

The Contributions of Ilorin Scholars to Poetry in Arabic in Nigeria

Lateef Onireti Ibraheem

Department of Arabic,
Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

onireti@unilorin.edu.ng

+23482863111

Abstract

Poetry is an important aspect of the literary tradition of any culture. In the Arabic, it is considered to be a repository of Arab history, values and norms. This explains why the Arabs celebrated the emergence of a new poet in a family, tribe, or clan. In Nigeria, despite the belief that poetry in Arabic is a difficult art, it has reached a greater height in both quality and quantity, especially during the period of “efflorescence” of Arabic literature in Nigeria. The aim of this study is to evaluate the contributions of Ilorin scholars to the growth and development of poetry in Arabic. To achieve this, the study is divided into four sections. The first section gives a brief history of Ilorin and the growth and development of Arabic Language in the ancient city. The second section deals with the efforts of Ilorin scholars in the study and preservation of poetry in Arabic. The third section discusses how poets in Arabic emerged in Ilorin; while the fourth section concentrates on the works of Ilorin poets in Arabic. The conclusion is a summary of the study and its findings.

Keywords: Contributions, Ilorin Scholars, Poetry, Arabic, Nigeria.

Ilorin and the growth and development of Arabic Language

Ilorin is the capital of Kwara State in Nigeria. It is about 300 kilometres to Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria and about 500 kilometres to Abuja, the current capital. Ilorin was founded in the 17th century as a village (Salihu, A.S. & Jawondo, I.A, p1). The early settlers in the town were Yoruba-speaking people with Afonja as the prominent military leader in 19th century. Later it expanded into a town when the Hausa community from the North headed by Bako also settled at Gambari area of the town. Afterward an itinerant Fulani Muslim scholar, Salihu bn Jinta, popularly known as Shaykh Alimi, also from the North, arrived the town, and within a short period, his descendants established an Islamic state in Ilorin and its environs. The town today is predominantly Yoruba, but it is politically and administratively close to northern Nigeria. It has expanded to become an Emirate that comprises Asa, Moro, Ilorin-West, East and South Local Government Areas of Kwara State (Ibraheem, L.O. & Zubair, H. 2013, p1). The scope of this paper however covers Ilorin

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metropolis which shares boundaries with Sao town to the North, Eyenkorin to the South, Ganma to the East and Alapa to the West.

According to Oseni (2006, p45) Ilorin has been a centre of Arabic and Islamic learning, even before the arrival of Shaykh Alimi in Ilorin in 1817. By the close of the 17th century, some Muslim scholars had settled in Ilorin. Shaykh Solagberu (AbdullahiTahir) and his compatriots settled at Oke–Sunna. Other scholars in the town included Shaikh Muhammad Munabai and his wife Aishat, Shaykh Sasini, Shaykh Sanusi, Shaykh Muhammad Thanni and others known and unknown in history. These scholars engaged in intensive teaching, preaching and conversion of natives to Islam. The coming of Shaykh Alimi, however, boosted the Arabic and Islamic pedagogy greatly and it tremendously enhanced the spread of Islam in Ilorin and its environs. He taught the Oke-Sunna scholars half of *Jalalayn's Tafsir* and opened the gate for the influx of more scholars from Hausaland, Borno and Nupeland to Ilorin; and at the later stage, scholars from Yorubaland and beyond also came to Ilorin to teach and preach Islam. At the same time, other scholars left Ilorin to other parts of Nigeria and beyond to teach, preach and spread Islam. At some other times, students from different parts of Yorubaland and other parts of Nigeria and West Africa also came to Ilorin in great numbers. These phenomena continue up to the present moment. Thus, Oseni's (2006, p55) classification of Ilorin scholars into three, is an acceptable proposition. These are scholars who remained in Ilorin, scholars who went out of Ilorin and scholars who came from outside Ilorin.

