

The Fulani Jihad and Its Impacts on Ilorin's History

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Abstract

This paper investigated the incidence of the Fulani jihad of 19th century with emphasis on the development and impacts on Ilorin's history. Ilorin until the emergent Fulani jihad which goes all the way to the movement of Usman Dan Fodio was a Yoruba settlement that had been a constituent part of the defunct Oyo empire where Afonja, the Are-ona-Kakanfo of the Empire was domiciled. The paper examined the circumstances that gave rise to the influx of the Fulani group into Ilorin from the 19th century. Ilorin was flooded by such emigrants The emergent Fulani Emirate system, which turned to the Sokoto Caliphate became the corollary of such emigration. The study took a critical look at the actions of Afonja whose decision played a pivotal role in the advent and development of the emirate system in Ilorin. This development has been described as what turned the movement into the thrust of the Fulani jihad into Yorubaland. As the new emergent order thrived in Ilorin, which was associated with the Sokoto Caliphate from the nineteenth century, it was not devoid of some impacts. The range of impacts includes political, socio-cultural and economic impacts. These tripartite impacts which are still evident in contemporary times are based on functionalism constituted the basis upon which this paper rests. In this article, it was established that these impacts on Ilorin would not have come into fruition without the role played by Afonja.

Keywords: Fulani, Jihad, Afonja, War, Independent, Empire, Emirates.

Introduction

Hakim, describing Jihad stated that: "The meaning of the concept of *Jihad* in Islamic law based on the Quran and the hadith (2016:35). Etymologically, the word is derived from the Arabic, the second form of Isimmasdar *jaahada* and which means "wholeheartedly" (Mansur, 1992:9). Besides this, the word *Jihad* is sincerity or great effort (Ghafur cited in Hakim,2005:185). The concept of the Jihad in Islamic thought means a holy war undertaken by Muslims against non-Muslims. Fulani Jihad was a movement embarked on by Usman Dan Fodio in the nineteenth century. By far the single most important event in Hausaland and the surrounding countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio (Orugbani, 2005: 14-16). The Fulani began in 1804 as began to depose the Habe dynasties in Hausaland and began to put in their place the Fulani Emirs.

The Fulani Jihad and Ilorin

The Fulani Jihad into Ilorin was as a result of the action of Afonja. Prior to this, Afonja was the *Are-Ona-Kkanfo* of the Old Oyo empire. The tradition of the then Oyo empire prohibit both the Alafin and the *Are-ona-Kakanfo* to reside together in the same place, hence Afonja was domiciled in Ilorin, while the Alafin, Awole resided in the capital of the Oyo empire. The relationship between Alafin, Awole and Afonja deteriorated with time. It is pertinent to note that it was the former that appointed the latter, *Are-ona-Kakanfo* of the Oyo Empire. In 1796, the Alafin of Old Oyo Empire appointed one of his leading military officials called Afonja' as the *Are Ona Kakanfo* (that is generalissimo) of the empire (Agboola,2004;460). The personality conflict that erupted between Afonja and Alafin

Awolaseemed to be the chief *raison d'etre* that laid the foundation upon which the coming of the Fulani Jihad in Ilorin occurred.

Samuel Johnson stated, “Recorded traditions tend to suggest that this element loomed large than other issues. It is related that Awole and Afonja were personal enemies (cited in Ikimi (ed.) 1980: 141). The refusal of Afonja to attack the impregnable town of Iwere as described by Orugbani (2005) could also be seen to have lent credence to the assertion of Samuel Johnson. Rather than obey and risk failure, Afonja revolted showing another crack in the constitution (Orugbani, 2005: 32). In the same vein, Ade-Ajayi and Akintoye remarked that:

Challenges to the authority of the Alafin in the second half of the 18th century by leading civil and military chiefs were signs of the internal instability. At first, the revolt of Afonja, the Are-ona-Kakanfo, head of the Calvary force, appeared to be just another one such challenges. He set about building up Ilorin, where he was based, as an independent town. In his rebellion, he received the support of other leading chief sat Oyo who had their own grievance against the Alafin. Afonja had the support of a few Muslims, led by Alimi, a Fulani cleric (cited in Ikimi (ed.) 1980: 283).

