Quranic Education in Postcolonial Nigeria- The Southern Nigerian Experience.

Is-haq Oloyede
Rafiu Adebayo
Afis Oladosu

Abstract

This paper attempts a brief appraisal of Quranic education (QE) in the postcolonial period in Nigeria. Specifically it focuses on Southwestern parts of Nigeria where there exist a rich Arabic-islamic intellectual tradition. The paper begins with an introduction in which it explores the idea of postcolonialism. This serves as a platform upon which it does a review of the aims, objectives and the history of QE during the colonial period. It proceeds from there to do a recap of the developmental trajectories that are discernible in the field during that era which immediately follows British colonial suzerainty otherwise known as the post-independence period. The paper then does a schematic classification of major stakeholders in QE in the area into three, namely the Tradition Ulama (TU), the 'Dualized Ulama' (DU) and the Modern Scholars of the Quran (MSQ). It thereafter highlights some of the challenges confronting QE in Nigeria as a whole and proposes some pathways through which they could be overcome.

Introduction

We must begin with two disclaimers both of which we are extremely pertinent to this exercise. The first relates to history, while the second

impinges on geography. In other words, this paper derives its historical validity from the "postcolonial', not the post-independencial. The reason for this, as shall be explored more closely below, relates to the argument in cultural studies that all references to the post-independence period, no matter the clime, is nothing but a euphemism for the transition, by nations in Asia and Africa, from one phase of colonialism to another. Thus the employment of the category of postcolonialism, not post-independence, then becomes more suitable and indeed a categorical imperative.

Now the disclaimer which relates to geography borders on the necessity to delimit the 'borders' of our inquiry. This is equally for two reasons. The first relates to the fact that the Southern parts of Nigeria is extremely wide and vast and as such it would amount to intellectual dishonesty for a paper such as this to posture as if it can encompass, in detail, the history of Islam or QE in the whole region[1]. Thus reference to Southern Nigeria here would be to Southwestern parts of the country. The latter, occupied in the main by the Yoruba, has traditionally been known, across histories and epochs, to be the bastion of Islam and Quranic education (hereafter QE) in the region[2]. Thus, any study which purports to do an appraisal of QE in the Southern parts of Nigeria must take the Southwest as its point of departure. It is the latter, therefore, that shall be the locus of our inquiry; it is to its cultural contours and landscapes that this paper shall focus its attention.

Having dispensed with the above issues which appear to be foundational to this paper, it then becomes imperative for us to begin to map, like a cartographer, the pathways of this paper. Let us begin with the unknown before the known; it might be useful for us to begin with the postcolonial before the Quranical.

Of the Postcolonial and the Aporetic

In charting a beginning, the following questions are highly pertinent: why, at the turn of the 21st century, are we still obsessed with that

moment in history when colonialism became postcolonialism? Why, over half a century after the attainment of flag independence, reference still needs to be made to that moment when Nigeria ceased to be a colonial outpost but a postcolonial, nay, neocolonial space?

The first response to the above questions might be that life in the postcolony, no matter its geography or space, is sucked inexorably back into the vortex of the colonial past which constantly serves as its referent (S. Mezzadra and F. Rahola 2006;1). In other words, the postcolonial period hacks back to the subversive space of difference of the colonial period partly because the deep racial or ethnic inequality, patent social imbalances and incessant exploitation of the poor by the rich, and the dehumanization of the weak by the powerful are all patrimonies of the former. Concern with postcolonialism, therefore, functions in deepening our awareness of the deep *aporias* and folds which once operated between the lines of the official colonial discourses but has succeeded in appropriating the political space in the postcolony. The word postcolonialism reminds us that though the experience of colonialism belongs to the past, it nonetheless refuses to stay in the past; that though colonialism may have come to an end, its patrimonies cannot be put to an end; that while domination and exploitation of the colonized were constant features of colonialism, the postcolonial period has witnessed the emergence of new dominant powers and newer identities of the dominated and newer characterizations of the exploited.