Teaching of Arabic in Ilorin started with Informal Traditional Education with two types of schools in operation. The first one was the Qur'anic school (*Makaranta Alo*) which concentrated on the teaching of how to recite the Qur'an and memorize it. The second one was the advanced school (*Makaranta Ilmi*), that taught rudiments of Theology, Jurisprudence, Qur'anic Exegesis, Hadith text, Arabic grammar, Arabic literature, Islamic history, etc. Some quarters still maintain these types of school till date (Oseni, 2006, p49). Though the schools slowed down learning and the mastery of Arabic Language, yet it produced scholars who were writers, poets, judges and government officers. From 1930 however, private Arabic schools based on the Formal System of Education started to emerge with the establishment of Zumuratul Adabiyyah by Shaykh Kamaludin al-Adabi. The system continued to improve by the years in both quality and quantity. Today, in Ilorin, we have standard private Arabic schools that serve as feeders to tertiary institutions within and outside Nigeria. These schools through their products have contributed immensely to the development of Arabic Language and Literature in Arabic in Nigeria. In addition to producing teachers, writers, poets, imams, preachers and other spiritual leaders, some of the products of the schools pursued their education to University level and eventually chose teaching, research and community development as their career. Ilorin today is one of Nigerian towns where Arabic has almost become the second language of the inhabitants. It has greatly influenced their languages (in terms of language borrowing) and their cultures and ways of life through Islam.

Ilorin Scholars' Contributions to the Teaching of Poetry in Arabic

Based on the findings of this study, it was discovered that Ilorin scholars contributed in deferent ways to poetry in Arabic, ranging from teaching, documenting, preserving and composing of the genre. These could be discussed as follow:

It was a general belief that poetry is the compendium of Arab's language, history, culture, norms and values (Hasan, 2007, p1). At the initial stage of documenting Arabic grammar, poetry was used as one of its reliable sources. Hence, whoever intends to study and understand Arabic language must learn poetry. Against this background, Ilorin scholars embarked on the teaching of poetry in Arabic to their students to ensure acquisition of necessary vocabularies, acquaint them with the Arab history and ways of life, and, by extension, teach them morals and wisdom. In addition, poetry was used to document and teach certain subjects owing to its meter (*wazn*), rhyme and rhythmic nature which make it easy to memorise and comprehend. For example, subjects like Rhetoric, Grammar, Jurisprudence, Science of Qur'anic reading (*Tajwid*), Philosophy, etc., have been composed in poems and taught to students. As a result of this, Arabic students have learnt a lot of poetry and committed a great deal of poems into memory. They have used such in their speeches and preaching at occasions and ceremonies. This act has really helped greatly in popularising and preserving poetry in Arabic in Nigeria over the ages. One of the oldest Arabic poems being taught in Ilorin, according to Al-Ilory (1982, p24), is the poem composed by Salih ibn Jinta, popularly called Shaykh Alimi (d.1823), entitled khudh (take) extracted from the opening line of the poem that reads thus:

خذ بكلام العالمين يا أخي ** العالمين بسنة لا من ربا

Keep to the words of the scholars, my brother
Adherents to Sunnah and not hypocrites

Another book of poetry that is popular among Arabic students in Ilorin up till this moment is *Kitabul Daliyyah*, authored by Alyusi. Other books of literature from different authors also serve as texts for poetical study.

Apart from teaching poetry and its rules, there are other subjects and practical activities that Ilorin scholars employed to produce poets in Arabic. These include organizing poetry competitions and giving prizes to the winners in order to motivate them and instructing students to compose poems during the occasions of *Mawlidun-nabiyyi* (The birthday of the Prophet) *lailatul Qadri* (Night of Majesty), to welcome visitors to their schools, or when a scholar is being sent-off and during any social occasions (Ibraheem,2007, p 60). This method is highly effective because today Ilorin has produced a lot of poets in Arabic who are of international repute like Isa Alabi Abubakar, Abdul Baqi Shuiab Agaka, Abdulsalam Muhammad, Usman al-Thaqafi, Uthman Eleyinla, Ibrahim Shith, Nuhu Ibrahim, Hakiki, Sarumi, Sulaiman

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Ayegoro, Mustafah Said Olawumi, Ibrahim Said Olawumi, Abdul Lateef Said Olawumi, Hamid Alhijiri and others.

