

## Cultural Interplay: A Review of the Interconnectivity between Arabo-Islamic and African Cultures in the Northern and Southwestern Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

It is an established fact that contacts between the Arabs and the people of Islamised areas of Nigeria facilitated the inevitable cultural interconnectivity. These contacts have, to a large extent, influenced the totality of lives of the people of locales of this study in Nigeria. Focus of this paper is purposively restricted to the Northern and South-western Nigeria because instances of the interplay could significantly be felt there. South-south and South-eastern Nigeria are excluded from this study because of the absence of direct link of the Arabs with the inhabitants of these areas. Islam gained direct access to the areas in the 19th century when some Muslim Hausas came to settle there. The paper traces the probable channels of contact between the Arabs and Yoruba people to consanguinity as postulated by some historians, the trans-Saharan trade route from Egypt to Sudan across the Saharan Desert and Lake Chad, Bornu, Hausa and Nupe lands of Nigeria which facilitated the close contact of Nigerians with the Arabs as well as Islamic proselytization. The possibility of genetic consanguinity or affinity between the Hausa/Fulani people and the Arabs could not be established. Trade links and Islamic proselytization are viewed as channels of contact amongst these people. The paper employs historical method which attempts to reconstruct the significant events of the past through analysis, synthesis and verification, in examining the socio-religious lives of the Nigerian people within the locales of the study, with a view to considering the extent of interconnectivity between the African and Arabo-Islamic cultures. Having discovered the extent of intercourse between the two, it discusses the identified areas of conflicts and accommodation and the harmonization of the two sides for healthy interplay between the cultures. The paper discovers that cultural interconnectivity is inevitable and this should serve a stimulant for peaceful co-existence which is highly desirous in Nigeria.

### Introduction

While attempting to give a definition of culture, Attah (2012:167) quotes Okwoli (1973), describing culture as a form or type of civilization of a race or nation

and the customs associated within a society. The word 'culture' describes how people dress, worship, eat, sleep, bath, conduct meetings, work, marry and perform other activities. It is a known fact that Arabo-Islamic culture was the first foreign

civilization that entered the continent of Africa and particularly West Africa in about the 11th century. This culture made impact on the lives of the people where it reached. 'African culture' in the context of this paper refers to the culture of the areas where Islam is substantially practiced in Nigeria. The term is appropriately selected because the locales, the Northern and South-Western Nigeria, are domiciled in the geographical entity known as Africa. In essence, it could be an uphill task taking the entire Africa into account in a paper of this nature. By implication, our focus will strictly be restricted to purposively selected instances and illustrations obtainable within the Northern and South-Western Nigeria.

Relying on Uba (1988:145-159) while narrating the practice of Islam amongst the people of the Southern Nigeria excluded from this study, Adebayo (2013:191-210) states that there is no direct link of the Arabs with the Ibos of Nigeria. Islam as a religion did not gain direct access to the land until in the 19th century when some Hausas who had embraced the religion came to settle down there. Few Ibos accepted the religion prior the 1967 civil war in Nigeria. The civil war however marked a serious setback on the spread of Islam which started at the eve of colonial masters' exit in Nigeria in Iboland. He observes further that as a result of the war, many Ibo Muslims ran away from their hometowns and villages, while many of them were said to have changed their Muslim names to Christians. Thousands of Hausa, Fulani, Nupe and Yoruba Muslims who had been living in Iboland for many years were forced to leave the land for their hometowns because of the propaganda that the civil war was religiously motivated. Although the impact of Arab civilization cannot be glaringly identified in the eastern part of Nigeria, Adebayo (2013) notes that the few Muslims there are making efforts at adjusting their life style to comply with the teaching of Islam

### **Theories of Origin: Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba People**

Adebayo (2013:191-210) observes that there are myths and mysteries surrounding the origin of the Hausa and Yoruba in relation to the Arabs. The same observation could be applied to the Fulani. The Fulani, a people of obscure origins, expanded eastward from Futa Toro in Lower Senegal in the 14th century. By the 16th century they had established themselves at Macina (upstream from the Niger Bend) and were proceeding eastward into Hausaland. Some settled in the 19th century at Adamawa (in the northern Cameroons). Many of the Fulani continued to pursue a pastoral life; some, however, particularly in Hausaland, gave up their nomadic pursuits, settled into existing urban

communities, and were converted to Islām (Fulani Empire: *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2012)).

