ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP AND YORUBA IDENTITY: THE INTELLECTUAL DIALOGUE OF ADAM ABDULLAH AL-ALŪRĪ AND MUSTAPHA ZUGLŪL AL-SANUSI'S HISTORICAL WRITINGS

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Keywords

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Abstract

Research Problem: *Despite the fact that there are numerous and significant intellectual contributions of Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilūrī (1917–1992) and Shaykh Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sanusi (1937–2014) to Yoruba Islamic historiography, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the intellectual discourse between their historical writings, specifically regarding how they employed Islamic frameworks to reinterpret Yoruba origins, migration, Islamization, and identity, and the methodological controversies these interpretations generated.*
Methods/Theory: *This research adopts a qualitative and comparative historiographical approach, while it critically examined the primary Arabic texts of al-Ilūrī and al-Sanusi alongsi. It draws on Ibn Khaldun's historiographical principles that both scholars claimed to follow, and evaluates their use of oral tradition, archaeological evidence, written sources, and socio-linguistic analysis.*
Results: *The research indicates that both scholars constructed a narrative which connected Yoruba origins to Arab/Middle Eastern ancestry, using converging methodologies including Isnād-based oral tradition, chronological arrangement, and causal analysis. However, their works were guided by religious and nationalistic sentiments, inciting significant criticism regarding source referencing, factual contradictions, and selective interpretation from contemporaries such as Adam Yahya al-Fulāni and R.D. Abubakre.*
Conclusion: *Al-Ilūrī and al-Sanusi's historical writings constitute a sustained intellectual discourse harmonising Islamic universalism with Yoruba particularism, transforming history into a medium for cultural affirmation despite methodological limitations.*
Key Contribution to Knowledge: The study depicts the first comparative

analysis citing al-Ilūrī and al-Sanusi's works as a coherent intellectual dialogue rather than isolated scholarly efforts, clarifying their shared historiographical methodology and its critical reception.
Recommendations: *Further research should critically re-examine oral and archaeological sources underlying Yoruba-Arab origin claims, and scholars should adopt more standard refrencing to strengthen the empirical credibility of Yoruba Islamic historiography.*

1.0 Introduction

The connection of Islamic scholarship and Yoruba identity creates one of the most fascinating intellectual developments in twentieth-century South Western Nigeria (Abdulsalam & Adeogun, 2018:255). As Islam strongly advanced in Yoruba socio-religious life from the nineteenth century onward, Muslim scholars increasingly adapted historical writing as a means of articulating communal identity, legitimacy, and civilizational memory (Abdulsalam, 2022:122). Within this milieu, Islamic historiography evolved beyond devotional narratives into structured historical reflection influenced by Arabic literary traditions and reformist impulses. The rise of modern Arabic-trained Yoruba '*ulamā* created a new intellectual climate in which questions of origin, migration, and political transformation were revisited through Islamic lenses (Abubakre, 1994:112). It was in this context that the historical descriptive writing also became more ideological, serving as a platform for discussing the relationship between faith, ethnicity, and modernity.

Also, Adam 'Abdullāh al-Ilūrī (1917–1992) and Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sanusi (1937–2014) were prominent contributors to this discourse, whose historical writings engage the common Yoruba origins' themes of Islamization and civilizational identity (Al-Ilūrī, 1978: 15–21; al-Sanusi, 1987: 22–30). Both scholars who were deeply trained within the Arabic-Islamic scholarly tradition and influenced by classical Muslim historiography, particularly the methodological reflections of Ibn Khaldun, sought to reinterpret Yoruba history within broader Afro-Arab and Islamic perspective (Al-Ilūrī, 1982: 9–14). Their works addressed themes such as migration theories, the role of Islam in state formation, the Sokoto Jihad's impact on Yorubaland, and the evaluation of earlier colonial- missionary historiography (al-Sanusi, 1987:75–82). Consequently, they positioned Islamic scholarship as both an epistemological medium and a cultural resource for redefining Yoruba historical consciousness.

This intellectual engagement was however not without dispute. Critics have questioned the extent to which religious commitments formed their interpretations of oral traditions, archaeological materials, and linguistic evidence (Abubakre, 2004:201–205). Nevertheless, the historiographical significance of al-Ilūrī and Zuglūl is rooted in their attempt to harmonize Islamic universalism with Yoruba particularism, thereby constructing a narrative that admitted both religious orthodoxy and ethnic dignity. Their writings reflect a broader twentieth-century trend in which African Muslim scholars adapted history as a medium for cultural defense and reform (Hunwick, 1999:56–60).