Ilorin Arabic Scholars' Contribution to the Preservation of Poems

At the initial stage of learning poetry like other subjects, students would copy their lessons on slates and papers before the advent of text books. Even now that we have Arabic books in abundance, teachers still write lessons on the chalk board to teach their students and the students will copy it in their notebooks. With this method a lot of poetry is preserved in manuscript form. Likewise before and after the advent of Arabic typewriter and computer, poets composed their poetry in their handwritings while others copied it from them. Up till today, a significant number of poetry remains in manuscripts although most of them got lost while some were destroyed by ants, fire and chemicals. This prompted some scholars to make individual and concerted efforts to compile some of this poetry and publish them (Al-Ilory, 1992, P 54). Adam Abdullah al-Ilory is at the forefront of the scholars who embarked on this noble assignment. His first publication in this regard is entitled *al-Fawa-kihu as-saqitah* (The fallen Fruits). In it a total number of fourteen poems from different poets of Nigeria origin and a poem composed by Abi Muhammad Abdullahi bn Abi Zaydi al-Qayrawani of Tunis were selected to form teaching manual to pupils and a reminder for the older generation who memorized them during their school age (Al-Ilory, 1972, p2). This compilation was first published in Tunisia in the fifties and it was popular among Arabic pupils across Nigeria; it still serves as one of the textbooks up till the time of writing this paper. The author has another compilation exclusively for the primary school pupils of Arabic Training Centre, Agege, Lagos (Markaz), and its branches across Nigeria and other countries of West Africa. It comprises his own poems and other poems that he extracted from literature books. The compilation is entitled *al-anāshīd al-Markaziyya* (Markaz Songs) (Al-Ilory, 1972). Worthy of mentioning here also is *al-maqtū'āt al-adabiyya* (Al-Ilory, 1972) and other book that consists of poems composed by Arab poets. This effort of compiling poems for the purpose of teaching poetry to students has now become an art which is practiced now in Ilorin and in other places in Nigeria; and this has a great impact on the development of poetry in Arabic in Nigeria.

In their efforts to preserve Arabic and Islamic scholarship in Ilorin, Ilorin scholars have succeeded in introducing and bringing to the fore, through standard publications, some poets and their poetry which hitherto existed as manuscripts and were at the verge of destruction. This helps in refacing them and making them available as materials and references for students and researchers across the world. Adam Abdullahi al-Ilory was also among the early contributors to this aspect through his book entitled *Misbāhu ad-Dirāsaaril Adabiyah fi diyāri an-Nigeriyyah* (The Torch of Literary Studies in Nigeria) (Al-Ilory, 1992) . This work encompasses poetry composed by known and anonymous poets of Nigerian origin generally. Another work of his that is rather specific is the book entitled *Lamhāatul Ballawry fi mashāhir Ulama'i Ilorin* (The Glowing Crystal on the Famous Ilorin Scholars) (Al-

Ilorin, 1982). This work remains a great reference on early Ilorin scholars and literary figures. The work has an update in the work of ‘Razaq ‘Deremi Abubakar (1995), which he wrote in conjunction with Stefan Reichmuth and entitled: “Ilorin and Nupe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”. The work is written in English and only presented the first line of each of the poem mentioned in transliteration with a brief biography of their composers and the reason why each poem was composed. Similarly, Abdul-Lateef Ahmad Adekilekun (2006) also made a contribution in this regard. The title of his work is: *‘Atharu Shaykh al-Liabib Tajul Adab wa kibāru Talāmidhihi Shiran wa Nathsrān* (The Influence of Shaykh Labib Tajul Adab on his students in Poetry and Prose). , Abdulsalam Muhammad Usman Al-Thaqafi also made a significant contribution entitled: *Tārikhul Adabil ‘Arabi fī Madinati Ilorin minal ‘Asril-Islāmi ‘ila mābadal Istiqlāl* (The History of Arabic Literature in Ilorin City from the Islamic Era till After the Independence) (Usman, 2007). These books and many others that were published after them constitute significant contributions to poetry in Arabic in Nigeria, and as such, preserve important manuscripts that would have gone into extinction.