The statement of Ade-Ajayi and Akintoye (1980) as suggested above did not appear to contrast with other extant literature, but stands out as the most important of forms of help he received In order to buttress the point being made, Akinjogbin and Ayandele opined that: “Around 1823, Afonja proclaimed what in modern parlance, would be called a revolution of the peasant when all Hausa slaves in the adjacent towns hitherto employed as barbers, rope-makers and cowherds, now deserted their masters and flocked into Ilorin under the standard of Afonja, the *Kakanfo*” (cited in Ikimi (ed.) 1980:142).

Subsequently, Orugbani and Morgan in their exposition, were not averse to the view of Akinjogbin and Ayandele (1980). For the former, opined that: “The Fulani foothold in Ilorin was consolidated when Afonja, Governor of Ilorin and the *Are-Ona-Kakanfo* of Old Oyo Empire, revolted and relied on Mallam Alimi, a Fulani scholar in Ilorin, for the supply of mercenaries” (Orugbani, 2005: 33). Whilst the latter, remarked thus: “Afonja sought the help of the Fulani in order to realize his ambition. He made friends with Alimi (Morgan,1977: 17). Though a non-Muslim, Afonja obviously had faith in the power of Islamic prayers and charms made by Alimi so much that he became wholly dependent on Alimi for spiritual guidance and support, thereby putting himself at Alimi’s mercy (Abdulwahab, 2007:73).

At this point, it is noteworthy that the overwhelming consensus in some of these extant literatures that came to light did not translate to the emergence of the Fulani Jihad in Yorubaland. The point at which it came to fruition was vividly captured by Akinjogbin and Ayandele when they opined that: “What appears probable is that Afonja’s bid to form a peasant republic under himself misfired. The strangers he had invited to aid him turned against him, seized the leadership from his descendants after killing him in battle and turned the movement into the thrust of the Fulani jihad into the Yorubaland (cited in Ikimi (ed.) 1980:142-143). This account of Akinjogbin and Ayandele brings to light, the commencement of the Fulani jihad in Yorubaland as Ilorin became the base from where several attempts were made to replicate what occurred in Ilorin in other Yorubaland. The jihad in Hausaland came to an end in 1809, but fighting for the establishment of emirates as part of a wider

Caliphate continued in places throughout the first half of the 19th century. In the 1820s the emirates on Nupe and Ilorin were established (Abubakar in Ikimi (ed.) 1980: 103).

Political impact

The most profound effect of the Fulani jihad on Ilorin centered on the emergent emirate system in Ilorin. The immediate result of Afonja's death was that Ilorin, a Yoruba town, came directly under Fulani control (Morgan, 1977:18). Abdulwahab corroborated this when he opined that: "The death of Afonja saw the establishment of the emirate system of administration in Ilorin with Abdulsalami proclaiming himself as emir in 1823" (2007:77). Owing to the demise of Afonja, there were strong indications that the Fulani elements in Ilorin were unwavering to establish themselves in power in an era that they assumed political authority of Ilorin, which paved the way for their entrenchment, especially the dominant role the Fulani element had to play from that period in the politics of Ilorin.

The Sokoto Caliphate to which Ilorin had become an integral part seemed to have impressed the Caliphate, it was this understanding that the Caliphate authorities provided the necessary support and confidence to the pioneer emir of Ilorin, Abdulsalam and consequently legitimized Fulani rule in Ilorin (Abdulwahab, 2007:105). The support and legitimization of Fulani hegemony in Ilorin bolstered the emergent emirate system in Ilorin in its imperial conquest of Yorubaland. The Ilorin – Ibadan conflicts were to survive all of these other complications. The Ilorin and Ibadan armies then returned home and the Ekitiparapo forces were disbanded. The greatest and the longest of the 19th century wars had come to an end (Ade-Ajayi and Akintoye cited in Ikimi (ed.) 1980: 292).

With the conquest interest of the Fulani group in Ilorin coming to an end, attention was shifted to the consolidation of its hegemony over Ilorin as the years progressed into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As the years went by, however there were reforms in the Emirate system as the quest for political inclusion of Oyo-Ile people came to light. The emergent Mogaji who ranks next to the emir of Ilorin was the corollary of such reforms yet in a town where the Oyo-Ile people are the aborigines, the emirate system, which was a major import of the elimination of Afonja have continued to play that dominant role in Ilorin's political history.