When contemplated more closely, the 'post' in the postcolonial[3] functions to awaken us to that uncanny reality that though colonial geography which is mapped and bound by borders may have been destroyed, it has ironically been replaced by a borderless space in the former colonial outposts which is circumscribed by identity conflicts and the emergence of new authorities. Such becomes discernible in contemporary Africa which now constantly play host to a combination of internal strife and uncommon crises. Nothing accentuates the postcolonial in the former colonies than the presence of 'ghosts' and

ghettoes in its cities and the ascendance of violence as strategy for transaction in identity politics.

Following from the above, it could then be suggested that the idea of the postcolonial is nothing but a referent for that uncanny situation in which humans "exist in a state of double consciousness- of the past and the present; of the decentring of the centre and the emergence of new centres of hegemony; of domination and resistance; of the past in the present and the present in the past" (ibid4). Whereas during the colonial period two classes of people existed in the colony- the ruling and the ruled classes, the postcolony feature two new classes: "the working classes" and the "dangerous classes" (ibid 5). Whereas colonialism erected the pillars of racial inequality, the postcolonial period has replaced that with ethnic and social inequality. The postcolonial is that flux in human reality in which, in line with Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1961) humans discovers new regions of inequality (ibid).

If indeed the postcolonial period has become like a palimpsest, then the task of charting the course of QE during those moments in history and in an extremely rigid geographical terrain like Southern Nigeria becomes doubly difficult if not outright impossible. A simple insight into this might be the seeming difficulty, on the part of non-Muslim researchers in the field, to shed the colonial patrimony which privileges pejorative reference to the Qur'an as Koran. QE in the postcolonial period in Nigeria is thus set on a rigid attachment to the colonial period. But what exactly do we mean by QE? What have been its historical trajectories in Southern parts of Nigeria since the attainment of independence by the country? What are the challenges confronting it today?

QE: On the Philosophy of A Divinely Inspired Idea

QE, otherwise known in Arabic as *al-Tarbiyyah al-Quraniyyah*, is that which sources its vision and operation from the Quran, the last testament revealed by the Almighty to guide humanity. To define QE as such is to

begin to pay attention to the UNESCO's definition of education. According to O. O. Akinkugbe, the UNESCO's charter refers to education as the means, the methods and the processes by which accumulated values, skills, experience and knowledge of a given human society or community are transmitted, both formally and informally, by human societies or its representatives, from one generation to the other (O. O. Akinkugbe: 1994;7). It is equally that process which works towards "…awakening the enormous potential that lies within each of us, enabling all of us to develop to our fullest potential and better contribute to the societies in which we live" (ibid).

But the goal of QE culture goes beyond the UNESCO remit. It aims towards the production of a balanced and righteous community of humanity on earth- a community that will deploy its acquired experience, skills and knowledge to the realization of the better life on earth and assist its members attain eternal success. This is in line with the Qur'anic vision in which the Almighty says: "I have created the Jinn and man so that they may worship me" (Q51: 56). In other words, as far as QE is concerned, the utilitarian purpose of education is only a means towards a higher purpose: the establishment of a sustainable harmony between humans - KhalifatuLLAH -Vicegerent of Allah (Quran 2: 32) - and other entities in the cosmos. Here the communiqué issued at the end of the First World Conference on Muslim Education which was held in Makkah in 1973 speaks to this. It says, in part, as follows:

> Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational feelings and bodily senses. Education in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific and linguistic, both individually and collectively, and motivate all aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection (D. Mustafa: 2003; 24)

The religion of Islam strives to achieve the above through its division of knowledge into two: revealed and acquired. While revealed knowledge refers to that granted unto humans by Allah through His prophets, acquired knowledge is that which is obtained by humans through the study of the natural phenomena and human societies. The Islamic epistemology is, therefore, hinged on the assumption that the "better life" either in the terrestrial or celestial is attainable subject to the acquisition of both strands of knowledge. Knowledge, in Islamic hermeneutics, foregrounds the search for the Truth (*al-Haqq*) and defines what becomes proper action (*al-Amal al-Salih*). It is upon its plank that a balance can be evolved, by humans, between the spiritual and the terrestrial; it is the benchmark for determining ethics and morality (*al-Akhlaq*) in contradistinction to debauchery and immorality and, without it, wisdom (*Hikmah*) runs the risk of becoming folly.