Other Ilorin scholars also compiled poems presented at different ceremonial occasions and published them, together with prose texts, as books. Among these scholars are Muhammadul Amin Adam al-Gambari, who compiled the poems and prose presented at the funeral ceremony of his father, Shaykh Adam al-Husayn al-Gambari, who died in 1997 and Hamid Busairi Mukhtar Isalekoto, who compiled poems and prose works delivered at the first annual ceremony of Shaykh Mukhtar Isalekoto foundation in 2005 and published it with the title: *“al-Aqlaam”* (The Pens) (Ibraheem, 2011: 270) .

Presently, concerted effort is being made by the Ilorin scholars at the Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria, to organize regular symposia that would provide opportunities for the presentation of poetic manuscripts to the public and which could be published subsequently. The first and the second symposia of this type were organized on the 12th September, 2012 and 30th April, 2013 respectively. During the second one, one of the Ilorin poets, Isa Alabi Abubakar, was crowned “the king of Nigerian Poets in Arabic”.

Ilorin’s Scholars Contributions to the Study of Poetry in Arabic

While efforts on compilation and preservation of poetry in Arabic in Ilorin were intensified, departments of Arabic and Arabic Units, as the case may be, were established in Nigerian Universities and other tertiary institutions across the country, starting with the University of Ibadan in 1961. This development ushered in the era of study and appreciation of poetry in Arabic in Nigeria in which Ilorin Scholars made immense contributions. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor, Master or Ph.D. degree programmes in Nigeria, a student must embark on research and write a long essay, dissertation or thesis. This provides opportunity to some Ilorin students in tertiary institutions specializing in Arabic to gather Arabic manuscripts across Nigeria and beyond for study, in order to make the scripts

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accessible and understandable to people, to let them know their worth and value, their contributions to the development of Arabic language and literature in Arabic in Nigeria, and the poets' strengths and weaknesses in the mastery of Arabic language aesthetics.

Some of the Ilorin scholars who contributed in this regard, did their study on poetry in Arabic generally with the aim of gathering materials for subsequent researchers. In this category we have Shuaib Bukhari (1982) entitled "*al-Adabul 'Arabi fi biladi Yoruba*" (Arabic Literature in Yorubaland) and Yaqub Yusuf (1983) entitled: "*Ash-Shi'rul Arabi fi Madinat Ilorin*" (Poetry in Arabic in Ilorin City). Other Ilorin Scholars picked a theme of poetry for their studies. Abdulsalam Muhammad Usman Thaqafi (1997) wrote "*al-Hamaasa fish-Shiril Arabi fi Diyari Nigeria*" (Heroism in Poetry in Arabic in Nigeria), a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Ilorin and Mashood Mahmood Muhammad Jimba's (2005) PhD thesis was on "*Dirasatun tahliliyatun Lish-Shi'ril Wasfi fil Adabil Arabi An-Naigiri*" (An Analytical Study of Descriptive Poetry in Nigerian Arabic Literature). Other Scholars concentrated on the poetical works of individual poets or group. For example, Lateef Onireti Ibraheem, studied Shaykh Adam Abdullahi al-Ilory's poetry in his project submitted to the University of Ilorin in 1995. The title of the project is "*Ash-Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory wa sh'rul Arabi fi Nayjiriya* (Shaykh Adam Abadullahi al-Ilory and Poetry in Arabic in Nigeria), while Musa Abikan also focused on Isa Alabis's poetry in his PhD thesis submitted to Lagos State University, Lagos. The title of his thesis is: *Al-Itijaahāt al- Wujdaniyat fi Shi'ri Isa Alabi: Dirasatun Tahliliyyah* (Arabic Lyrical poetry and its Trends in the Works of Isa Alabi : An Analytical Study). It is disheartening that most of these theses are still in manuscripts on the shelves of the various Universities. Among those who carried out studies on poetry works of groups of people and associations is Uthnan Idris al-Kankawi, who researched on the poetry of Mankondoro group in Nigeria. The work is a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Ilorin.