While many significant studies have examined al-Ilūrī's contributions (Abubakre, 1994) and al-Sanusi's works (Oladosu, 2018) individually, and others have addressed broader themes of Yoruba Islamic identity (Abdulsalam, 2022; Peel, 2016), no study has

systematically positioned their historical writings as a connected intellectual dialogue built on a shared teacher-student relationship, common source material, and a shared commitment to Ibn Khaldun's historiographical principles. Prior researchers tend to treat their works in isolation, leaving unclear how their individual contributions built upon, reinforced, or diverged from one another in influencing a distinctly Islamic account of Yoruba history. This study fills this gap by providing the first comparative analysis of their works as a sustained intellectual discourse. An examination of their works, therefore, elucidates not only the methodological dimensions of Yoruba Muslim historiography but also the intersection of Islam and identity in modern West Africa.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Islamic scholarship among the Yoruba produced a distinctive body of historical writing in the twentieth century, but the works of two of its most prolific contributors, Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilūrī and his student Shaykh Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sanusi, have not been thoroughly examined as an interchanged thoughts. Although both scholars wrote comprehensively on Yoruba origins, migration, Islamization, and the impact of the Sokoto Jihad on Yorubaland, existing scholarship tends to treat their writings distinctively rather as a sustained exchange of ideas built on a shared teacher-student relationship, common source material, and a common allegiance to Ibn Khaldun's historiographical principles. This gap leaves unclear how their individual contributions built upon, reinforced, or diverged from one another in shaping a distinctly Islamic account of Yoruba history.

3.0 Research Objectives

The objective of this paper is to:

1. Examine the historical writings of al-Ilūrī and al-Sanusi as a connected intellectual discourse, tracing their teacher-student relationship and shared themes on Yoruba origins, migration, Islamization and the Sokoto Jihad.
2. Analyse the sources and methodologies adopted by both scholars, particularly their use of oral tradition, archaeology and socio-linguistic evidence.
3. Assess the extent to which religious conviction and cultural sentiment shaped their historical interpretations, and to evaluate their overall significance for Yoruba Muslim historical consciousness.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Islamic Scholarship in Yorubaland

Islamic scholarship in Yorubaland reflects an important part of the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria. Islam has not only served as a religion from its early introduction but also as a major source of knowledge, culture, and social reform. The spread of Islam within the Yorubaland around the fourteenth century created a new educational movement that promoted literacy through Arabic and Qur'anic learning. This educational renaissance laid the foundation for a well-grounded tradition of learning that later evolved into organized institutions and intellectual networks. Islamic scholarship as a result, became a means of moral instruction, identity formation, and cultural discourse among Yoruba Muslims (Peel, 2016:45).

The early phase of Islamic learning in Yorubaland depended on informal madrasa and zāwiyah systems, where Alfas and ʿ*ulamā*ʾ taught the Qur'an, Hadith, and Fiqh in homes and mosques, particularly in towns such as Ilorin, Iwo, Ede, Oyo, and Ibadan (Balogun, 1982:78). Itinerant scholars from Mali, Bornu, and Hausaland further augmented this tradition by establishing study circles and introducing

wider West African Islamic intellectual networks (Abdulsalam, 2019:53). Arabic literacy formed the foundation of this educational system, granting access to the Qur'an and classical Islamic texts. As Islam developed locally, Yoruba scholars innovated Ajami through the use of Arabic script to write Yoruba and translate Islamic concepts into familiar cultural idioms. Propagated by figures such as Alfa Nofiu and Alfa Alimi, Ajami writings strengthened religious understanding, literary creativity, and intellectual autonomy among Yoruba Muslims (Oladosu, 2012:112).

The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries marked the consolidation of Islamic education in Yorubaland, with Ilorin emerging as the principal centre of Islamic scholarship after its incorporation into the Sokoto Caliphate, while towns such as Iwo, Ede, Ikirun, Epe, Ibadan, and Lagos witnessed the growth of organized Qurʾānic and Arabic schools (Abdulsalam, 2025:7). This period signifies a remarkable growth in Arabic learning, initiated by scholars such as Abū Bakr ibn al-Qāsim (Alfa Alaga of Ibadan, d. 1882), founder of the Oke-Aremo school, and Aḥmad al-Rufāʿī ibn Muḥammad Bello (1851–1917), who established the influential Oke-Are institute in Ibadan. Other prominent figures included ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥasan (Alfa Okekoto, d. 1920), Harun Kātibī, Mudathir ʿAbd al-Salām, Sanusi Alaka, and Matala Gaa Agodi. In Ilorin, scholars such as Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr Omo Ikokoro (1870–1936) advanced Qurʾānic education under Muḥammad Belgore al-Fulānī (d. 1913), who introduced advanced Arabic grammar and logic, alongside Musa Birabwati Layli, al-Busayrī, and Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Dirāmī (d. 1915). Collectively, these scholars laid enduring intellectual and institutional foundations for Arabic-Islamic education in Yorubaland, influencing later reformers including Shaykh Kamāl al-Dīn al-Adabī and Shaykh Adam ʿAbdullāh al-Ilūrī (Oladosu, 2018:61).

The institutionalization of Islamic learning redefined education by integrating traditional subjects such as tafsīr (Qur'anic exegesis), ḥadīth (Prophetic traditions), and fiqh (Jurisprudence) with modern administrative structures. Yoruba Islamic scholarship underscored both intellectual and moral formation. The curriculum included Arabic grammar (*naḥw*), rhetoric (*balāghah*), jurisprudence, logic (*manṭiq*), and Sufism (taṣawwuf). Advanced students studied classical texts such as *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* and *Alfiyyah Ibn Mālik* under prominent teachers with established scholarly lineages. Yoruba scholars also composed original Arabic treatises and Yoruba Ajami poetry addressing local religious, ethical, and social concerns. Through their writings, they adapted Islamic legal and theological principles in to Yoruba socio-cultural contexts, creating a syncretic intellectual tradition that harmonized faith and culture (Oladosu, 2018:80-85).