Thus QE is hinged on the notion of the inseparability between the profane and the sacred and on the idea that knowledge which is divorced from faith in the Supreme Being is not only partial knowledge but also acute ignorance. This becomes pertinent when consideration is given to trends "outside" Islam where faith in the eschatological and the preternatural is not a condition for the ascension to and recognition of an individual as scholarly. As far as Islam is concerned, the man who has no knowledge of revelation but is well apprised of the Other knowledge is like the blind man who touches only the trunk of the elephant in the dark and goes on to pontificate and celebrate his erudition.

In other words, QE is not a rarefied body of knowledge which disapproves of the so-called secular sciences. Rather it encompasses all Sciences, either secular or religious. The Qur'an says. "Nothing have we omitted from the Book" (Q6:38). From this we can deduce that QE, when properly thought of, comprises other sciences such as Medicine, Engineering, Mathematics, Psychology, Sociology etc., because they are also Quranic sciences. They all derive their points of reference,

existence and destiny from the Almighty, the creator of the heavens and the earth.

Thus it can safely be proposed that QE is a functional one. This functionality derives, in part from some of its features all of which make it unique and holistic. It is our proposition that the characteristic features of QE include practicality, universality, historicity and comprehensiveness. To say QE is practical, is to underscore its relevance to the contrarieties of human status and circumstance across ages and climes; to cloak education in Islam with the robe of universality is to retrieve the Prophetic axiom-look for knowledge even if it be in China; to foreground knowledge acquisition in line with the Quranic injunctions in the historical is to establish the strong link that binds the whole of Muslim education in the contemporary times, notwithstanding its negative trajectories, with its medieval and classical roots.

Now when reference is made to the feature of comprehensiveness in Quranic philosophy of education, it is to the multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity of its disciplines. In other words, when Allah, in the very first revelation of the Qur'an enjoins His prophet and by extension, humanity, to read –"Read in the name of your Lord who creates" (Q 96: 1-5), there appears to be a decisive lack of referent to the thing to be read. But exegetes would argue that the referent is actually embedded in the Quran: that by commanding the Prophet to read, he is actually being enjoined to read the whole of creation, to read and derive meaning from the universe in its cadence and symphony, in its order and disorder. Thus to believe in the injunction that humans should read, is to call attention to all fields of learning from the soft to the hard, from the "wet" to the "dry", from the humanities to the sciences. Thus "the Quran becomes transparent only to those who have studied the sciences, which are extracted from it"(N. Al-Attas: 1980; 62). For example, the verse of the Quran which reads ". . . who, when I am sick, gives me health" (Q36:

80) would be appreciated and understood better by those with the knowledge of medicine.

Thus we above represents a brief insight into the epistemology of QE. Let us proceed, thereafter, to look at some of its trajectories in the Southern (Western) parts of Nigeria. We shall begin with the Pre/Colonial Period

QE in Pre/Colonial Nigeria

To talk about the advent of QE to what later became southwestern parts of Nigeria is to pay attention to the coming of Islam to the area. According to such renowned scholars as Gbadamosi(1978), Abubakre (2012), Nasiru (1977) and Fafunwa (1974), Islam came into that area which is populated in the main by the Yoruba during the 17th century. However, Al-Ilori is of the view that the religion had been introduced to Yorubaland as far back as the period of Alhaji Mansa Musa (d.1337) of Mali Empire stressing the nomenclature given to Islam as "*imale*" as a derivative word from Mali. Johnson and Parinder have gone on to aver, apparently taking a cue from the *jihad* of Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi, that Islam actually came into Yorubaland in the 18th century. The dissonance in the date notwithstanding, what is indubitable, however, is that wherever Islam spread to, the teaching of the Qur'an quickly followed. This is partly because the observance of religious rituals in the religion particularly *salat* is dependent on the acquisition of at least a rudimentary knowledge of the Qur'an. Thus it became customary for Muslims to establish Qur'anic schools otherwise known as *Ile-Kewu* and for their brethren in faith to enroll their children and ward in such schools. Muslims usually do this based on the axiom that *"ati kekere nimole tii komo re lesin"* – "It is from the cradle that Muslim parents inculcate religious rites in their children".