Interestingly, some Ilorin scholars have published works on poetry in academic journals, magazines and books in and outside Nigeria. Hamid Ibrahim Olagunju (1993) published an article entitled: "An Appraisal of some Themes in the Poems of Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory" in JARS, published by the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. Isa Alabi Abubakar (2001) published an article entitled "William Shakespeare in the Poems of Hafiz and Shawqi" in ALORE, Ilorin Journal of the Humanities, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. He jointly published an article with Lateef Onireti Ibraheem entitled: *Ash-Shi'rul Arabi An-Naijiri wa muharabatul Irihabi ad-Dawly: shi'ru Isa Alabi Abubakar namaosajan* (Nigerian Poetry in Arabic and Fighting Terrorism: a Case Study of Isa Alabi Abubakar's Poetry) in **Majalla al-Aasima (Annual Research Journal)**, published in 2011 by the Department of Arabic, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India. Abdul Baqi Shuai Agaka(2004) published a book entitled: *Al-Adabul Islami fi Diwanil-Alori* (Islamic Literature in Al-Ilory's Poetry), published by Centre for Manuscript Publication, Ilorin. The list is not exhaustive.

Ilorin Poets in Arabic and their works

Composing Poetry in Arabic in Ilorin commenced in the nineteenth century. The oldest poem of Ilorin authorship is attributed to Shaykh Salih bn Jinta, popularly known as Alimi. It was used to eulogize Shaykh Uthman ibn Fodio, though Shaykh al-Ilory(1982) was skeptical about Alimi being the composer of this poem because of some grammatical errors, which characterized the poem. He submitted that the poem might belong to one of the first generations of Ilorin scholars because of its popularity. The poem partly reads thus:

خذ بكلام العالمين يا أخي **
 العاملين بسنة لا من ربا
 المخلصين الزاهدين الورع **
 الآمرين المنكرين العاصيا
 ومعلمين الناس في أحوالهم **
 أعمالهم أقوالهم متساويا
 قاموا بدين الحق لا من هزلة **
 في الدين في إسرارهم وعلانيا
 لم يلبسوا الحق بباطل أمرهم **
 لم يجعلوا الدين كدين يهوديا
 هذي صفات من صفات الأوليا **
 في الدين من دين الحنيف تفاديا
 شيخ الشيوخ عالم من أوليا **
 ومجدد الدين بحق ناديا
 عثمان من نور الزمان بفضله **
 هذا الزمان لا الزمان الماضي

Keep to the words of the scholars, my brother
 Those who know the Sunnah and act not out of hypocrisy
 Those who are sincere, ascetic, prudent,
 Commanding what is right and forbidding sin
 They uphold the true religion without frivolity
 Openly and in secret
 They dilute not their activities with falsehood
 They practise not their religion like the Jews
 These are the characteristics of the saints
 In the pure religion
 (Their leader) is a scholar of scholars and teacher of teachers.
 That is Uthman the light of the present time
 And not the past period

A great deal of poetry in Ilorin is devoted to eulogy because, according to Abubakre (2006, 103), praise singing is part of the rich oral culture of the Yoruba, who are the majority of the inhabitants of Ilorin. This culture of praise forms a basic element of their public life. In addition to this, Islam, the religion professed by the majority of Ilorin scholars, teaches that good deed should be acknowledged and appreciated. The eulogy like the above in Ilorin was restricted to Muslim rulers and prominent scholars (Abubakre,104). But today praise poetry in Ilorin has been extended to praising individuals or groups within the community. It is being used for