The ʿ*Ulamāʾ* played diverse roles such as educators, preachers, judges, and moral guardians within the Yoruba Muslim communities. Their influence extended beyond the mosque to community leadership, mediation, and the administration of justice. They issued *fatāwā* (legal opinions) on matters such as family law, inheritance, and commercial transactions in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence. Esteemed scholars such as Kamāl al-Dīn al-Adabī, Adam Abdullahi al-

Ilūrī, Murithada Abdulsalam, and Mustapha Zuglūl Sanusi were celebrated for their piety, erudition, and enduring contributions to Islamic scholarship, particularly through the establishment of Arabic schools in Yorubaland. Through their leadership and intellectual legacy, the ʿ*Ulamāʾ* significantly shaped Yoruba Muslim identity, emphasizing discipline, justice, and moral rectitude as essential values of Islamic life (Oloyede, 2014:140–146).

The advent of British colonialism in Nigeria interrupted the traditional pattern of Islamic learning. Colonial authorities gave precedence to Western education and dismissed Arabic-Islamic schools as "unmodern." This marginalization created tension between Islamic and Western educational systems. In response, Yoruba Muslims established voluntary organizations such as the Ansar-ud-Deen Society (founded in 1923) and the Nawair-ud-Deen Society, which integrated Islamic values with modern curricula. These organizations preserved Islamic identity while enabling Muslims to participate in modern professions. The hybrid system of education they pioneered became a hallmark of Yoruba Muslim intellectualism and a model for Muslim reform movements across Nigeria (Peel, 2016:165–169).

The postcolonial period saw the institutional growth of Islamic scholarship within the formal educational structures. Universities such as University of Ibadan and University of Ilorin introduced departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies, producing academically trained scholars who intergrated traditional and modern disciplines. Personalities such as Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede and Abdulrasheed Na'Allah enriched the study of Arabic and Islam through research and policy engagement. The establishment of such programs marked a shift from mosque-based instruction to formalised, globally recognised scholarship (Oloyede, 2014:148).

4.2 Yoruba Muslim Historiography

Scholarship on the historical writings of the Yoruba *'ulamā'* has advanced largely along descriptive rather than analytical lines, detailing Muslim scholarship broadly while rarely interrogating its methodological foundations. Bidmus's (1972) *A Literary Appraisal of the Arabic Writings of the Yoruba 'Ulamā'* is regularly treated as the field's starting point, yet an internal critique from within the same scholarly lineage, Bidmus observed that despite its title's promise of literary analysis, the work amounts largely to a compilation "without paying any serious attention to the literary study" of the material it surveys. Abubakre's (2004) *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South-Western Nigeria* and his (2006) essay on Ilorin's role in Arabic scholarship display a similar tendency: both widen scope usefully for context but stop short of sustained scrutiny of any single historian's handling of sourcing, chronology, or causation, functioning closer to annotated bibliographies than critical historiography.

Genuine critique in the literature clusters either a narrow evidentiary extreme or a broad ideological one, with little scholarship occupying the middle ground of close, source-by-source assessment. Abubakre's (1989) *Qaba'il Yurba min khilāl āthār al-dārisīn* exemplifies the former: subjecting the socio-linguistic claims behind Yoruba-Arab kinship theories to close scrutiny, Abubakre demonstrated that apparent lexical resemblances were more plausibly the product of loanwords than of shared ancestry, a rare instance of a scholar within the Arabic-Islamic tradition critically testing the claims of fellow *'ulamā'*, though the rebuttal rests on linguistic evidence alone and does not extend to the archaeological or oral-traditional claims raised alongside it. Ubah's (2001) *Islam in African History* represents the latter extreme, indicting Muslim historiography broadly for undisclosed reliance on secondary sources,

religious partisanship, and lack of objectivity. This is a valuable discipline-neutral corrective, but it is also asymmetric: Ubah engaged extensively with Hausa-Fulani scholarship on the Sokoto Caliphate while giving almost no attention to the parallel Yoruba Muslim historiographical tradition, limiting the force of his judgment when applied specifically to Yoruba historians.

A number of studies fall between these poles, providing real methodological contributions limited by narrow sourcing. Abdul Rahmon's (1989) study of Arabic poetry in Ibadan practically treated poetry as historical evidence for reconstructing the religious dimension of the 1895 deposition of Baale Dada Opadere, while relying heavily on internal Muslim testimony without an exclusion of the independent colonial or missionary accounts. Gbadamosi's (1997) work situated Muslim historical writing within the broader growth of Islam and took indigenous religious testimony seriously as evidence, yet engaged only lightly with the Arabic-language primary sources produced by the *'ulamā'* themselves. Danmole's (1983) close philological reading of a single praise poem demonstrated the value of textual precision but still misfired on a point of authorship, showing that philological rigor cannot substitute for secure biographical grounding.