One other incentive for QE during this early period were some sayings and statements credited to the Prophet in which he lays emphasis on the

virtues of teaching and learning the Quran, the divine scripture. One of such *ahadith* reads thus: "the best among you is he who learnt the Qur'an and taught it to others." This *hadith* stresses the importance not only of learning the Qur'an but also that of teaching it to others. It, therefore, becomes clear that those who had the knowledge of the Qur'an among Muslims would always aspire to teach it to others.

Further, it is held by most Muslims that the Qur'an is a source of healing. This is based on, among others, the following verse of the Qur'an: "And We send down in the Qur'an that which is healing balm and mercy for believers, though it increases for the evil doers naught save ruin."(Q17: 82) Thus the acquisition of QE meant the possession of a weapon against earthly principalities and authorities. Put differently, not a few Muslims in the early periods of Islam in Yorubaland strove to acquire Quranic learning on the belief that it has inimitable metaphysical powers particularly at a time when witchcraft and sorcery were the order of the day.

Consequently the pre/colonial period witnessed the establishment of Quranic schools in Yorubaland majority of which were attached to mosques under the supervision, in most cases, of the Imam. There were other private Quranic classes that were established all around the Southwest particularly in areas where Muslims constitute the majority. Attendance in such schools was tuition free. In other words, at its advent in Yorubaland, there was open access to QE. To charge tuition fees for teaching the Qur'an was deemed an infraction against the divine blessing which ordinarily would come the way of those who are involved in the exercise.

Currents in QE in the pre- and early colonial period in the Southwestern parts of Nigeria later witnessed an increased tempo and fervor when cities in the region began to host itinerant scholars from the north who ventured into the area to teach the Qur'an and further Arab-Islamic learning. According to Fafunwa (1974), some of these scholars came to Yorubaland through Ilorin. In Abubakre's account (2004), mention may

be made of, among others, 'Uthman ibn Abu Bakr who came to Ibadan in the first quarter of the 19th century from Katsina; Shaykh Abu Bakr of Sokoto origin who settled in Ilorin and taught many Yoruba indigenous scholars of Arabic; and Muhammadu 'al-Barnawi from Bida. Others identified by Nasiru (1977) are Abu Bakr Bubi from Sokoto, Shaykh Ibrahim (alias Sare-Imo) from Bornu and Shaykh Muhammad al-Takiti al-Nafawi from Nupeland. Abubakre (2012) has equally identified Shaykh Salih b. Junta, popularly known in Yoruba as Afa Alimi- a Fulani from Sokoto who first settled in Oyo-IIe and later travelled far and wide preaching Islam and teaching the rudiments of Islam in different Yoruba towns - as one of such itinerant scholars.

In addition to their contribution to the dispersal of QE in the region, the itinerant scholars further contributed significantly to Arab-Islamic culture in the Southern parts of Nigeria through what may be termed 'the domestication' of Arabic. The domestication of Arabic script referenced here has to do with the documentation of indigenous Yoruba language through the use of Arabic Alphabets. This is later known as the *Ajami* scripts.

It axiomatic that as a result of these cultural interactions between the Yoruba and other Islamic scholars from outside the region, the Southwest soon began to play host to the emergence of its own local scholars. These include among many others Haruna Matanmi from Osogbo, Muhammad s-Sanusi ibn Haruna from Offa, and Ahmad Rufa[c]i ibn Muhammad Bello from Ibadan. Historians of Islam in Yorubaland are of the view that these scholars were all former students of Shaykh Abubakr ibn al-Qasim (d.1882). Popularly known as Alaga, Shaykh al-Qasim was said to have laid the foundation of Arab-Islamic culture in Yorubaland after having obtained his learning from scholars from northern parts of the country. But this glorious era of QE in Yorubaland began to experience negative interruptions beginning from 1882.

