmed, Mangaji Alaase.... 13/5/18.

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which is also located along Shao-Ilorin express way. Idi-Ape shares boundary with Ibagun at the northern part of the express way. It share boundary with Idiokun at western side. Ibagun and Idiokun belong to Isale-Oja family. It is important to understand that right from pre-Emirate period, the Alaase family maintains both spiritual and economic importance of Idi-Ape at Alaase village in Shao. Alaase family also extended to Idiagbon of Emir's road and Egbejila village.

Adeyemi was the first Mangaji Otun-Ago of Ojo-Isekuse family. Mangaji Otun-Ago was recognised by Afonja of Ilorin and the tittle is still functioning as part of administrative cadre of the Ilorin Emirate till date. Adeyemi became the first Mangaji Otun-Ago immediately after the death of Ojo-Isekuse. Nevertheless, the baton of Mangaji ran to Olanipekun, Olalekan, Yusuf, Kuranga, Zubairu (Maikarufi), Ahmadu Adio and Ibrahim Ahamad (the present Mangaji Alaase) in succession.

Among the houses that existed around Idi-Ape in the Ojo-Isekuse era were Ile Safari (Ile Jehunkunnu); Ile Ila (Emila's house), Ile Otun-Ago, Ile Alapinni, Ile Aare, Ile Isokun, and Ile Ba'sale. Magaji Otun-Ago became known as Magaji Alaase in the last decade of the eighteenth century when the member of the Ojo-Isekuse family of Ile Otun-Ago was recognised as proficient marketers and distributors of '*Ilekun Aase*'⁴³⁷ (*Aase* door), a large wooden door used by Ilorin and its neighbouring towns, as sub main gate at the entrance of each household. Several families in Ilorin settled at Ile Alaase before they finally settled at their present places. Among such families are Sheikh Adam Abdullahi, Magaji Ojuekun, Iyaniwura of Ile Kure, Popoigbonna and the ancestor of Daudu Alapa.

Afonja Family

Following the incessant raids of Nupe on Igbomina area, which was part of the *Ẹkuṅ Osì*⁴³⁸ (left-wing division or Metropolitan Province of Oyo geo-political division), Alaafin Ojigi ordered Laderin, the great grandfather of Afonja to *Ẹkuṅ Osì*.⁴³⁹ It should be noted that Ilorin was equally known as *Bode* (boader/gate-way) through which slaves were transacted, during Laderin's period.⁴⁴⁰ Perhaps, based on relatively civilised status of Ilorin in the seventeenth century, Laderin was based in Idi-Ape, Ilorin to discharge his official duty at the interest of Alaafin. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that based on the circumstances that led to the presence of Laderin in Ilorin, he was given a leadership honour by the Yoruba in Ilorin and those that were residing across the *Ẹkuṅ Osì*. Pasin, his son, succeeded Laderin and

437 About the description of the door see: Hermon-Hodge, H.B. *Gazetter of Ilorin Province*, London, George Allen & Unwin LTD, Museum Street, 1929, p. 275.

438 Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Time to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, C.S.S. Book Shop, P.O.Box, 174,50, Broad Street, Lagos, Nigeria, p.13.

439 Yusuf S.O., *The Origin and British Colonial Impact on the Cosmopolitan Community of Ilorin in the 20th Century*, LINCOM Cultural Studies, 2007, p. 63.

440 Interview with Suaib Aremu, Magaji Aare of Ilorin, Age:78 years, 21/6/17.

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became the father of Alugbin who was Afonja's father. In a leadership role, Pasin was also recognised by the Yoruba as a chief and leader. He was reported to have been brave and focal that on public occasions he (during the reign of Alaafin Majeogbe) condemned Basorun Gaha for his inordinate intimidation and usurpation of Alaafins' authority⁴⁴¹. Pasin did not have a formidable military power to withstand the threat of Basorun Gaha in Ilorin, therefore, he fled to Olla, (presently in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State) where he was eventually captured and slain. The baton of leadership among the Yoruba ethnic group of Ilorin came to Alugbin. He was said to have led a section of rebellion against Basorun Gaha in 1774⁴⁴². Afonja became prominent among the then-Ilorin sectional leaders due to his military prowess.