The account of O' Hear underscored this dominant role in the following manner:

Ilorin town under the Fulani dynasty was divided into five wards for purposes of administration. One, the Emir's was administered by the Mogaji Gari, an official who was also the Emir's intermediary in relations with his overlord at Gwandu. Some members of the Yoruba population, it may be noted, were placed in wards other than those controlled by the Yoruba Baloguns, Ibagun, sub-ward, though Yoruba in population was included in the Gambari ward, Idiape area, home of the family of Afonja was included in the Emir's ward (1983:5).

Such inclusion tends to reinforce that dominant role of the Fulani in a town that going by all accounts they were not the aborigines; they have emerged on the scene as the leading figure in the political history of the town.

Socio-cultural Impact

There seemed to be many aspects of the socio-cultural impact, the Fulani Jihad had had on the history. One of such areas that have been affected is in the area of religion. The Sokoto Caliphate to which Ilorin belonged was not a unitary state but one which the, like the present Nigeria, comprised autonomous emirates each with its emir and government (Abubakar cited in Ikimi (ed.)1980:304). This draws attention to the fact that an autonomous emirate entity such as Ilorin could not have been immune from the practice of the Islamic religion. The impact of the Islamic religion in Ilorin, may not have had the kind of effect in the fabric of the Ilorin society were it not for the rebellion embarked upon by Afonja. In fact, Ade-Ajayi and Akintoye while examining the reasons behind the rebellion carried out by the Fulani group against Afonja came close to identifying religion as one of the causes of the rebellion against Afonja.

As they put it: “Within a short while, however, Afonja fell out with his Fulani allies. He refused to become a Muslim” (cited in Ikimi (ed.) 1980:283). This underscored the fact that the Islam as a religion had made its way into the social fabric of the Ilorin society from the time such an event occurred, which could be traced to the nineteenth century. With the passage of time, emergent Muslim population had swelled in the fabric of the Ilorin society. The ever-swelling number of Muslim population could not have been divorced from the Yoruba population that embraced the Islamic religion with time. The conversion of the Yoruba population constituted one of the many aspects of the socio-cultural impact brought to bear on Ilorin history occasioned by the successful Fulani Jihad in Ilorin. The Yoruba elements by the 1860s and afterwards also became gradually absorbed into Islam (Abdulwahab, 2007:124).

Besides this religion aspect, was and is the Muslim names taken up by people of Yoruba extraction in Ilorin. There are countless evidences that points at this in Ilorin’s history. It is equally important to stress that the presence of the Fulani group vis-à-vis the proximity of the settlement pattern over the years have, made it possible of parents of Yoruba heritage to have their offspring being given Muslim names, especially amongst families that had embraced the Muslim religion. Yoruba names are rarely considered in such homes and families; as Muslim names takes precedence. In this wise, religion replicates itself in a different in an unending effect derived from the Islamic religion, which has eaten deep into the fabric of the Ilorin society. The point being made from the foregoing explanations is that the inclined to take up Muslim names are real and have not wane in contemporary times by the Yoruba stock in Ilorin.

Again, another variant of the impact the Fulani Jihad had on Ilorin within the broader context of religion in this case Islam was the resultant support given by the Yoruba Muslim population during the period when the Fulani group were trying to establish themselves in Ilorin. Perhaps, this was why the general concern for the spread of Islam ran so high in the minds of Yoruba Muslims in Ilorin that they supported the Fulani not only in their rise to political prominence in Ilorin but also in the several expansionist wars targeted at their kinsmen in the neighbouring Yoruba communities in South-western Nigeria (Abdulwahab, 2007:125).