In other words, sequel to the establishment of its colonial suzerainty over cities all around the Lagos colony, the British colonists soon

promulgated the first Education Ordinance in colonial history. The ordinance is unmistakable in its goals as it declared all other methods of education including QE a nugatory. It further categorized all existing schools in the colony into two: Government and "Assisted" schools. Government schools were the ones established by the colonists themselves; 'assisted' schools belonged to the colonists' various Christian missionary outfits most of which were already enjoying government aids and supports. The categorization actually served no other purpose but give official fillip to the promotion of Christian education.

In other words, one of the fundamental philosophies of the colonial enterprise is that all natives and indigenes of the colony are sub-human excepting those who, either by choice or coercion enjoy racial redemption via their acceptance of the Christian faith. Cultural critics would argue that this is one of the reasons that led to the colonial experience- that Europe would never have ventured into Asia and Africa in order to turn Asians and Africans into second class citizens on their own soil had European believed that the peoples of Asia and Africa were humans like themselves. Thus with the ordinance the British authority now had a legal warrant to say that the educational system that would merit its patronage would be such that would be hinged on the Bible. It must be such that would celebrate, in line with Ayandele's explanation, "Bible Knowledge, Christian ethics, Christian moral instruction, Christian literatures, some Arithmetic, languages and craft, all geared in the direction of producing Christians who could read the Bible (Ayandele 1966:144).

Thus schools purposely established to promote QE in Southern parts of Nigeria were pushed to the margins of existence. They were derided by the colonial masters and their patrons among the natives as institutions for people with no future. Invariably the Southwest witnessed the emergence of the following negative axiom: *'Ole n te laafaa'* – lazy students under the tutelage of the Malams.

Despite the unfavourable condition and circumstance pictured above, Muslims still strove to keep the fervor for the acquisition of QE aglow. They devised a number of strategies to achieve that purpose. These may be described as constructive collaboration and outright rejection.

The constructive collaboration strategy apparently emerged based on the assumption by some Muslims during this period that they would benefit a lot should they join the British powers in its educational programmes. Thus in the year 1896 what was then considered to be one of the best Qur'anic schools at Akanni Street, Lagos at the time was converted to the first Government Muslim School. The event marked the beginning of active involvement of Muslims in the acquisition of the so-called "Western education". Soon thereafter, other Muslim schools co-financed by the Muslims and the government started emerging in places like Epe and Badagry in 1898 and 1899 respectively. In opting for this strategy, Muslims at the time knew that that were taking a risk; that collaboration with the British powers was nothing but a metaphor for an invitation to a dinner with the devil.

Indeed this soon became axiomatic in the way the so-called government approved schools were run. For example, the 'conventional' schools did little to promote QE. This is because in the said schools, QE occupied a second position in the scale of preference of the schools particularly with respect to curriculum (Adebayo 2003). Thus the collaboration strategy became a menace, not an ace; it turned out to be a solution that was worse than the problem.

The outright rejection strategy therefore became the preferred option. It was consequently seized upon by a large majority of Muslims living in the Southwestern parts of Nigeria. Majority of the Muslim population in the region began by refusing to register their children and wards in the Christian schools established either by the British authority itself or its agents. The Muslims were convinced that a Muslim child who received the British education would ultimately be converted from Islam to Christianity. This response from Yoruba Muslims to the British

authority''s educational programmes caught the colonial masters unawares. A Christian missionary, James Johnson, while on a tour of important Yoruba mission stations and schools in 1878, was said to have commented thus: "the Muhammedans (sic) show no desire for the education that may be had at our schools" (Gbadamosi, 1978). Instead of taking their children to British schools, Muslims increased their patronage of the *Ile-Kewus*. For example, Muslims in Iseyin, despite the concerted and the extensive missionary activities of the British agents stuck to their Islamic identities. While the government schools in the area registered only six Muslim children, records show that the number of Muslim children in Ile-Kewu at the time skyrocketed to one thousand, two hundred and forty-six (1,246). There was little the British authority, then led by Governor Sir G. Carter, could do to counter the Muslims's strong attachment to QE. It should be noted that during the period in question, there were more than fifty five Qur'anic schools in the town (Gbadamosi, 1978).