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thanking, appreciating, congratulating people and welcoming special guests to ceremonial occasions, sending-off individuals, apologizing for error, and more importantly, praising and seeking blessings for the Holy Prophet. It was also noted that Ilorin scholars also composed poems to eulogize non-living things, especially the schools that produced them. Due to limited space in this paper, only one example will be given and that would be drawn from Sarumi's poem, which he used in appreciating his mother. Below are few lines from the poem:

أماه قلبي مدي الأيام يهـواك ** وحسي الدهر أن الله يرعـاك
سقيت نبعك قدما صافيا غدقا ** وليس أنّ الهوى زعم فأغـراك
نعم فلي كبـد تشتد لوعته ** حتى أنال بشكر العرف مرضاك
حملتني لشهور ظلت مدتها ** في لجة الوهن والتهليل نجواك
لله درك كم عانيت من ألم ** عند الولادة كيف اليوم أنساك
فداك نفسي من ليل أرقـت به ** واصفرّ من شدة المسعى محياك
وكلما إشتكى عضو أحس به ** أحسست مثلي فلا ندري من الشاكي
وكم شدوت بألحان لترقدني ** حملا علي الصدر مدعوما بيمناك

(Ibraheem & Abubakar,2012)

O My Mother, my heart will forever continue to love you
It will be sufficient for me in life that Allah continues to take care of
you
I once drank from your pure and refreshing source
My love for you is not a fancy claimed in order to deceive you
Indeed I have a liver that is continuously burning
Until I am able to earn your pleasure through appreciating your good
deed
You carried me in your womb for months,
You remain during the period
In the abyss of agony,
Chanting the name of Allah was your night devotion
Only Allah could measure how much pain
You suffered on the day you delivered me;
Why would I then forget you today?
I dedicate my life to you, from those days you woke up at night
Your eyes were red out of severe stress
Whenever I felt pain in any organ of my body
You shared the pain with me;
it was not clear who was really in pain.

The poem is characterized by accurate choice of words, beautiful expressions, and is filled with emotions and imagination that may influence its reader or listener to share

his feelings toward his mother. The prosodic and grammatical rules were applied adequately and are of a high standard.

Another theme that has also gained prominence in poetry in Arabic from Ilorin poets is elegy. Its content generally comprises singing the praise of the dead one, expressing the gravity of losing him and the repercussion of his death to his family, community or nation. It also condoles the family of the deceased and associates. It equally dwells on the philosophy of life and death and prays for the deceased. Elegy, like eulogy, was, at the initial stage, composed for scholars, martyrs and Muslim rulers in Ilorin. It has now developed from elegizing human beings to sympathizing with animals and condoling with a fallen nation like the poem of Ibrahim Shitu, which is an elegy for Kuwait, when it was annexed by Iraq in 1990. An example of sympathizing with animal is better illustrated by Isa Alabi Abubakar((2008): where he says:

يا ديك ما ذنب الصياح ** . تفشيه في الفجر الملاح؟
 وتمدّ عرفك فيه في ** زهو بحب وانشراح
 يصحو به من قد تعـ ** سقم في المنام إلى الصياح
 ويعود يعد الصمت للـ ** دنيا النشاط كذا المراح
 إني رأيتك تلتظي ** يوما بلا أثر الجناح
 تجري ضليلا حائرا ** والنار مسكرة كراح
 هو مشهد سأظل أذ ** كره وفي القلب الجراح

O Cock, what is the offence of your crowing
 That you spread every dawn?
 You expand your gullet while crowing with pride and
 pleasure,
 To the adoration of people you wake up
 Whoever is in slumber
 Gets back to life of activities and merriments
 Today, I witness you being burnt alive
 Without any offence committed
 You were running helter-skelter strayed and bewildered
 It was a scene I would never forget
 While the wound remains in my heart.

In a community where we have different ethnic groups of diverse languages and culture that agree to live together based on Islam, business and politics, there are bound to be differences and the possibility of one ethnic group claiming superiority over the other or a tribe protesting against oppression. This situation was the case during the Umayyad and part of Abbasid periods, when there was a war of superiority between the Arabs and non-Arabs (especially the Persians); this led to the

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emergence of poetry in Arabic on ethnic chauvinism in Ilorin. (Ibraheem, 2009, p135).