A further weakness recurring across the biographical literature is the blurring of hagiography with historical evaluation. Olagunju's (1986) thesis on Shaykh Adam Abdullah explicitly canonizes its subject as "a great historian" before his claims are independently tested, allowing a scholar's standing within the Islamic scholarly community to substitute for an assessment of his evidentiary rigor. The most rigorous external challenge to the oral-traditional foundations of this scholarship comes from Robin Law (1976), whose argument that "genuine" oral tradition becomes progressively harder to isolate from the interpretive interventions of local historians such as Samuel Johnson raises an unresolved question for Yoruba Muslim historians, who relied just as heavily on oral testimony redefined to fit an Islamic universalist context. Abdullahi Smith's caution against the uncritical use of narrative genres (*ḥikāyāt* and *qiṣaṣ*) as historical fact, and Alagoa's (1987) defence of oral tradition's embedded chronology, further revealed that, frameworks developed for oral tradition generally have not always been carefully adapted to the distinct evidentiary character of Arabic-script Muslim historical writing.

4.3 An Overview of Adam Abdullah al-Alūrī and Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sanusi

Al-Ilūrī has been the major subject of inquiry in the literature. The earliest is Olagunju's (1986) unpublished thesis, which offered a translation with commentary of al-Ilūrī's *Nizam al-ta'lim al-'Arabi wa tarikhuhu fi al-'alam al-Islami*, treating him explicitly as "a great historian" and thereby establishing his individual reputation within Nigerian Arabic and Islamic studies scholarship. This was followed decades later by biographical and reformist-focused studies from outside the immediate Yoruba Arabic-studies tradition: Gambo Hassan and Bello (2019) assessed his contribution to Arabic and Islamic education in western Nigeria. Olanrewaju and Gambari (2023) examined his personality and reforming activities in Yorubaland, explicitly noting in their work that his scholarship "has not been adequately researched by western scholars". Likewise, al-Fulani (2007) and Abubakre (1989) works addressed al-Ilūrī's socio-linguistic argumentation. In most of these literatures, al-Ilūrī appears in the form of a detailed biographical sketch, his birth in Wasa, his education under his father and itinerant Hausa scholars, and his founding of *Markaz al-Ta'lim al-'Arabi al-Islami*.

In contrast, Al-Sanusi has received a less independent scholarly attention. The only individual study of al-Sanusi's own writing is the author's earlier annotated translation of one of his non-historical works, *Saya'ud al-Arab ila Falastain*, a study of his position on the Palestinian struggle rather than of his historical methodology (Lawal, 1994). Outside the source document, the only substantial individual engagement identified is Sanni's (2023) review of the English translation and annotation of al-Sanusi's *Azhar ar-Ruba fi Akhbar Bilad Yawruba*, useful for situating the work bibliographically, but a book review rather than a sustained critical or historiographical study. Therefore, the resulting gap identified so far is that, no existing study in literature has offered a dedicated and full-length historiographical assessment of al-Ilūrī's and al-Sanusi's historical writings on Yoruba identity.

5.0 Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative and comparative historiographical methodology grounded in critical textual analysis of primary and secondary sources. The primary data comprise of the original Arabic-language historical writings of Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilūrī, notably *Aslu Qabā'il Yūrubā wal-Qabā'il al-Mujāwirat Lahā fī Naijīriyah* (1991) and *Shaykh Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sanusi's Azharu 'r-Rubā fī Akhbāri Bilādi Yūrubā* (1987), which are examined closely for their treatment of Yoruba origins, migration, Islamization, and state formation. Primary sources were selected based on their direct authorship by al-Ilūrī or al-Sanusi and their explanation of themes such as origin, migration, Islamization and political transformation. Secondary sources were selected for their critical engagement with the two scholars' works, their contribution to the wider debate on Yoruba origins, and their methodological and theoretical importance to the study. Sources published between 1970 and 2024 were prioritized to capture the development of the discourse over this period.

6.0 Theoretical Framework

Ibn Khaldun's (1377/1967) historiographical theory is adopted for this work. This study contributes to the development of historiographical context by applying it to a modern African context and demonstrating its utility as a critical lens for evaluating contemporary historical writing. It shows that while al-Ilūrī (1991) and al-Sanusi (1987) claimed to follow Khaldunian principles, their actual practice reveal the tension between the ideal of objective historical analysis and the demands of religious and cultural affirmation. This application of Khaldunian principles to modern Yoruba historiography extends the framework's relevance beyond its classical Islamic context and demonstrates its enduring value for critical historical analysis in African studies.

7.0 Results

7.1 Islamic Scholarship and Yoruba Identity Debate

Shaykhs Adam Abdullah al-Ilūri and Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sanusi appeared to be in a class of their own. Apart from the Islamic perspective which they both adopted in their writings, their methodological approaches distinguished them from other later Yoruba *'ulamā*. Their contributions to historical writings in Yorubaland in terms of quantities and qualities eclipsed other members of this group. Their writings and research methodologies compete favourably with modern writers of history. They were among the very few among the Nigerian *'ulamā* who have preponderance of history writing in their literary productions. A critical appraisal of their works was made in this section. Also, attempts were made to examine other sources of information used by both Al-Iluri and

Zuglūl in their historical writings referred to earlier. Also, both writers claimed to have adopted and adhered strictly to Ibn Khaldun's principles on historical writing. The study examined the extent to which they applied these principles in their individual works.

