

## **A Review of Stefan Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung Und soziale Integration in Ilorin***

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Although a number of works have been written on Islamic education and scholars of Ilorin, *Islamische Bildungis* perhaps the most exhaustive treatise on the history of Islamic education and the scholars of this institution in Ilorin at present. The result of the close to a decade of research, the work explores the role of scholars and their institution in the social integration of the different groups that coalesced to define Ilorin as a people and society.

The central thesis of the work is the role of Islamic education as the pivot around which societal integration was achieved. This the author traced through the history of the town from the formation of the town into an emirate, the role of Islam as the legitimizing tool of Fulani rulers and the important role the scholars of Islam played in the history of the town. The work pointed out the central location of Ilorin both geographically and culturally as an important factor in the redefinition of Ilorin identity both in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it became an emirate and in the twentieth century urban life. The emirs spent most of the 19th century inviting scholars especially from the north to settle in Ilorin and help develop the Islamic essence of the town. The author was able to delve into the multi ethnic composition of these scholars and how that helped to define Ilorin's multiculturalism.

This role of the scholars as a pivotal group in the society continued in the colonial period and the work reveals out how the scholars latched on to Yoruba penchant for forming associations and clubs, and harnessed this to serve Islam through the establishment of Muslim organizations; their missionary activities in the commercial city of Lagos as well as other Yoruba cities having a great influence on this, especially in the first half of the twentieth century.

The scholars apart from being teachers were also renowned for their magical-therapeutic services. Even the establishment of the emirate is linked to the provision of this service, and then during the consolidation of the emirate, especially against the irredentist wars of the Yorubas, these magical-spiritual skills of the scholar served the warriors. In the twentieth century, this service comes to serve the merchant and trading class but also the society in general. As a distinct social group, the scholars served as the mobilizing factor for the community through relationship and network of teachers and students within and outside Ilorin; development of new Arabic mode of education, increasing participation of women in religious activities and growing literary production in Arabic.

The book indicates the role of scholars as conscience of the society; their preaching as a source of public order. The modern era with wide spread of awareness and means of spreading awareness, these scholars also took the opportunity and through their activities we witnessed an increased self-consciousness among Muslims and about their interests in the public life, social and political. The presence of Muslims in public institutions, growth of Friday mosques, development of private institutions of learning both western and Arabo-Islamic, development of Muslim organisations, and youth and women participation in these, all reflect the influence of these scholars.

The scholars responded to the challenges against their vocation especially those posed by western education and the economic and political structure of the state and the country: through formalization and modernization of Arabic schools, establishment of organizations, local and national and connections to international centers of Muslim education and organizations in the Middle East. Through their students and clients in public life they sought to promote and protect Muslim interests.

One will get an insight into the development of the modern Arabic schools in Ilorin, their mode of operation as well as scholarly literary productions in Arabic as well as the classical Islamic texts in private collections of scholars of Ilorin from the pre-emirate era to the post-colonial era. Through the lens of social integration the work expatiates on the importance and dynamism of Islamic education and its guardians in the life of the people of Ilorin in their private, individual lives as well as a community in public life.

While the work focused on Islamic education and its role as harbinger of social integration, the work tilted a little more to the Markaziyya network than the Adabiyya network. The researcher's background in

Arabic language/literature as well as Sheikh Adam Abdullahi's preoccupation with research and writing (the author had a close working relationship with Sheikh Adam Abdullahi) especially on scholars of Ilorin is probably responsible for this. Nevertheless the work remains *primus inter pares* and a great contribution to the intellectual history of Ilorin. A translation of the volume into English language would help to spread the knowledge contained in the work in Nigeria and the English speaking world.

#### REFERENCE

Stefan Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung und Soziale Integration in Ilorin*, (Munster: Lit. Verlag, 1998).