Afonja's history in Ilorin is identified with socio-cultural and political administration. He was an animist who worshipped Sango and Iyemoja. Animism and Islam thrived in Ilorin in the days of Afonja who had his shrine located at Idi-Ape in front of the Aare compound and at the same time at the back police post at Idi-Ape. The shrine was later converted to a mosque after the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate government in 1823. Afonja held cordial relations with Sheikh Alimi, especially when the latter provided efficacy of prayer to support the former against Ojo Agunambaru at the battle of Ogidi. Afonja and Alim had no contempt but their respective followers were usually engaged in several jealous and contending arguments as to whether Afonja or Sheikh Aimi was superior, judging by the actions of each of them at Ogidi war. Disgruntle jealousy, argument and contemptuous rivalry among the supporters were intensified into conflict as a result of the aggressive action of Alimi's household Muslims to have stripped a masquerade during Afonja's Egungun festival.⁴⁴³ Jimoh further emphasised that relations between Sheikh Alimi and Afonja were cordial and respectful that both of them 'stroved to restrain their respective followers from precipitating a communal strive' at the expense of the Ilorin ethnic groups' co-existence.⁴⁴⁴

On a religious basis, Ilorin tradition has it that Afonja also worship Iyemoja with the descendants of Ojo-Isekuse at places where the Union Bank for Africa and the ancient Ilorin Jumat mosque are located today. It should be noted that Afonja established a sectional administration among the Yoruba. This later transpired to the adoption and reformation by the Ilorin Emirate after instituting its government. Administrative offices that were created in Ilorin by Afonja included: Alapini (Head of masquerade), Ona-Isokun, Are Ago, Otun Are, and Ikolaba (Head of Sango worshiper), which were (by the Fulani hegemony) reformed into Magaji Alapinni, Magaji Isokun, Mogaji Agbadamu, Magaji Alaase and Mogaji Ikolaba respectively.

441 Jimoh, L.A.K., (1994: 14) *Ilorin the journey so far*....pp.27, 79.

442 Ibid. p. 50

443 Ibid. p. 56

444 Ibid. p. 55

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To integrate Oke-Suna of Solagberu into Afonja's administration the latter stretched out friendship and alliance to the former who declined for a conceived interest.

Religion: A Connector of Administrative Relations in the Ilorin Pre-Alimi Era

In pre- Alimi period of Ilorin, religions played a dominant role in any administrative area, where a distinct head man was recognised. Ojo-Isekuse, Emila and the Baruba hermit were known to be compatriots. Three of them practised and practised animism. Ojo-Isekuse worship *Iyemoja*. Emila was a priest among them while the Baruba hermit was a member of *religo-tripod* relations.

Laderin, himself, arrived in Ilorin many generations after the death of Ojo-Isekuse.⁴⁴⁵ However, the progenies of Ojo-Isekuse and Laderin are said to have a common faith in worshipping '*Iyemoja*',⁴⁴⁶ at the Idi-Ape of Ilorin. At the threshold of the ancient Ilorin mosque, the *Iyemoja* deity is said to be worshipped. Both Laderin families and Ojo-Isekuse in Ilorin claim a common right to the worship and celebration of *Iyemoja* before Islam is well established in Ilorin. Ojo-Isekuse's mother, Akee is said to have being a gift to her parents after numerous sacrifices to *Iyemoja* River (located between Igboho and the ancient palace of the *Alaafin* Oyo) in old Oyo. The *Alangeere* from Baruba and the people that worshipped *Oosa Safari* occupied a portion of the place where the main building of the ancient Ilorin mosque is currently located.