According to *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2012), the Hausa people are found chiefly in northwestern Nigeria and adjacent southern Niger. They constitute the largest ethnic group in the area, which also contains another large group, the Fulani, perhaps one-half of whom are settled among the Hausa as a ruling class, having adopted the Hausa language and culture. The language belongs to the Chadic group of the Afro-Asiatic (formerly Hamito-Semitic) family and is infused with many Arabic words as a result of Islamic influence, which spread during the latter part of the 14th century from the kingdom of Mali, profoundly influencing Hausa belief and customs. A small minority of Hausa, known as Maguzawa, or Bunjawa, remained pagan.

Locating the specific origin of the Yoruba people has remained a contentious issue, which continually engages the attention of historians. Acute dearth of early written records about the origin of this race paved way for controversial speculations and scholarly theories. Such has also been observed by Ogunbado, (2013:2). The general trend of these theories, most of them based on Yoruba oral traditions is that of a possible origin in the East implying that there was a sort of consanguineous relationship between the Arabs at one point in history, and the Yoruba (Aderibigbe, 1981:192; Abubakre, 1983:5). Furthermore, (Aderibigbe, 1981:192) observes that sequel to the similarities between Yoruba and ancient Egyptian culture - religious observances, works of art, burial and other customs, some scholars speak of a possible migration of the ancestors of the race from the Upper Nile.

Some sources claim that the Yoruba descended from Canaan in the Middle East after their expulsion from Makkah (Mecca) by one Ya'rub b. Qahtān at an unknown date in the remote past. They first turned to Egypt, later to Ethiopia until they finally ended up in their present abode (Abdul Rahmon, 1989:13). In support of this view, Al-Iluri claims that the Yoruba were from the Arabs, from the offshoots of Ya'rab ibn Qahtan who was the founder of the earliest Arab kingdom or another Ya'rab or from the offspring of the first Ya'rab. Yoruba was therefore coined from the word Ya'rab (Abubakre, 2004:287)

Another tradition suggests that the Yoruba descended from Nimrod, a king of Makkah shortly after the advent of Islam. The said Nimrod had a prince called Oduduwa who indulged in, and encouraged idol worship. A clash reportedly ensued between Oduduwa supporters and the Muslims of Makkah, which claimed the life of Nimrod; hence Oduduwa and his supporters were expelled from Makkah. They fled via Maghrib (Morocco) and they finally reached Ile-Ife after a journey of about ninety days (Abdul Rahmon, 1989:13).

The two traditions point to the possibility of genetic consanguinity or affinity between the Yoruba people and Arabs, by establishing the migration pattern of the Yoruba people from the Middle East. We must remark that these traditions are only popular here as we are yet to discover authentic sources in Arab or Islamic history to support the exodus of such magnitude to this part of the world. In addition, the reasons for the migration remain contestable. We can still consider the traditions not only for their relevance to the present study but also for the absence of reliable alternatives, as far as we know for now.

According to Adebayo (2013:191-210), apart from the point of departure of the Hausa and the Yoruba, the natives equally had opportunities of having close contacts with the Arabs. Generally speaking, the Arabs had reached the continent of Africa ever before the flight of Prophet Muhammad to Madinah. The early Muslims sought asylum in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) from the strong opposition of the Makkans against the new religion embraced by them (Haykal, 1982:97). Also the trans-Saharan trade route from Egypt to Sudan across the Saharan Desert and Lake Chad, Bornu, Hausa and Nupe lands of Nigeria equally facilitated the close contact of Nigerians with the Arabs (Balogun, 1998:11-13). Adebayo (2010:60-77) claims further that it was through this that Islam as a religion had easy penetration into Nigeria. The penetration of Islam and its wide spread like burning fire in the forest during harmattan in Nigeria made the influence of Arab civilization felt much in the geographical zone, hence Arab civilization becomes a synonym of Islamic civilization. In the same token, the Nigerian cultural values equally have certain indelible influence on civilization brought by the Arabs.