Although Oral traditions formed a major source of information for the historical writings of both Al-Ilūrī and Zaglūl, they have equally made use of other sources as well. These sources include; archaeological findings, anthropological evidence and written evidence. The use of a social- linguistic approach equally serves as a useful source of information in their writings. Al-Ilūri in *asl qaba'il Yoruba* tries to establish that Africa was the original homeland of the Negroes. He made reference to a report allegedly ascribed to Herodotus that Negroes were found in the Libyan Desert. The information went further to describe the nature of the people found in the desert. According to the report, the people were black in skin and short in height. Al-Ilūri thus referred to an archaeological finding in Ile-Ife and other parts of Yorubaland of an image which to him shared some common features with these people found in the Libyan Desert. He says:

> What bears testimony to their short-stature are statues found at Ile-Ife and other Yoruba towns which do not exceed two or one and half feet in height (Abubakre, 2004:280).

He also cited examples of series of excavation activities carried out by geologists and archaeologists throughout the length and breadth of the universe from Asia, to Europe and Africa, digging out materials of ancient civilizations. Items dug out include farming tools of ancient, carved sculptures made of wood and even human skulls of old, which have been covered with dust. Al-Ilūrī used the instances given above to prove the age long history of man's existence on earth as against the claims of some theologists who put the existence of man on earth since creation at a little above six thousand years (Al-Iluri, 1991:49-50).

The use of archaeological evidence was equally employed by Zuglul to ascertain the genetical relationship of the Yoruba with one of Arab lineage. He says:

> The genetically connection of the Yoruba tribe with one of the Arab tribes may not be unconnected with some of these factors, among which are the present of statues that were carved from trees, stones and coppers in Yorubaland, the antiquities stumbled upon by archaeologists at Ile-Ife and from other ancient Yoruba cities, also from things that were handed down from its ancient people are (all) authentic proof that the Yoruba have great share of art work and have a strong connection of family relationship and tie with the ancient Egyptians (Al-Sunusi, 1987:34).

Written evidences form another major source of information for the historical writing of both Al-Iluri and Zuglul. These source materials are primarily from local books written in Arabic, English or Yoruba languages. Among these books, some are not easily accessible such as the work of Muhammad Masanih (d. 1667). However, *Infāq 'I-maysūr* of Muhammad Bello and Johnson's *History of the Yoruba* were duly acknowledged. But the latter two were severely criticized by al-Ilūri for incoherent presentation of fact (Al-Ilūrī, 1991:92). Their secondary materials are foreign sources, mostly they referred to the history of North Africa and some are relevant to the major empires and trading zones in West Africa. Both admire the philosophy and approach to history as formulated by Ibn Khaldun and they both seem to have imbibed his method of presentation of fact. Al-Ilūri, while laying a foundation for his argument in support of the coinage of Yoruba from the name of a prominent leader of Arabian descent, called Ya'rab Ibn Qahaṭān, based his argument

on the findings of Ibn Khaldun. The latter is reported to have said that no information reached them that Ya'rab bn. Qahtan conquered any land in Persia, Babylon or Iraq (Al-Ilūrī, 1991:92). Another instance was used by Al-Ilūri when he covertly referred to a well-known theory of Ibn Khaldun which states that most times the tendency is that a conquered nation tries to imitate the conqueror in all things. Based on this principle al-Ilūri argued that the emigrant Yoruba are more civilized than the aborigines they met at *Ife*, hence the aborigines had to succumb to the more superior civilization of the Yoruba migrants and imitate them in all affairs. Al-Ilūrī's brilliant pupil Mustafa Zuglūl al-Sanusi demonstrated an exceptional grasp of Ibn Khaldun's principles when he used the above theory of the latter to justify that the Yoruba are the true founders of Ilorin. In another occasion, Zuglūl employed the principle of Ibn Khaldun to explain the cause of the fall of old Oyo which he ascribed to the widespread of atrocities. He quoted an excerpt from Ibn Khaldun's principle which says;

> When corruption is too strong, the lungs become sick. These are the plagues, and its ailment is restricted only to the lungs. Even when the atrocity is weak and less, it increases the decay (of the heart) and consequently increases the fever which makes the body sick and subsequently destroyed (Al-Ilūrī, 1991:72-76).

Al-Ilūri further distinguished himself as a leading historian among his group when he devised a socio- linguistic evidence and cultural traits to support his claims that the Yoruba people were of Arab stock. Most of the words he made reference to have striking similarities with the original words in Arabic while he gave examples of some cultural traits among the Yoruba also found among the ancient Egyptians (Al-Sunusi, 1987:153-154).

The scientific approach employed by both Al-Ilūri and his pupil Zuglūl in writing their works equally deserve a line or two here. According to modern historians, the hallmark of a good historical work is an authentic and reliable source of information, chronology of facts and scientific arrangement of causes and effects of event (al-Sunusi, 1991:154). The sources of information employed by both al-Ilūri and Zuglūl in their works on history as this study have shown so far is of acceptable international standard. Their use of oral traditions follows the generally acceptable *Isnād* tradition. Unlike the early Yoruba'ulamā's historical works, both al-Ilūri and Zuglūl follow the rule of chronology in their presentation of facts. Events recorded by them are properly dated. They both attached significant importance to the rule of causation and effect of event (Abubakre, 2004:293). Both display a high sense of independent judgment. Their ability to make salient deductions from various events through critical analysis distinguishes them from other later Yoruba '*ulamā'*.