Solagberu in Oke-Suna

Oke-Suna existed as an enclave and mini-community of Ilorin in Solagberu time. All the same, before Solagberu became prominent in Oke-Suna, few travelers sojourned at the place. These included ethnic members of Hausa, Nupe and Yoruba, who entered and exited the settlement through Ogbomosho/Iseyin axis. Some of them were Nupe charm dealers. The place was then called 'Gbede'.⁴⁴⁷ Linguistically, Gbede is noted as prefix of the word Gbedegi, which was pointed to by Nadel as among five original sub-tribe of Nupe. Nadel submits that "the Gbedegi (of Nupeland) are believed to have been Yoruba origin and have been Nupe-ized by Tsoede and his men."⁴⁴⁸ A religious rite similar to that of *Iyemoja* was practiced in Gbede (Oke-Suna) until the arrival of Solagberu. The religious rite appeared under *Ndako gboya* (Iggunnu in Yoruba language) and mask dances, which are attributed to the Nupe culture. One Ndache (father of hunting) is said to be popular among the sojourners.⁴⁴⁹ A smith workshop is said to have been located at Oke-Suna during

445 Ibid. p. 27

446 *Iyemoja* is a deity that has connection with water.

447 Gbede in the Yoruba language means *Idera*, which in turn means tranquility in English.

448 Nadel, S.F., () *A Black Byzantium, The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, The Oxford University Press, London: The International Languages and Cultures, New York Toronto. 1942: p. 19

449 *A transmission of repeated story from Umar Lawal, Ile Kijan, Oke-Apomu, Ilorin, a trader, Age:64, 1994. The informant asserted that the information was Transmitted to him through his father.

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Ndache's period. Meanwhile, contrary to his hunting-related name, Ndazche dealt in *kanwa*⁴⁵⁰ (potash), which he pushed to the Ilorin marketplace, perhaps the Gambari market. He used to order for the production of swords (which he departed with, whenever he left) from the smiths. Ghali and Abdullahi associated with Ndache, yet, there is no clarification about the relations between Ndache, Abdullahi and Ghali, although they were all Nupe men.

The arrival of Solagberu at Gbede (Oke-Suna) signified a nucleus reformation of the town because he significantly pioneered the *Ilimi* (Islamic Philosophical Knowledge) school. Four important things are noted about Solagberu's arrival. First, there was a drastic reduction, if not total eradication of mask dances. Second, the place name was converted to Oke-Suna. Third, a few Tapa (Nupe) were his students; four, Solagberu was popular among people from other quarters. Therefore, it is concluded that there has been an existence of relations among the people across all quarters of Ilorin.

While people in Idi-Ape worshipped *Iyemoja*, and other objects of sacred, the people of Oke-Suna were practicing Islam. Solagberu was their spiritual leader. It is worth mentioning that some aspects of the policies of Islam placed administrative control in the hands of spiritual Islamic leaders. As a cleric, Solagberu ought to have inspired civic obedience among the denizens of his quarters. If he had been the Imam, some degree of loyalty is expected from people under his jurisdiction. On the other hand, if he had not combined the role of Imam with cleric assignments, then he would have been singled out as a factor among the clergymen of the quarters. On this backdrop, he possessed an interpellation over his subjects' affairs. For instance, the *Zakat-l-fitri* (spiritual mandatory charity from every Muslim at the end of Ramadan fasting) must have been directed to him for further disbursement. This aspect of Islamic policy and the Imam-ship role endeared the cleric to exercise some control over their subjects.

Solagberu was very popular among the people of Ilorin, especially the Yoruba. His original name was Muhammed Tair.⁴⁵¹ Upon his generosity, felicity and pragmatic actions in using influence to win more companions into his cadre, he was nicknamed Solagberu by the Yoruba. Solagberu also answered the agnomen:- *Oga ye*.⁴⁵² He was given the agnomen perhaps, because of his possession of leadership quality. However, the descendants of Solagberu are now found in Ile Solagberu of Agbaji area, although for a reason best known to the interviewees (members of Solagberu's family) the ancestral line of Solagberu is concealed. It should be noted that Ile Solagberu (Solagberu's compound) was formally known as Ile Ogeye (*Ogeye* compound).⁴⁵³

450 *Kanwa* is known as *Kanwun* in Yoruba language.

451 Interview with Alhaji Abdulsalam Oba Adisa Solagberu, Occupation: a retired civil servant; Age: 88 years, Ile Solagberu, Agbaji Area, Ilorin. 4/9/18.