### **Arabo-Islamic and African Cultures: Aspects of Compromise and Conflict**

Ever before the contact of Nigerians with the Arabs and their consequent acceptance of Islam, the people had their own cultural and religious values. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979:11-26) observe that the people strongly believed in the existence of a Supreme Being under different names. Dopamu (1987) notes further that:

Allah is worshipped through various forms in African religion and he is given various names among various tribes and localities. He is Olodumare of the Yoruba, the Osanobwa of the Benin, the Oghene of the Urhobo, the Chukwu of the Igbo, the Nyame of Akan, the Unkulunkulu of the Zulu, the Nana Buluku of the Ewe, the Ngewo of the Mende, the Murungu of Kikuyu, the Katonda of Baganda,

the Akongo of the Ngombe and God known to African peoples in general(42)

This Supreme Being is so mighty that He could not be approached by ordinary men except through the divinities who could be categorised into primordial and deified divinities. Some of these cultural and religious values were seriously attacked by the Muslim preachers who vehemently preached against them by labelling them as polytheism, fetishism, idolatry, heathenism, animism and paganism (Adebayo, 2019:1)

Prior to the popular Jihād declared by 'Uthmān b. Fūdī (1754-1817) in 1804, there was prevalence of un-Islamic practices in Hausaland. According to Doi(1984:35), 'Uthmān's preaching of reforms in the practice of Islam and doing away with syncretism and innovation (*Bid'ah*) was the direct influence of his teacher Jibril who was already preaching for reform and Jihād against syncretism as a result of which the Hausa Sultans had turned against him. In fact, he gave 'Uthmān a flag of victory, thus inspiring him to start and continue the Jihād.

Doi (1984:38) notes further that amongst the '*Ulamā*' or the learned men who were expected to wage war against syncretism, there were those whom the reformers stigmatized under the name '*Ulamā*'*al-sū*', the bad '*Ulamā*' who were the compromisers or equivocators. They were the men of learning who betrayed their religion and the *Sharī'ah*, stilled their consciences, and supported the ruling classes in their transgressions of the Islamic law, thereby providing them with a mantle of false respectability. These reason served as catalysts for 'Uthmān's preaching of reforms in the practice of Islam which was eventually tagged a Jihād.

African traditional religion was firmly rooted among the Yoruba people prior to the advent of Islam but on its emergence, there occurred mass conversion of the traditionalists to Islam. According to Yusuf (2018:334), Muslims in the southern parts of Nigeria were deeply involved in many practices that contravene the teachings of Islam, arising from their customs and cultures. Adebayo (2013:193) claims that the gradual acceptance Islam by the Yoruba consequent upon the activities of Muslim clerics paved way for radical change in the religious life of the people. Polytheism which prevailed initially was replaced with monotheism which is the central theme of Islamic teaching. Traditional rituals to natural objects were regarded as act of *Shirk* (polytheism) which is the most heinous sin in Islam. According to Folorunsho (1998:161) this mass conversion weakened the position of African religion among the people. Traditionalists were against this development and this led to various forms of confrontations and assaults, but the growth of Islam remained astonishing. According to Adeleke (2005), just like in Yorubaland, the practice of Islam in

Hausaland could be said to have been incorporated into the existing traditional practices, social institutions and existing culture of the people. The absorption of Islam into the traditional ethos is demonstrated by the *Kano Dirki*, where a Qur'an was turned into a state totem to which homages were paid.

Islam is monotheistic and it demands uncompromising faith in Allah and loyalty in its Prophet. The Islamic belief in uncompromising monotheism (Tawhīd) is directly opposed to belief in any of the Yoruba deities (Doi, 1984:253). Islam was then seen as an intruder which came to undermine the peoples' tradition. This suspicion is natural and later justified because the insistence of Islam is on the uniqueness of Allah as Single Omnipotent Creator. Islam rigorously excludes all conflicting sources of power which could in any way impair the absolute dominion of Allah (Folorunsho, 1998:161). The attitude of Islam to non-Islamic culture, according to Opeloye (2011:2) is that of accommodation and rejection. Islam accommodates a local culture if the culture is compatible with the Islamic tenets. It rejects the indigenous culture if it undermines the belief system of Islam.