However, they are the most criticized of all the Yoruba 'ulamā' partly because they wrote more works than most of these '*ulamā'* both past and present or because most of their writings have attracted significant reactions from quite a number of Nigerian '*ulamā*. The two have equally received a fair amount of literary attention from critics/scholars. Several research works in form of thesis, dissertations and even journals have been written on both scholars more than any other Yoruba '*ulamā*. Other scholars have written books of voluminous pages to examine the authenticity of some claims of these two scholars or it's otherwise. Here attention will be given to the criticism of the methodology, perspectives and approaches adopted by these two writers in some of their works.

Three things determine the reliability of oral traditions recorded by local historians as referred to earlier. They are the motives, assumption and method. Their effect is not

restricted to oral tradition alone but it affects the reliability of other sources as well. The writings of the Yoruba 'ulamā' of history especially those who belong to the latter category were motivated by religious and nationalistic sentiments. The works of both Adam Abdullahi al-Ilūri and Mustapha as-Sanusi Zuglūl depict this tendency more than any other known Yoruba Muslim scholar. They defend the Yoruba race from all sorts of assault and also identify it with the past glory of ancient civilization of the hermitic race. Al-Ilūri writes in defence of this position of his when he seeks to justify it with a tradition of the Prophet which says: "'Learn (something) from your origin, that will link you with your kinship" (Al-Fulāni, 2007:150).

Mustapha Zuglūl was very keen in defending his Yoruba kinsmen. In the introduction to his book titled al'Azhar Ruba fi akhabar bilad Yoruba'; Zuglūl showed his disapproval of those who used their pen to lampoon any of the Yoruba clans. He does not differentiate between those who are honest in their criticisms and the dishonest ones. Below is an excerpt:

> …among them are those who made their pen a tool of allusion to some tribes among the Yoruba. And makes his pen a source of weapon against other tribe among the Yoruba. And among them are those who scent of hatred is perceived in their books against some clan among the Yoruba. Among them are those who embark on dishonouring the good reputation of certain cities among the Yoruba cities due to hatred, enmity or malice, which they harbour in their mind for that tribe or clan (Al-Fulāni, 2007:150).

The cultural identity in the writings of both scholars could be gleaned from their in-depth discussions on issues that directly affect the Yoruba race. Issues like the origin of the Yoruba race, the reference to Ile-Ife as the ancestral home of the Yoruba, the Sokoto Jihad in the Yoruba nations, the depopulation and destruction of old Oyo, the assassinations of Afonja and Solagberu, and the various inter-tribal wars within the Yoruba, formed the main themes of their historical works. A critic of Yoruba 'ulamā' writings on history lamented this trait in their works which he believed has become a common feature in all the writings of all Yoruba 'ulamā' who writes on history: "They are influenced by religious and tribal sentiments on one hand and personal and tribal ambition on another (Al-Ilūrī, 1991:13).

Al-Ilūrī and Zuglūl were equally known for their uncompromising stance on religious matters. They both wrote from the perspective of religion. They perceived the culture and traditions of the Yoruba from the viewpoint of Islam only, hence they referred to the adherents of traditional worship as idolatrous. Zuglūl while describing a traditional deity in Yorubaland called Sango presented an image of a frustrated king who eventually committed suicide out of shame. He described how the coming of Islam put an end to the worship of Sango in Yorubaland. In actual fact Sango worship still persists in some part of Yorubaland. Al-Ilūrī in what appears as pacifying those who are annoyed because of the destruction of Oyo empire by the Fulani invaders says:

> Those who grieved for the destruction of Yoruba kingdom because of the establishment of Fulani kingdom should suppress their anger because the state raised is beneficial to mankind more than the one destroyed. And this is in accordance with the law of survival of the fittest (al-Sunusi, 1991:10).

From the foregoing, it is rather safe to conclude that both writers are motivated by religious and cultural sentiments in writing the history of the Yoruba. It is rather impossible that the conclusions of most Yoruba 'ulamā' in this category can pass the scrutiny of modern and scientific historians (Al-Fulāni, 2007:191).

Historical facts are to be presented the way they are transmitted devoid of any sentiments. The use of oral tradition by modern historians as sources has never been contested. The real problem is how far the local historians have misrepresented or distorted the oral traditions upon which they based their works. Al-Sunusi (1991:72) warns against the use of oral traditions already documented in written form by local historians which might have been manipulated by them.

Al-Sunusi further said that the testimony of such information is quite worthless, because it is
'second hand and that it is necessary to go back to all traditions he has used in order to evaluate it'. The writings of the later Yoruba ulamā reflect the interest of its numerous readers who in most cases are from the Muslim world. Their work follows the methodology and principles laid down by their mentors who are mainly from the Arab world. Adherence to these principles, methodology and perspectives is Sine- qua-non for the reliability and acceptability of their historical works among their brethren. Adam gives an insight into his methodology and approach to historical materials in the following excerpt:

> Then I decided to gather all these varying information which I later subjected to thorough criticism before recording, following the aforementioned rules and principles of Scholars of hadith and history (Al-Fulāni, 2007:37).