The common mock denigration among the different groups and tribes was also in practice in Ilorin, it occurred between the Hausa and the Nupe which inspired Muhammad Al-Takiti to respond to one of the Hausa scholars' mocking of the Nupe in these boastful lines:

إن النفاويين قوم لا نظير لهم ** عند الفصاحة في الأقوال والكرم
أنهم عرب في أرض مغربنا ** فلا نظير لهم في سائر العجم
فإنهم أمناء القوم في عمل ** إن النجابة فيهم غير منعدم
يا ويح شخص أتى في الفضل يحسداهم ** إن المحاسد لا يأتي على اللثم

(Al-Ilory, 1982, p28)

Indeed the Nupe are a group that has no match
When it comes to eloquence and honour
They are Arabs in the West
There is no ethnic group like it among non-Arabs
They are trustworthy when they engage in any work
They are never found wanting in terms of brilliancy
It is unfortunate for anybody who is jealous of it
Jealousy only comes from a Cur.

It also occurred between the Yoruba and the Ebira and this led to Yunus Abdullahi to compose poems on ethnic chauvinism to condemn the Yoruba for abusing and making jest of the Ebira. In the course of that he boasts of what the Ebira, especially the then Governor of Kwara State, who was an Ebira man, had done for Ilorin people and Kwarans in general. The opening line of one of his poems reads thus:

سلامي عليكم، كيف يشتم آدم ** أتانا بفضل الدين في بلد عالم
(Ibraheem, 2002, p140)

May the peace be upon you,
Why abuse Adam (the then governor of Kwara State)
Who brings honour to the religion (Of Islam) in the town of Alimi
(Ilorin)

Politics is another theme to which Ilorin poets contribute immensely. This theme is presented in forms like eulogy, elegy, satire, description, instigation and others. The political poem, initially, usually starts with the praising of the Muslim rulers and description of their victory over their enemies in battles, as well as giving accounts of the battles. It later developed into condemning some policies of the

Colonial Government. This is contained in Ahmad Yanma, who mixes praise and elegy with historical nostalgia in one of his poems. The opening line of the poem, according to Al-Ilory (1982, p46b), reads thus:

أعوذ برب العرش من شر دهرنا ** وشر الـذنين يفعلون بقوة
I seek refuge from the Lord of the throne
From the evil of our time
And the evil of the (Dictators) who use power.

Poems on politics, such as the ones cited above, later developed into focusing on contemporary political situations in Nigeria and the world at large as subjects of discussion. With globalization, the Ilorin poets are able to explore themes such as annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, the latest fall of Bagdad, the Rwanda genocide, the issues and travails of Palestine, the Israel / Palestine peace road map drawn by the Bush Administration in America, the September 11 saga in America, international terrorism and other international political events. Isa Alabi Abubakar's poem on September 11 provides a good example of this type of poetry (Abubakar & Ibraheem,2011, 10):

حادثة روعت العالمما ** خوفاً الجاهل والعالمما
والشر قد كشر أنيابه ** فالتهم الظالم والراحما
نائة من همه وصفها ** يخونه بيانه راغما
سبتمبر الأسود شهر غدا ** يذكره عالمنا ناقما
من يرحم البيض فقد هالهم ** ما شيب الشيخون والناعما؟
أرثي لهم لأنني شاعر ** لا يقبل الإرهاب والظالما
إني امرؤ ذومقة قلبه ** رق ويهمي دمعه ساجما²³

Event which sends jitter across the (whole) world
It frightens the Ignorant and Scholars
Calamity opens his carnivorous claws
And swallows the oppressor and benefactor
A calamity in which its describer
Gets betrayed no matter his expertise
The darkest September, a month the world
Shall continue to remember in sorrow
Please sympathize with the White (the Americans)
For they have been inflicted
With a (fear) that could make the old and the young grow
grey hair
I condole them because I am a poet

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Who detests terrorism and oppression
I am a person whose heart is soft
And who sheds tears profusely

The poet has never visited America, but he is able to monitor all terrorist attacks in his room through the instrument of globalization, satellite stations, internet and others. This enables him to pick and comment on America and world politics in fluent Arabic language devoid of grammatical errors.