452 Ibid. *Oga ye* is a Yoruba word meaning 'a fit leader or a leadership fit (person).'

453 A Yoruba corrupt word for *Oga ye* is *Ogeye*. Muhammed Tair is said to have once

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Doshe of Ilorin

Doshe, the first Balogun of Ilorin was a Nupe man, although his actual town in Nupeland is not yet discovered. Doshe was well recognised among the Hausa of Gambari quarters right from the time of Afonja. In addition, the Yoruba identified him with Hausa. It was a Hausa word *duse* (stone) that was corrupted to Doshe by Ilorin community. He was a general of the Confederate Ilorin army during (c. 1798-99) Majia's attack of Ilorin. He led the contingent of the Ilorin army against Majia in the Sobi (*Ogunadinimole*) war. He lost his life in the war, at Jebba. The man was hardy and brave perhaps a reason for him to answer Duse Doshe, however, his other name is not known, if at all it existed. It is reported according to tradition that "Doshe was at the side of Afonja in Ogidi war against Ojo-Agunbambaru."⁴⁵⁴

Just as in Afonja's case, loss of war to a war general means infamy, not only to the general himself but also to members of his immediate family. Such a loss of war perhaps, contributed to exist of Doshe's family (except a daughter) from Ilorin. According to oral data, "Doshe left a child who married at Ile Alfa Ondo at Baruba quarters, and the woman was the great paternal mother of Alhaji Amadu Pass, who died around 1974-5."⁴⁵⁵ The demise of Doshe paved the way for Ali 'Maiyaki' (a Hausa word that means warrior) as the first Balogun Gambari of Ilorin. It should be remembered that Doshe combined traditional medicine with military activity, he is also said to be among the pioneer architects of the ancient Awodi market.⁴⁵⁶ Ali Maiyaki was recognised as a major leader of all military sectors of the Ilorin Confederation until 1823 when he was officially *turbaned* by Oba AbdulSalam. Sequel to the proclamation of Ilorin as an autonomous Emirate government, the title of Balogun Gambari became commissioned. Ali Maiyaki upheld an ovate military status between 1808 and 1845 when he died. Thereafter, the succeeding Gambari Baloguns had been upright in their relations with other ethnic groups (especially the Nupe with whom they take a joke about Ali's succession of Doshe) who are of non-Hausa origin.⁴⁵⁷

Imam Gambari of Ilorin

AbdulMumeen and Aminullahi were the ancestors of Imam Gambari of Ilorin. They were scholars and migrants. They migrated from Bokani⁴⁵⁸ in Nupeland to Ilorin.

Popularly been pin pointed as selected Emir of Ilorin by Ilorin people but he rejected. This argument is supported by interview with Alhaji Abulkadri Oba Baba Alfa Solagbru, Estate agent, Ile Solagberu, Agbaji Area, Ilorin. Age: 81, 4/9/18.

454 Interview with Jimoh, L.A.K., Occupation: a retired civil servant Age: 80, Masankore, Gambari area, Ilorin. 26/10/17. See also: Ilorin The Journey....pp.79-84.

455 Ibid. 8/9/18.

456 Onagun, R., Oral Traditional evidence, Ph.D Study Group organized by Dr. Jawondo, A.I., Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin. 9/6/19.

457 Interview with Saliu Muhammed, Occupation: teaching, Age: 40. Ile Balogun Gambari, Ilorin, 22/2/19.

458 Bokani is a Nupe language meaning people of Kano.

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AbdulMumeen and Aminullahi traced their ancestors to Kano. According to an oral source, Kano was not the ancestral home of AbdulMumeen and Aminullahi's fore father, but Egypt, their foremost ancestors were among the exodus that left Egypt from time immemorial.⁴⁵⁹ In view of this, it is inferred that AbdulMumeen and Aminullahi got acculturated and detribalized in Nupeland, just as their foremost ancestors in Kano, and their primogenitors in Kano and Bokani. AbdulMumeen and Aminullahi spoke Hausa and Nupe fluently. Moreover, before their arrival, some migrants from Kano had already established a settlement known as Bokani. Economic and religious factors were among the reasons for their movement to Ilorin. On their way to Ilorin, they sojourned at Lima presently located at Moro L.G.A of Kwara State. Their descendants still own land estate in Lima till date. Upon their inward migration to Ilorin, it was Shehu AbdulMumeen who reached Ilorin and subsequently established. He met Ibrahim Bako (Serkin Gambari), who apportioned him a piece of land.