For Islam to be widely accepted in Nigeria, Adebayo (2010: 60-77) affirms that it had to accommodate some traditional virtues which are equally cherished by Islam. The traditional teachings on brotherhood, generosity, sexual discipline, honesty, orderliness, kindness and mutual love, were all accommodated by Islam. While some of these values were useful tools for the propagation of Islam in Nigeria, some of them were eventually modified by it. The prevailing practice of polygamy in the traditional Nigerian system was modified by restricting it only to four at a time and with the condition of maintaining justice among the wives. *'Idul-Fitr*, *'Idul -Kabir*, *Maulud Nabiyy* and *Hijrah* celebration came to replace traditional festivals. While applauding this principle of accommodating useful customs that are not inimical to Islamic teachings, being one of the Islamization strategies of the early Muslims, Faruqi (1992) concludes:

The wisdom of the early Muslims in recognizing and accommodating useful customs from the surrounding civilizations is evident. It is also in accord with a prophetic hadith: "Wisdom is the lost property of the faithful who deserve it most wherever it may be found," a saying that encouraged Muslim scholars to accept useful knowledge and the other good things of life which were consistent with the Shari'ah (498).

### **Arabization/ Islamization of African Cultures**

Apart from the much argued migration theory, another factor for the incursion of the Arabs to

Yorubaland, which could be given consideration, is the advent of Islam which facilitated the visitation of Arabs to the region between the 15th and 16th centuries. Ogunbiyi (1989) submits that:

The Yoruba had their earliest contact with Islam in about the 15th century although active Islamization did not seem to have taken place until the 18th century...itinerant Arab Muslim preachers are known to have paid occasional individual visits to the Yoruba country from the 15th century onwards (93).

The contact of the Arabs, mostly traders and preachers with the people of Nigeria marked a new era in the religious lives of the Nigerians. Abubakre (2004) informs us about the migration of the Arabs from Damascus, not only to Yorubaland but even across Hausaland. He observes that 'there were Arabic scholars and a mosque in Oyo-Ile around 1550'. According to him,

Arabs were known to have migrated from Damascus during the time of Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz about 100AH to Kanem-Borno...all of them were teachers of Arabic texts to their hosts....they moved about with their knowledge through Niani, Jenne, Timbuktu, Kawkaw (Gao) to Katsina, Kano, Kanem-Borno and Yorubaland especially at its old capital Oyo-Ile where there were Arabic scholars and a mosque around 957 A.H/1550C.E (15).

Meanwhile, some trade related terms are observed in the Arabic borrowings in the Nigerian indigenous languages. This probably led Abdul (1976) to identify trade connection as another channel of the interplay. He stresses that:

There may have been a cross-culture of the two communities that is, that Arabs and the Yoruba which may have occurred as a result of trade contact ... There have been stories about and reports of Yoruba-speaking settlements along the trade routes from Bornu to Khartoum in the Sudan ... The early trade across the Sahara connects North-African countries with Northern Nigerian (p.37).

### **Some Specific Illustrations of the Interplay**

#### **System of Divination**

Divination, according to Opeloye (2011:12), is "the art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of the omens or by the aid of supernatural power." Adebayo (2019:4) discusses the practice of divination by Nigerians as follows:

One common practice among Nigerians is consultation of divinities before embarking on anything. They consult before embarking on anything even before admitting any stranger into

their premises so as not to regret taking an action. When a child is born into a family, adequate consultation is made to know what the future has in stock for him. It has to be noted that the spirit of consultation had assisted Nigerians particularly some towns in Yorubaland to accommodate Muslims in their midst and this had assisted the spread of Islam in such towns

According to him (Adebayo, 2019:4), a diviner is believed to have the power of interacting with the spiritual world for the purpose of receiving information about the clients who come to know what the future has in stock for them. He is therefore consulted to discover the cause of sickness, problem or death of somebody; clear the air on who to marry, when to travel or when to plant. Speaking in the same vein, Opeloye (2011:11) confirms the above assertion while giving insight into what serves as catalysts for engagement in divination by the Nigerians, stating further that a diviner is assumed to be an individual who possesses the power to receive information from the spirit world for the benefit of his clients.

Abubakre (2002:27) draws our attention to an area that is worth looking into in the interplay of the cultures is Yoruba divination, the patronage of Ifa oracles. According to him,

It is believed in some quarters that the method of Ifa divination and its worship were introduced by a blind man Setilu by name, who was famous for his powers of foretelling the future. It is of interest to note that Setilu sounds like a Yorubanised form of the Arabic Satih, who was one of the pre-Islamic Arab diviners (Abubakre, 2004:210).