Most works of Yoruba 'ulamā' on history lack adequate referencing. Many of them rely on oral tradition as their sources. They are generally unmindful of the particulars of their informants. Among the later Yoruba 'ulamā, few of them have adopted the modern method of referencing. The works of Adam Abdullahi al-Ilūrī and Mustapha Zuglūl provides a list of books (foreign and local), journals, magazines and newspapers consulted. Names of scholars (foreign and local) that were interviewed are properly recorded either in the introduction to their works or at the back page. Another scholar of Yoruba origin who also acknowledged his sources in his works is Khidr Salahuddin Apaokagi. However, some allegations were made against some of these scholars of deliberate act of plagiarism, contradiction of evidences, distortion of facts and open falsification of non-existing historical principles by their critics (Abubakre, 2004:282).

The first allegation of false information and lack of accuracy is that of 'Uthman Muhammad Barayima Bari against Al-Ilūrī. Bari believes that it was the Jihad of Shaykh Uthamn Dan Fodio that brought Islam to Yoruba land, he vehemently attacked al-Ilūrī for spreading false information and being self-contradictory by claiming that Islam was introduced to Yorubaland through Muslim slaves bought from the Hausaland by Yoruba rulers. Below is an excerpt of his criticism of Al-Ilūrī:

> As we stated earlier, he (Shaykh Adam) mentioned in his book under study that those who carried out the propagation of Islamic religion in Yorubaland were among the slaves who were sold to the Yoruba rulers. Then we saw him (Shaykh Adam) in another direction saying a different thing entirely on the same issue in his book. "Islam in Nigeria and Shaykh 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī al-Fulāni. Shaykh (Adam) mentions to us the story of Shaykh Salih b. Muhammad bi Junta, who migrated from Sokoto to Oyo-ile, the capital of Yoruba kingdom at the time, to where the origin of Shaykh Adam 'Abdullahi al-Ilūri was traced. He (Shaykh Salih) then settled in Ilorin. He (Shaykh Adam). Further said that this Shaykh Salih Muhammad b. Janta was the one who brought Islamic civilization to and the first (person) to establish the Islamic Fulani Emirates in Ilorin. In any case, we did not intend to study the aforementioned book in

this place. However, it is imperative for us to point to some examples in order to emphasize the existence of such contradictions of identity and lack of accuracy in narrating the historical events in the writings of his eminence, Shaykh Adam ‘Abdullah al-Ilūri (Ismaheel, 2004: 269-270).

‘Abdullahi al-Ilūri reacted to these allegations in his book entitled Ashi ‘at al-uqul wa’l – nuqu sala Aḍawa’al qundil wa’l-fudul (Rays of intellects and tradition on the lights of the lamp and the inquisitive), the excerpt of which read thus:

Fourthly, his thinking that there is a contradiction between our statement: “those who firstly propagated Islam in Yorubaland were slaves” and our statement that “Shaykh Salih, a Fulani (Scholar) established an Islamic state there”. We refer him to Infaq al-Maysir…. P. 38. Where it says: “slaves were brought to the people of this land, Yoruabland, from our land (Hausaland) and they were sold to the Christians in the harbor (Al-Fulāni, 1991:154-155).

Al-Ilūri’s claim that Alhaj ‘Umar al-Futi born in 1787 C.E was among the grand-children of the Marabouts was equally refuted by his critic. The latter criticized Shaykh Adam for peddling falsehood. He claimed that Shaykh Umar was from Futa Toro in Senegal and that was the reasons why he was given the epithet, ‘al-Futi’. He equally declared incorrect, Al-Ilūri’s statement that Futa Toro is in Guinea. His remarks read thus:

> Shaykh Adam ‘Abdullahi also mentioned that Alhajj ‘Umar al-Futri, who was born in 1787C.E and was among the grand-children of the marabout’s. This is a mix up that no one who is conversant with the West African history can ever say: Alhajj ‘Umar was from Futa Toro in Senegal as reflected in his epithet; “al-Futi”. How could he be among the grand-children of the marabout; who came from North Africa? What then is the relationship between both? Shaykh Adam stated further that Futa Toro is in Guinea. This also is not correct. Futa Jalon is the one that is situated in the Republic of Guinea (Al-Fulāni, 2007:154-157).

In Ashi “at al-uqul, Al-Ilūri challenged the knowledge of the West African history of his critic. He traced the origin of the Marabout and the Ribat to the revolutionary efforts of the past ancestor known as Murabit before the city of Marakech was founded. He reacted thus:

> That ‘*Umar al-Futri* was among the grand-children of the Marabouts”….. The critic said that it is wrong: Had this critic, learnt the meaning of al-Ribat (hermitage) and at Murabit (Marabout); how it came into existence in West Africa before the foundation of Marakish and what followed it that made those who fought in the course of Islam in that area among the ancestors and the predecessor were those known as “al-Murabitun” to the extent that the French colonialism designated the name Marabout to every preacher till today; he should not have controverted a matter that is even more established in history than the critic himself in his town.