Bako of Ilorin

Bako was a prince in Zamfara. He arrived in Ilorin with his entourage. On his way to Ilorin, he brought his royal regalia which included *Kakaki* and *Tambari*.⁴⁶⁰ The **Kakaki** (royal trumpet) and the **tambari** (royal drum) which he alone possessed in Ilorin gave him a distinctive and enviable mark of royalty, especially during festive outings.⁴⁶¹ Before the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate Government, specifically, Jum'at and I'd prayers were embodiments of socio-cultural engagements that tie the people. They were observed in Gambari quarters under the auspices of Bako, who usually received ceremonial regards from people and other dignitaries before they returned to their various homes/destinations. The activities continued till the initial commission of the Baloguns' offices. Ibrahim Bako was a devoted Muslim. He demonstrated his faith by building the first Mosque (which is now located at Ile Loke) in Gambari quarters. Imam Gobri was the first Imam of the Mosque. Mallam Alimi was a close associate of Ibrahim Bako and was honoured by the entire congregation of the Mosque. He was unanimously accepted as the *Naib Imam* (deputy Imam) by the congregation.⁴⁶² Tradition holds that Bako's reign in Ilorin predated Alimi's, but unlike Afonja and AbdulSalam of the Alimi dynasty, Bako did not organize a basic structure of administration, although he was a successful popular figure among the masses and other three leaders, Olufadi and Solagberu. Around the reigning epoch of Bako, visitors and strangers were highly welcome in

459 Interview with Ahmad Ishola, Occupation: retired Judge; Age:71, Ile Imam Gambari, Gambari, Ilorin, 20/12/18.

460 Interview with Yahya Seriki, Serikin Gambari of Ilorin, Occupation: trading; Age: 75. Ile Seriki Gambari, Ilorin. 31/12/18.

461 Jimoh, (1994:354-5) *Ilorin the journey*....

462 Yahya Seriki, Serikin Gambari of Ilorin, Occupation: trading; Age: 75. Ile Seriki Gambari, Ilorin. 31/12/18.

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Gambari quarters in view that Ilorin shall develop from an ordinary settlement to a city. This factor was a crucial one among those that enabled Bako to accommodate and host several ethnics that chose to settle at the quarters. The predominant quality of Bako sufficed through the ovate changing of his tittle "from Serkin Hausa to Serkin Gambari before the arrival of Shehu Alimi."⁴⁶³ Of course, he became Serkin Gambari when the population of his quarters prevailed as a multi-ethnic one, instead of the single (Hausa) ethnicity of which it was formally assumed.

During his time, Solagberu was combining political and spiritual leadership role in Oke-Suna. The arrival of Afonja in Idi-Ape area was a remarkable turning point because unlike his father (Pasin), grandfather (Alugbin), and his great-grandfather (Laderin), Afonja intended to secede (Ilorin) completely from Oyo, and also to reform the town as a sovereign. On this basis, he institutionalized political and spiritual offices which included Alapinni, Isokun, Aare Ago, Otun Aare Ago, and Ikolaba all of which were later modified and transformed to Magaji Alapini, Magaji Isokun, Magaji Agbadamu, Magaji Alaase and Magaji Ikolaba respectively under the Fulani hegemony.⁴⁶⁴ It is however understood that Afonja was able to secure a union of political organization among the descendants of Emila, Ojo-Iseekuse and Baruba and this achievement made the quarters to become a confederate one.

It is pertinent to recognise Serkin Gambari, Solagberu and Olufadi as devoted Muslims who believed in the compulsion of *Jumm'at Solat* (Friday Prayers), which spiritually, politically and socially connect Muslims irrespective of their differences. Solagberu might have had his separate Jumm'at prayers at his quarters if he and his followers considered Gambari too far. Ditto, no source is yet available that Solagberu attended Gambari Jumm'at prayers. Conversely, Gambari quarters is so closed to Olufadi's domain that his companions might have attended Serkin Gambari Jumm'at mosque.