As a counterpart of Ifa, the Yoruba Muslims literate in Arabic learnt the Arab method of geomancy, *hati* from the Arabic *Khattu'raml* (sand cutting), which has a great vogue in North Africa, West Africa, and the Sudan. The initial patronage of Ifa oracles by the Yoruba for consultation before embarking on any vital endeavour is undertaken was replaced with consultation of *Mallams* for the same purpose. There were instances where the kings of some towns in Yorubaland had to invite Muslim clerics to their towns to render spiritual assistance on one problem or another for them (Adebayo 2010:60-77)

A comparison of Ifa oracle with the method adopted by Muslim clerics was made by Abubakre (1993) when he observed that:

It is curious to find that Arab system of geomancy agrees in-to-to 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 *iyereosun*, 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 (178).

This system of divination is not peculiar to the Yoruba people. Doi (1984: 248-253) discusses extensively the various manifestations of this practice in the northern Nigeria. Abdul Rahmon (2002:25) submits that the spread of Islam and Arabic scholarship in Yorubaland was occasioned by several agencies actively at work in the early 19th century. Of these agencies the factor of 'predestined Muslims' has been extra-ordinary. Unlike the other factors which were prompted by the itinerant scholars and traders, this factor could be regarded as the contribution of Ifa oracle to the spread of Islam in Yorubaland. Gbadamosi (1978: 68) asserts that some parents in line with Yoruba custom sought Ifa diviners to peep into the new-baby's future; a practice known as *Wiwo akosejaye Omo*. Through this practice some children were often revealed to have been 'predestined Muslims'. Ironically, such children were in the forefront of Islamic proselytization and the growth of Arabic scholarship. The particular verse of *Odu Ifa* is known as *Otura meji (Odu Imale)*. Some notable 'predestined Muslims' discovered by Gbadamosi (1978: 68) were Muhammad Lamuye the Oluwo of Iwo; Abibu Lagunju, the Timi of Ede and Aliyu Oyewole, the Akinrun of Ikirun.

Commenting on the royal patronage, which boosted Islamic proselytization in Yorubaland and the growth of Arabic scholarship during the reign of these 'predestined Muslims', Gbadamosi(1978) writes:

...Timi Abibu Lagunju of Ede and Oba Aliyu Oyewole of Ikirun were both strong supporters of Islam in their respective areas. Indeed Oba Oyewole probably went further than any of the Yoruba Muslim Obas, so far that he was popularly eulogized in his *oriki* (praise-name) as a friend of Muslims and a helper of Muslims (68)

#### ***Wiwo Tira Odun (Annual Peeping into the Book).***

Abdul-Rahmon (2012:12) calls our attention to the cordial relationship between the '*Ulamā*' and some rulers in Yorubaland which accompanied the development of Islam and formalized certain practices, hitherto unknown in Yoruba royal tradition. The attempt by the '*Ulamā*' to discourage Muslim kings from patronizing Ifa Oracle made them bring in its place what they called *Wiwo Tira Odun* (annual peeping into the Book). The practice started in Ibadan probably with Aare Latosa, the first Muslim to ascend the Ibadan throne (1871-1885). It is a practice whereby the '*Ulamā*' deployed astrological calculation to project future occurrences usually

done on the 10th day of Muharram (1st Muslim lunar month). The Qur'ān would also be recited at the end of which the king would donate generously to the 'Ulamā' and a feast would be prepared for the generality of the people.

What is of interest, as Abdul-Rahmon (1990: 66) finds out, is the speed at which the practice of *Wiwo Tira Odun* became a general norm in Yoruba palaces. Apparently it was a by-product of the itinerant culture of traditional 'Ulamā' where issues of doctrine and law were transmitted along the route from the North to the coast of Lagos.

### Marriage

Using marriage to illustrate the culture of the Igala people of the Northern Nigeria before the advent of Islam, there were no written rules governing marriage, however, there were unwritten customary practices. It was the advent of Islam later eroded these practices (Attah, 2012: 168). This situation is applicable to the other areas covered by this study. It needs to be mentioned that some traditional practices in marriage are accommodated by Islam with some modifications. Parental consent, thorough investigation of the family background of the suitor or the wife to be, and virginity up to the day of marriage are cherished in Islam, which, as well frowns at imposition of the suitor on the daughter or vice-versa and emphasizes mutual consent between partners. Marrying of limitless number of wives is modified by Islamic culture which restricts it to a maximum of four at a time and with the condition that justice be maintained among them. (Adebayo, 2013)

### Festivals

While discussing the effects of Islam on some traditional festivals in Igalaland, a scenario that is applicable to other Islamised area in Nigeria, (Attah, 2012: 168) notes that most of the festivals have lost their relevance and many gone to extinction. Many festivals no longer attract participants due to the availability of Islamic and Christian festivals. Some of the people now see traditional religious festivals as archaic since the social pleasure usually derived from them have now been replaced by Islamic and Christianity festivities.