Social Poetry (*Ash-Sh'ru'l Ijtima'i*) is another type of poetry in Arabic that has gained popularity in the field of literature in Arabic in Ilorin. There are two categories of social poetry in Ilorin; the first one condemns and criticizes the societal malaise, while the second one describes different societal functions and occasions. Hence, it is meant to congratulate, felicitate or condole. We shall be contented here with the poem of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi al-Ilory which reads partly thus:

ويح قومي جهلوا معنى الحيا ** وأساءوا فيه ختما وابتداء
هكذا قد جهلوا التواضعا ** وبنوه في سجود وانحناء
خلع نعل جعلوه واجبا ** لهم قبل وصول للفناء
وانبطاح لهم عند السلام ** وبروك لهم عند اللقاء
في مقام الحق أوجبوا السكوت ** وأباحوا الكذب والقول الهزاء

(Ibraheem, 2012, p397)

It is unfortunate for my people;
They do not understand the meaning of humility
They totally get it wrong
In the same vain, they misunderstand respect
They base it on bending down and prostrating
Putting off shoes, they make compulsory,
Before getting to their house
And to prostrate when greeting them
To praise whenever you meet them
Where truth must be said,
They make silence compulsory or
Approve telling lies and falsehood

Shaykh Adam here condemns all the acts of enslaving people, propaganda and oppression in the society, which are offensive to Islam. He then explains that humility is to steer clear of whatever will bring dishonour to you; and that respect lies in accepting the truth from whoever it comes from and respecting superior opinion.

Some Ilorin poets have published collections of poems known in Arabic as (*Diwān*) while some are in manuscript. Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory has a *Diwān* called *Allaqtat*; Isa Alabi Abubakar has two namely: *Ar-Riyadh* (2006) and

As-Suba'inyyāt (2007); Thaoban Adam Abdulahi Al-Ilory has *Minal Munajat Walhikami Athaobaniyyah*(2004) and others, Ibrahim Sa'id Olawumi has *Sadaful 'Awatif* (2009), Mustafah Sa'id Olawumi has *Hawiyatul Khalajaat* (2005) Hamid Alhijiri has *Alhadiqatulghannai* . Apart from these *Dawaawin*, there are other compilations which consist of two or three poems which are also published like *Tanbihul Ummatul Islamiyyat fi Madinati Ilorin Wasairil Hawzat an-Nigeriyyah* by Abdulsalam Muhammad Usman ath-Thaqafi. Apart from these most of poems in Arabic from Ilorin remain in the original manuscript.

It should be noted here that some of the works of poets from Ilorin were published in international newspapers and magazines and some of the poets participated in poetry competitions and won prizes. An example of this is Isa Alabi Abubakar, who won the first prize in poetry competition organized by King Saud University in 1990 (Abdul-Hamid & Ibraheem, 2007). The title of the poem is *'Aafatut Tadkhin* (The danger of smoking). This shows that the poetry of some artists from Ilorin is of good quality and of international standard.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, attempt was made to study the contributions of Ilorin scholars to poetry in Arabic in Nigeria. It was discovered that Ilorin scholars contributed immensely to poetry in Arabic through teaching, moulding poets, preservation and publication of poems and studying and appreciating poems in order to make them more understandable, unveil their qualities and, above all, compose more poetry.

It was also discovered that poets in Arabic explore virtually all the popular themes of poetry in Arabic, except the outlandish ones which are considered to be offensive to Islam such as description of alcohol (*khamriyyat*), infidelity(*kufir*) and erotic poems for the male (*al-ghazal bil mudhakkar* . In addition, a good number of their poems are of high quality and can compare with the acceptable standard in the Arab world while some are of relatively low quality.

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