Without much ado, on his arrival at Ilorin Shehu AbdulMumeen was recognised by Serkin Gambari as the grand patron of the faithful Muslims of the quarters, and was given an honorarium of all the areas of land that he covered till date. Hence, he was granted right to pilot the affairs of the community through public sermon in ordinary days, and *Tafsir* (translation of the exegeses of the Holy Quran) in Ramadan period. These activities took place in a place where Imam Gambari mosque is located to the present. Shehu AbdulMumeen was also authorized to lead *I'd* prayers, *Jumm'at* and five canonical daily prayers in some cases. The sermon, *Tafsir* and daily prayers were conversed to people in Arabic, Hausa and Nupe languages, in fact, up till fourth generation of Shehu AbdulMumeen, no one among Imam Gambari understood Yoruba language.⁴⁶⁵ At the time of his death the congregation of Gambari community postulated for an official Imam and it was conferred on

463 Jimoh, (1994: 364) *Ilorin the journey...*

464 Olumoh A.L., (2015: 63) *Managing Ethno-Political Relations in Nigeria: The Ilorin Example (1823-2003)*, University of Lagos Press and Book Shop Ltd, Akoka, Yaba- Lagos, Nigeria,

465 Interview with Ahmad Ishola, Occupation: retired Judge; Age:71, Ile Imam Gambari, Gambari, Ilorin. 20/12/18.

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AbdulBaaqi, (his first son) on the authority of Oba Shitta in 1842. At this time too, it should be noted that Ali Maiyaki's family was warrior and associate of Serkin Gambari. Although oral interview confirms that Bako, AbdulMumeen and Maiyaki family of Gambari antedated Shehu Alimi, yet they were compatriots because Alimi and AbdulMumeen used to meet at Bako mosque for mutual discussion.⁴⁶⁶ Then, the Bako mosque was known as *Ratibi* one because it was meant for the observation of the five canonical prayers alone, while the led AbdulMumeen's mosque was for the five canonical prayers, *Jumm'at* and *I'd* prayers.

Shehu Alimi was recognised as a connection between the leaders of ancient Ilorin. For instance, he arrived at Oke-Suna to be a compatriot of Solagberu. On his arrival Afonja parley alliance with him against Ojo Agunbambaru. He was a kin man of Olufadi, and a bosom of Shehu AbdulMumeen of Bokani, alias Dogo.

Shehu AbdulMumeen was an Islamic scholar, a tutor, a teacher and a spiritual war assistant. It is important to mention that Shehu AbdulMumeen's tutorial was confined to the Hausa/Fulani, and Nupe speaking people. Solagberu's status was equally recognised at Gambari quarters because "on occasions he touched people's heart because he switched to Kanuri, Hausa, Tuarege and Yoruba in his public address",⁴⁶⁷

It is now observed that in pre-Ilorin Emirate government, Bako was the political head of Gambari in association with the Maiyaki family, while Shehu AbdulMumeen was the spiritual head. Solagberu was a spiritual and political head of Oke-Suna, while Afonja was a spiritual and political head in Ojo-Isekuse-Eyila-Baruba's quarters. Olufadi was an economic leader while Shehu Alimi was a roaming educationalist, a "spiritualist and relations connector". None of Ilorin pre-Alimi's leaders engaged in imperial expansion but they engaged in internal expansion. For instance, Bako installed one of his sons, Gadanga to Akalambi.⁴⁶⁸ He also placed Danmerogo at Isale-Koko. He furthered extended to Iponrin now in Ilorin East L.G.A. of Kwara State.