### Linguistic Interference

An important aspect of the interplay worthy of note is the presence of Arabic lexical items in Nigerian indigenous languages, especially Hausa and Yoruba. Hunwick (1964) establishes the presence of Arabic

borrowings in Nigerian languages with the following assertion:

Yoruba and Twi have absorbed words originally of Arabic origin, the borrowings are usually terms of trade and commerce, military terms, economic and political terms and words connected with reading and writing, all of which readily illustrate the roles which Muslims have played in different areas in West Africa. (p.33)

Malik (1986:33) agrees with the submission of Hunwick when he points to the magnitude of enrichment of some indigenous African languages by Arabic. He observes that Arabic has enriched some indigenous African languages, including Yoruba with hundreds of religious, political and commercial words and expressions, which are commonly, used in Yoruba classical poetry as well as in Yoruba radio and television programmes. According to him (Malik 1990:429) 'the range of Arabic loan words in Yoruba reveals the impact which this language has made on the linguistic and cultural life of the Yoruba people'.

These domesticated borrowings, occur so frequently in the daily speech and conversation of the Nigerians, especially in the locales where they have penetrated the indigenous Nigerian languages that none but the language specialists especially the ones with sound background in Arabic are aware of their being words of non-native stock. It is apposite to cite few of such loan words as contained in the following table:

Arabic Borrowings in Yoruba	Arabic Source (Transliteration)	Meaning(s) in English
<i>adua / adura</i>	' <i>ad-du'ā'</i>	prayer, supplication
<i>alaafia</i>	' <i>al-'āfiyah</i>	good health, peace
<i>alikiyamo</i>	' <i>al-qiyāmah</i>	resurrection, hereafter
<i>alujanna</i>	' <i>al-jannah</i>	paradise
<i>alubarika</i>	' <i>al-barakah</i>	blessing, benediction
<i>alukawani</i>	' <i>al-qawānīn</i>	truthfulness, established principles
<i>alufansa</i>	' <i>al-fahshā'</i>	abomination, atrocity
<i>aniyan</i>	' <i>an-niyah</i>	intention
<i>arisiki</i>	' <i>ar-rizq</i>	subsistence, provision
<i>bilisi</i>	' <i>iblis</i>	Satan, devil
<i>fitina</i>	<i>fitnah</i>	trial, sedition, trouble
<i>haramu</i>	<i>harām</i>	forbidden, taboo
<i>kadara</i>	<i>qadar</i>	fate, predestination
<i>kalamu</i>	<i>qalam</i>	pen
<i>musiba</i>	<i>musibah</i>	calamity, misfortune
<i>riba</i>	<i>ribā</i>	usury
<i>saa</i>	<i>sā'ah</i>	period, time, age, hour
<i>suna</i>	<i>sunnah</i>	mores, orthodox
<i>sina</i>	<i>zinā</i>	adultery, fornication
<i>wasu/waasi</i>	<i>wa'z</i>	sermon, preaching
<i>wakati</i>	<i>waqt</i>	time, hour

### **Africanization of Arabo-Islamic Culture**

Abubakre (2002:28-29) observes some areas where Yoruba language and culture have influenced Arabic, including production of Yoruba proverbs in Arabic and narration of Yoruba stories in Arabic as a guide for preachers of Islam. The language remains Arabic while the setting, the characterization, plot device and narrative techniques are essentially original to Yoruba. He cites the work by Professor I.A. Ogunbiyi on Yoruba animal stories narrated in Arabic as an example. Abubakre (2004:316) notes further that Ogunbiyi's work reveals its uniqueness in rule-forming creativity. He does not only utilize the opportunities afforded him by modern standard Arabic, but also begins to cultivate a virgin ground whereby African modes of expression and rhetorical tropes can be metamorphosed into modern standard Arabic