The outright rejection strategy later gained more strength with the establishment of traditional Arabic schools in the Southwestern parts of Nigeria such as the *Markaz* in Agege (established first in Abeokuta but later relocated to Agege) by Shaykh Adam al-Ilori and *Mahd al-Arabi* by Shaykh Mudaththir Abdul Salam among others. Thus while colonial government increased its patronage of the conventional schools under its supervision, these Arabic schools subsisted on the goodwill of the Muslim populace. There QE, as a holistic process of learning and one which has rich intellectual repertoire, occupied the core of the curriculum. This trend continued up till the postcolonial period when the country attained flag independence from the British colonists.

QE In The Postcolony

One way by which an account of QE in Southwestern parts of Nigeria during the postcolonial period - that is the era after the official British colonialization came to an end- could be given might be that of

developing a cultural schema which is populated by characters whose task it is to impart QE to the mass of Muslim segments of the Nigerian population in those areas. Should this become consensual then these characters, teachers or Quranic Caravans (QC) can be divided, in the main, into three. These include the Traditional *Ulama* (TU), the Dualized *Ulama* (DU) and the Modern Scholars of the Qur'an (MSQ). In line with their nomenclature, the TU are teachers of Arabic who are either locally trained in such Arabic schools as were established during the colonial period or those who got scholarships for studies in the Arab world and came back to the southern parts of the country after graduation and established their own schools. Usually well-versed and grounded in Arabic and Islamic scholarship, this group of educators usually strives to preserve the core values of Quran and Islamic learning. Members of this class are renowned for their ascetism, strong commitment to proselytization, unwavering attachment to tradition and disavowal of modernity. This strong attachment to tradition and the core values of Islam often leads to their characterization as backward, primeval and anachronistic.

Under their supervision QE continued on the colonial trajectory. With reference to space, education of Muslim children usually takes place in the mosques, in residences of the Malams and under tree shades. Educational infrastructures that are available to them are picaresque of their ascetic *weltanchauung*. It often feature, among others, mats and ram or cow hides. The TU usually rely on texts which dates back to the medieval period while teaching the Quran. Here the foundation for Quranic education is al-*Qaidah al-Baghdadiyyah* - an Arabic text for beginners which contains Arabic alphabets in various forms as well as the last juz'u of the Qur'an. Once a student gains a mastery of this level of Quranic learning, he proceeds to begin to learn the reading of the Quran.

Now since texts usually lead to texts, students under the tutelage of the TU are, after having perfected the reading of the Quran, usually

introduced to other texts all of which are meant to increase their mastery of Arabic language on the one hand and their grounding in Quranic scholarship on the other. Thus they are introduced to legio-jurisprudential and linguistic texts such as *al-Akhdari, al-Ashmawi, Muqadimatul 'Iziyyah, Risala and Mukhtasarul-Khalil*. Generally speaking, Quranic learning under the TU supervision features rote learning. Feasts are occasionally organized for students each time they completed different phases of their education. Such feasts are meant to encourage the students not to waver in their learning. The feasts equally served as a form of 'enticement' for others who have not joined the educational caravan to do so without delay.

It should be noted that TU usually operate on the margins of the society. They are usually not recognized by government. They are treated with scorn and derision by the mass of Western-trained Muslim populace. They often depend on the goodwill of parents of children in their care in order to keep their schools going. Often times, they organize elaborate *Walimat al-Quran* at the end of the year. It is on such occasions they attract pecuniary appreciations from the society. Again, on such occasions, it is customary for parents of graduates in their schools to present the TU with gifts of various kinds including rams and goats.

One of the core challenges facing the TU in respect to QE relates to, as it was during the colonial period, their lack of recognition by the various governments in southern parts of the country. Thus graduates of these schools often become unemployed immediately they step out of their *alma mater*. They often opt for the easier pathway which is that of establishing their own Quranic schools. Thus QE, in the postcolonial period, functions largely only in yielding knowledge not in, as it was during the colonial period, the provision of material comforts for its practitioners (Doi, 1972) but in the strengthening the Muslims' religio-spiritual and social capacities.