More so, was the advice by the Emir to the colonial government against granting permission to Christian missionaries to operate and establish in the Southern district of Ilorin constituted an impact that cannot be relegated to the background (Afolayan cited in Agboola,2003:48). Thus, it could be inferred that the dual nature of both religions (Christianity and Islam) thriving in Ilorin was not of uttermost importance in Ilorin, which could not have been divorced from the disposition of the Fulani dynasty that emerged. The account of Rajiis very instructive in this circumstance, as he averred that:“In 1950, Gabriel Adeoye who had been duly selected by the kingmakers and people of Oke-Onigbin (among the Igbomina) as their Oba was rejected by the Emir and, therefore, by the

government, because he was a Christian” (cited in Agboola, 2003:48). The mutual corollary of this disposition of the Emir was the emergent religious intolerance in Ilorin.

Economic Impact

The Yoruba population in Ilorin was reported to have made the collection or imposition of tax impossible such as *Jangali* and *Jizya* quite unacceptable to the people (Abdulwahab, 2007:187). It was against this backdrop, that at the inception of colonial rule in Ilorin, tax extraction on the Yoruba citizens was strongly resisted, particularly as it concerned the Yorubas located within the Southern province. As Folola was quoted as saying: “Colonial taxation was not initially an acceptable economic reform policy due to its alien nature in Yorubaland “(cited in Abdulwahab, 2007:188). The statement credited to Folola could be as well be interpreted to mean that prior to the emergence of the Fulani dynasty, the Yoruba group were not used to the payment of taxation, but was tenable in the core North. Therefore, it is in this context that the 1913 tax riot that broke out in Ilorin could be understood.

The colonial government in its desire to achieving this, was not averse to the idea of encouraging all eligible tax payers to be engaged in profitable economic undertakings among which were said to be cash crop production which would naturally engender their economic status and invariably provides them enough returns in terms of profit via which the payment of their taxes could as well be realized. Apart from such encouragement said to have been given to the citizens to engage in cash crop production, the colonial government via the political reorganizations embarked upon during the World War 1, was reported to have assigned fief-holders who were now residents in the districts of Ilorin Province to help in the assignment of tax collection.

Whilst the colonial government enlisted for the support of the fief-holders in this task of tax collection on its behalf, the colonial government in Nigeria’s interest aimed at ensuring that tax evasion did not wane. This was evident by the decision of the colonial government to have provided district heads with the authority to enforce tax payment as a way of making these district heads to live up to colonial anticipations, it was reported that they were always held responsible for any tax evasion which the administration experienced or recorded in their respective districts (cited in Abdulwahab,2007:188).

Again, horse trade could be seen as a fundamental impact that could be reckoned with in the sphere of economic impact of the Fulani jihad on Ilorin’s history. The account of O’Hear (1983) revealed that horses were bought from Hausaland and Borno. Although, it was said that the Sultan of Sokoto prohibited its sale to Ilorin and Nupe, it however went on unhindered. That only limited export trade in horses but was permitted by Ilorin to the other Yoruba states further south. as suggested also by the high prices which were paid for them, compared with Ilorin, in the other states (Hear, 1983).

Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, the emergent Ilorin emirate was one of the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, caused by the early nineteenth jihad in the Northern part of Nigeria led by Usman Dan Fodio in 1804. However, it was after two decades in the nineteenth that Fulani dynasty emerged on the scene in Ilorin. With the establishment of the Ilorin emirate, which became part of the Sokoto Caliphate was therefore not without some impact among which are political, socio-cultural and economic. Of these trio, the political impact seemed to have the most profound impact. Thus, the conclusion that could be drawn from this study, is that had it not been for the role Afonja played,

such impact would not have risen in Ilorin's history. The political impact which had the most profound impact resonates with some global situations. From the foregoing, accounts the experiences of Afonja and Alimi in the history of Ilorin can be likened to several historical events or historical personages in different parts of the globe. To situate such similarity being likened to, few instances readily come to mind. One, the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Empire (1519-1521). The Spanish conquistador, Herman Cortes led an expedition to the Americas and encountered the powerful Aztec Empire in what is now present-day Mexico. Cortes formed alliance with some disaffected native allies, including a noble named Malinche who played a pivotal role in helping him topple the Aztec ruler, Montezuma II. The conquest eventually led to the fall of the Aztec empire and the establishment of Spanish colonial rule in the region. Similarly, Afonja 's alliance with Alimi, a Fulani cleric, led to the overthrow of the Old Oyo Empire and the rise of the Sokoto Caliphate's influence in the region to which Ilorin was not exempted.

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