Just immediately after the victory of Ilorin over Ojo Agunbambaru's invasion, rulers of each settlement were selected by their subjects to be the *Oba* (King) of Ilorin. It should be reiterated that each unit supplied regiments against Ojo Agunbambaru. Afonja was selected to be the *Oba* among his subjects; Solagberu among his own; Bako among the Gambaris; and Alimi among the Fulani, Yoruba, Hausa and Nupe. One of the conspicuous outweighed factors that enhanced the fame of Alimi among the masses was that he had ample exposure to Yorubaland as a result of his tour before returning to Ilorin. Perhaps, he spoke Yoruba language in addition to Fulfudi, Hausa and Nupe. He was also acquainted with Yoruba culture when compare with

466 Bako mosque is located at Ile Loke, Gambari quarters, Ilorin, till date.

467 Interview with Alhaji AbdulSalam Oba Adisa Solagberu...4/9/18.

468 Interview with Ahmad Ishola, Occupation: retired Judge; Age:71, Ile Imam Gambari, Gambari, Ilorin. 20/12/18. Gadanga was the great grandfather of the immediate passed Serkin Gambari.

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Bako, Olufadi and AbdulMumeen. Olufadi's chance of becoming Oba was narrowed because he had already been overshadowed technically by the growth of Alimi's companions. In addition, he was more a pragmatic economist than a political leader. According to the Judge, Ahmed Ishola Gambari, AbdulMumeen did not understand another language apart from Hausa and Nupe. He was a spiritual leader just like Alimi. By the position of his faith and status Alimi rejected the stool. Moreover, it is obvious that Bako had established a proto/mini administration in Gambari, yet he traversed Iponrin and Ilorin in those days. In addition, no record yet shows that he had bosom relations with Solgberu and Alimi nor did he speak Yoruba in addition to Nupe and Hausa languages. For this reason, Alimi and Solagberu's chances of becoming *Oba* were brighter. Being famous among the spiritual leaders, Alimi was accepted to become the *Oba* but he accepted the position on the ground that his son, AbdulSalam would be appointed. AbdulSalam was popular among both scholars and warriors because he combined both offices, and off course he was accepted and subsequently he became the Emir of Ilorin and the Emirate government commenced in 1823.

Upon his enthronement, AbdulSalam combined the position of spiritual leader, political head and warrior. He was the Imam of the ancient Ilorin mosque at Idi-Ape.⁴⁶⁹ He also delivered sermons and preached until he died in 1842. However, when Shitta became the Emir, unlike AbdulSalam he could not combine the offices, therefore he decided to elect a chief Imam instead. He elected AbdulBaaqi of the Imam Gambari family as the first Imam of the Emirate. Consequently, Imam AbdulBaaqi selected a member of the Imam Gambari's family to deputize him in Gambari mosque, where he was responsible to the post of Ilorin Emirate Imam.

It should be remembered that Gambari had served as Ilorin central market right from the time of Alugbin, Afonja's father. The market became prominent in the Oba Shitta period because the management of the market was decentralised such that it was managed under an alliance of the descendants of Bako, Shehu AbdulMumeen and Dose's associates. In addition, as one of the spiritual approaches to the Emirate war of expansion, Imam Gambari's house was among several spiritual homes that Ilorin war leaders supposed to pass night before finally embarking on expeditions. Therefore, whenever warriors returned to the town with captives they shared Imam Gambari's family.

However, it should be understood that based on the merit within Imam Gambari's family, the position of Imam Gambari has been restricted to the descendants of Shehu AbdulMumeen.

Conclusion

This paper found out that the ethnic groups of Ilorin pre-Alimi era were economically, politically and socio-culturally bound together. Each group was

469 Ibid 20/12/18.

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headed by a leader. Under a specific ruler, members of each group consisted of different ethnicity. The initial cordial relations among the Ilorin ethnic groups in the pre-Alimi era were informed by a change to the establishment of the Ilorin Emirate. The descendants of the foremost leaders/settlers of Ilorin are members of the Ilorin Emirate to date. The contemporary administrative structure of Ilorin is laid on the initial module Vivendi of the early settlers. The said administrative structure of the Ilorin Emirate is rooted in the Ilorin indigenous/native system and remains a prerequisite for the growth and development of the Emirate. Therefore, the early organisation/co-existence of the Emirate people has never been abrogated but remains in motion through several modifications.