The second main player in the field of Quranic education in the Southern parts of Nigeria during the postcolonial period is the "Dualized" *Ulama*. Dualism , as a marker for their vocation, is in recognition of the fact that they are usually and originally products of schools established by the TU. Upon graduation, they proceeded to acquire more education particularly from Western oriented colleges established either by the Government or private Muslim organizations such as the Ansar–Din, Ahmadiyyah and Anwar al-Islam colleges. Some of those who attended these schools and colleges later attended universities which offered Arabic and Islamic studies as courses of study (I. O Oloyede). Upon the completion of their studies, they sometimes establish Arabic school where they teach the Quran by using modern systems and techniques. They combine the pedagogical method in Arabic-Islamic tradition with that of Western epistemology.

Perhaps in recognition of the positive impacts the DU have had on an increasingly Westernized society of the Yorubas today, TU appears to begin to tow the same path. Thus it is customary nowadays to see TU introduce 'western' subjects into their curricula. This is true of *Mahd al-Azhari* in Ilorin which introduced English language as a teaching subject. The Arabic Institute of Nigeria, Elekuro, Ibadan which was established by Shaykh Murtadha Abdus-Salam has also introduced Islamic Studies and English language into the school curriculum and even started to organize afternoon lessons for interested students to pursue 'Western' education up to GCE level. Other schools established along the same line are Al-Adabiyyah school for Arabic and Islamic Studies at Owo, and Alhaji Badru deen's Amin Arabic Training Centre at Iwo which was established in 1968.

The third players in the QE spectrum in the Southern parts of Nigeria are those we have tentatively referred to as 'Modern' Scholars of the Quran (MSQ). These are Quranic practitioners whose learning of the Quran has been a product of neither of the above trajectories. Here reference is being made to those who have acquired their own learning neither from

the TU nor the SU but from essentially 'Western' sources. These may include graduates, Muslim and Christians, of Institutions of higher learning within and outside the Muslim world who have come back to Nigeria to take teaching appointments with government schools. It may include individuals who have availed themselves of the opportunity of the social media and information and communication technology to achieve different levels of competencies in QE. No matter their entry-points into the field, members of this group have increased access to QE in the southern parts of the country. Aside from other arguments, the flip side to their participation in QE spectrum is that questions remain on the extent to which their contributions can be said to be of great value or threat to QE in the area. A critical reading of the landscape compels the conclusion that there emergence in the field has only increased the challenges facing QE among the Yorubas. Those challenges are discussed below.

QE in Southern parts of Nigeria in the Postcolonial Period: The Challenges

Perhaps the very first challenge confronting QE in the Southwest is the lack of a coordinated forum for teachers of the Quran for exchange of ideas on the improvement of their vocation and adequate facilities to meet the challenges of modern times. Aside from that, QE is still largely being taught on the periphery of conventional, read 'western' education. This is because in the postcolonial period, hard knowledge (sciences) not soft knowledge (humanities) has become the privileged and preferred field of learning.

Closely linked to the above is that nowadays access to QE is completely difficult if not outright impossible for Muslim children who attend western oriented schools. Thus most of the Qur'anic schools therefore operate in the evening between 4:00 and 6:00 pm. Today, the acquisition of QE has largely become a pastime, not a strict religious duty as it used to be in the pre/colonial era.

Furthermore QE continues to be operated largely on charity. Thus proprietors of Quranic schools continue to suffer lack of the necessary funding to make a success out of their vocation and to properly package QE to a society on a constant journey to the 'North", to the West. Proprietors of such institutions often depend on the goodwill of members of Muslim community to survive and sustain the school. In other words, the assumption is still there today that QE could still subsist on charity while reality continues to dictate otherwise.

Since QE is still largely unrecognized by those in control of the economic and political superstructure in the southern parts of Nigeria, there is no gainsaying the fact that graduates of QE classes lack gainful employment. This has always provided a basis for critics of the religion of Islam to say that products of QE, for lack of gainful employment or for reason of unemployability, constitute significant group among those formenting trouble in the northern parts of the country.