### **Yoruba Mythology**

In addition to the above, Doi (1984:264-278) calls our attention to some other cases of religious syncretism in Yorubaland. This includes Muhammad Jimoh, the Mahdi of Ijebu-Ode who mixed African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam together. There is also the case of Bilqis Sungbo of Ijebu who was identified as the Queen of Sheba and whose tomb has become a centre of tourist attraction where people flocked for spiritual blessings and healing. Abubakre (2020:68) observes that stories, motifs and sayings derived from the Qur'ān and from other Arabic and Islamic sources can be found in historical traditions and legends as well as in popular music. According to him (Abubakre,2004:228-230), many of the Yoruba myths contain similarities with many scripture stories. He cites some instances of similarities between the scriptural accounts and the Yoruba versions of the backgrounds to these myths. Specifically, he states the story of the creation of the world attributed to Obatala and Oduduwa, the great flood (of Prophet Noah era) where Orunmila was presented as a principal character instead of Prophet Noah.

### **Kināyah (Metonymy)**

Abdul (1976:37) observes 'the similarity in the manners and customs between the Yoruba and the Arabs' a typical example of what he describes as *Kināyah*, a custom by which one is called by the name of one's child. An Arab is very fond of this, he places much honour and respect on it in the same way a Yoruba does. The Arabs would say *Abubakri* (Bakri's father) and *Umm Kulthum* (Kulthum's mother) in the same way the Yoruba would say *Baba Dupe* (Dupe's father) and *Mama Sola* (Sola's mum). An Arab would like to be called by his *Kināyah* in the same way a

Yoruba would; and either of them would consider it as a sort of disrespect or even an assault if one refuses to call him by his *Kināyah*. Even where a Yoruba has no child but is old enough to have one, he is called by the name of one of the children of relatives or close friends. This happens to be a custom that is common to the Arabs and the Yoruba people.

### **Nisbah (Relative adjectives)**

The relative adjective is called *Nisbah* in Arabic, which means 'relation'. Relative adjectives are derived from nouns by adding the so-called *Nisbah* suffix, which is */...iyyun/* in the masculine and */...iyyatun/* in the feminine. The *Nisbah* suffix thus makes a noun into an adjective (which often can be employed as a noun as well), expressing the meaning: 'related or pertaining to (the entity or thing denoted by the noun)'. The relative adjective often refers to geographical, national or ethnic names or names of occupations (Abu-Chacra, 2007:182)

Folorunsho (2006:125) observes *Nisbah* as another custom that is common to the Arabs and the Yoruba. Amongst the Yoruba people, *Oriki* could be seen as an adaptation of *Nisbah*, a Yoruba custom through which one's tribe; town or origin comes after his name. Arabs derive honour and pleasure from the citation of his *Nisbah* just as Yorubaman derives joy, honour and satisfaction when and if his *Oriki* is related. The same trait is also applicable to the northerners as we have abundant instances of people attached to their tribe, town or origin. The suffix- 'Al-Ilūrī attached to the name of our Shaykh, the torch bearer of Arabic scholarship in Nigeria, Shaykh Adam Abdullah is an indication of his attachment to Ilorin. Names like Aminu Kano, Garba Wushishi and Sheu Shagari could be ample examples of this phenomenon.

### **Conclusion**

We have been able to examine the interconnectivity between Arabo-Islamic and African cultures. Historical links of the Arabs with the people of Nigeria as postulated by some historians as well as the process of Islamisation of the people of the locales of this study suggest the inevitability of some similarities in the cultural value of the Arabs and that of people of the highly Islamised areas in Nigeria. It is remarkable that there are areas of conflicts as well as accommodation, respectively among the cultures of the two races involved in this study. Accommodation of the Nigerian cultural practices that are not inimical to its teachings by Islam in those areas serves as a factor for its acceptance by the Nigerians particularly the Hausa and the Yoruba. This accommodation in some cases, however, is largely

responsible for observable syncretism among the adherents of the religion. It is our belief that the spirit of tolerance and accommodation that facilitated peaceful intercourse between the various cultures discussed above could be effectively explored in our desire to have peace and stability in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

1. The paper discovers that cultural interconnectivity is inevitable and this should serve a stimulant for peaceful co-existence which is highly desirable presently in Nigeria, amongst the Nigerians of varying cultural, linguistic, social and religious backgrounds
2. The accommodation by Islam of non-Islamic local cultures and traditional values that were compatible with its tenets, like brotherhood, generosity, sexual discipline, honesty, orderliness, kindness and mutual love, paved way for peaceful emergence and spread of Islam in Yorubaland. The same approach could still be adopted within the locales of this study, to curb religious crises and enhance national integration

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