Yet another challenge confronting QE among the Yoruba today is the negative attitude of some Muslim parents to the Qur'an. Apparently driven away by the typhoon of modernity, a great number of Muslim parents, particularly the elite, have lost touch with their religious heritage. Consequently, learning of the Quran now occupies a peripheral position in their scales of value. Children of such Muslims now relate to the Quran the same way Christians relate to the Bible- a book which is useful only Fridays. One of the immediate aftermaths of this is the erosion of Islamic heritage from families whose forebears were the torchbearers of Islam in the region. There are certain homesteads in Lagos today which used to produce Imams for the city but from which no single person could be pointed to again as a bearer of the 'divine word' anymore!

The failure of some Qur'anic schools to adopt modern pedagogical method in teaching the Qur'an is another challenge confronting QE in

the region. Hardly could one find an Institution dedicated solely to QE with modern teaching equipments. Many of the students in Qur'anic schools could have performed better if the opportunity of interacting with modern information and communication technology relevant to the teaching and learning the Qur'an were provided for them in the school.

By Way of Conclusion

In closing, there is the need for a constructive appraisal of QE in the Southwest by all the stakeholders in the region. In other words, it has become urgent and important for Muslims in the region to chart new course for QE in view of contemporary realities. Such an appraisal should ponder such matters as funding, curriculum, the role of government, Muslim parents, relevant texts, employment of graduates of QE, teaching methodologies among other issues. It is our considered opinion that since the Southern parts of Nigeria is unlike the north where QE is seen to be part and parcel of the northern culture, the stakeholders' forum we are canvassing for should explore new horizons for proper collection of Zakat, the *waqf* (endowment), grants, and other matters that may be incidental to the evolution of a new QE regime that would be smart and responsive to the dynamics of the needs of Muslims and indeed non-Muslims in the 21st century. Such an appraisal appears to have become a categorical imperative.

Notes

1. Of recent researches have been carried out by scholars into the history of Islam in other parts of Southern Nigeria particularly the East and the South-South. For this see, for example:

2. There is panoply of studies on Islam in the Southwestern parts of Nigeria. For instance see: Abubakre R.D. (2004). *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South-Western Nigeria.* Iwo: Daru 'l-'Ilm Publishers); ----Abubakre, R.D. (2012) "Ilorin and the Rest of the World: Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory as an Ambassador

Plenipotentiary" in Abubakre, R.D. (ed) *Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory in the Tableau of Immortality,* vol II. Riyadh: The Nigerian Center for Arabic Research and University of Ilorin; Doi, A.R.I. (1972) Islam in Nigeria; Fafunwa, A.B. (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria.* London: George Allen and Unwin; Gambo Ado (2005). "Qur'anic Schools and Muslim Educational Reform" in Umar, B.A, Shehu S & Malumfashi, M.U. (eds), *Muslim Educational Reform Activities in Nigeria.* Kano: Benchmark Publishers Ltd; Gbadamosi, T.G.O. (1978), *The Growth of Islam Among the Yoruba 1841-1908.* London: Longman Group Ltd; Johnson, S. (1959). *The History of the Yoruba*. Lagos: CMS Bookshop; Nasiru, W.O. A. (1977), Islamic Learning Among the Yoruba (1896-1963). An unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan; Ogunbiyi, A. (1988). "Arabic –Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an in the Yoruba Speaking Areas of Nigeria" *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies (JARS),* 5. 92-109; Oloyede, I.O. "Trends, Development and Challenges of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigerian Universities: The Contributions of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory" in Abubakre, R.D. (ed) *Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory in the Tableau of Immortality,* vol II. Riyadh: The Nigerian Center for Arabic Research and University of Ilorin; Opeloye, M.O. & Jimoh, S.L. (2004). "The Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria and the Glorious Qur'an." *NATAIS Journal of the Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies,* 7, 65-83.

3. The idea of postcolonialism has generated panoply of works and researches particularly those with bias for what is eclectically referred to as cultural studies. For more on this see: *The Post-Colonial Question* (1996), I. Chambers and L. Curti, Eds. Routledge; *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*, by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999).

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