The book, “Islamic Missionary Activities’’ by Thomas Arnold, on page 367, stated that Alhaji ‘Umar was a son to one of the Marabouts. Shalabi also in his Encyclopedia of History, page 214, volume six, said that Alhajj ‘Umar was the son of an Almoravid Shaykh (Al-Ilūrī, 1991:147-148).

By providing the sources of his information, Al-Ilūrī as further proved the reliability and accuracy of historical facts he used in all his works. The same thing could not be said of his pupil who in most cases preferred not to mention the source of his information but reported them in obscure term using the phrase “Yaqul ‘al-Mukharihun” (The historians say). Thus, he exposed himself to criticism (Al-Ilūrī,

1991:147). Al-Ilūri was also criticised for hasty decision or conclusion and lack of thorough research in his historical writings. He was criticized for failure to use the rules governing human society in his works. Adam Yahya Abdul Rahman al-Fulāni cited an instance of failure of al-Ilūri to use this principle when the latter narrated the continuous movement of Shaykh Salih Muhammad bn Junta in Yorubaland before he finally settled in Ilorin. Al-Fulāni criticised al-Ilūri for the latter inability to link certain forces which to him forced Shaykh Salih Muhammad bn Junta to travel aimlessly across Yorubaland. He attributed Al-Ilūri failure's to lack of knowledge of principles of human society. According to al-Fulāni, the knowledge of human society came into existence long after the period of the Islamist whose methodology of writing was adopted by Al-Ilūri (Abubakre, 2004:285).

Adam Abdullah al-Ilūri while explaining the migration of people from Asia to Africa' however made a remark that nowhere in the world or in any book has it been recorded that mankind spread from West Africa to North Africa or from Africa to Asia (Abubakre, 2004:291). This comment attracted a note of caution from Abubakre on the part of Al-Ilūri, where he says:

> …again, a number of generalizations have to be overlooked in this quotation. He does not seem to take into account Leakey's finds in East Africa. The generalization, nonetheless, do not seem to negate completely the basic point intended by the author (Abubakre, 1989:71).

Abubakre also criticized the manipulation of socio-linguistic data employed by Adam in which he applied to trace many social and cultural events and practices to support his claim that the Yoruba people were of Arab stock. According to Abubakre, many of the terms are strikingly persuasive while some others can hardly stand up in the face of a systematic linguistic scrutiny110. He opined that rather than being original Arab words, many of these words or terms are indeed borrowed words from the Arab through religious influence or mere coincidence. He further argues:

> The second issue that the reader should be aware of in this book is that it is not possible reverting it's (the word) source to Arabic language. Neither would it be a clear evidence for the opinion of that person that says the Yoruba are of Arab stock. This resemblance with Arabic words is closer to loaning of words, just as what we have seen in this book is a mere coincidence or borrowed word. As it is found in Yoruba and other languages of West African Muslims such as: Mande, Hausa, and Kanuri, such words are more in use in the religious, social and economic realms (Abubakre, 1989:72).

Consequently, the submission of Abubakre above had once again brought to the fore the need to revisit the on-going discussions on the possible place of origin of the Yoruba race. Here, the study shall briefly examine some of the findings of scholars of Yoruba history including that of the Yoruba 'Ulamā'. It will reveal their areas of agreement and disagreement with a view to reconciling between the existing ones and the new findings.

Historians both past and present have played and continue to play important role in the course of unravelling the mystery that surrounds the origin of the Yoruba race. The origin of the Yoruba has become more or less a myth, the interpretation of which poses much difficulty as one tries to dig into its beginning. Writers have attributed the failure to locate the authentic place of origin of the Yoruba to three factors. They are; Lack of early Yoruba traditions on the origin of Yoruba race, conflicting oral and written evidence and

finally, the influence of Islam. An historian with bias for Yoruba history Robin Law asserts that the failure of sources earlier than Johnson to record the tradition of the descent from Lamurudu reflects the deficiencies of earlier research rather than non-existence of such traditions (Robin, 1986:246). The assertion made by Robin Law will be substantiated later in this study.

Hitherto, the much depended upon tradition on the origin of the Yoruba is Johnson's version which traced Yoruba descent to the Middle East, precisely Mecca. There had been no suggestion before his of any Yoruba traditions claiming a Middle Eastern origin (Johnson, 1921:3-7). Although Johnson's version of the tradition of Yoruba origin is most likely to be the most recent version, other writers of history have written on the subject matter few decades before Johnson (Robin, 1986:246). It seems that Johnson's claim to have received information from 'tradition carefully handed down' might be responsible for its popularity. Another view has it that this claim of Johnson's may not necessarily be true for it is assumed that Johnson's source might as well come from the statement of Muhammad Bello in his Infaq al-Maysur on the Yoruba. The latter also was equally reported to have been quoting from Ibn Masani a seventeenth century writer on the Yoruba (Bello, 1973:207). The second factor responsible for lack of consensus on the place of origin of the Yoruba is the existence of seemingly contradicting traditions. The early writers on the origin of the Yoruba before Samuel Johnson sourced their information from varying and contradicting traditions.

The earliest record of the beliefs of the Yoruba about their origin was provided by the Lander Brothers in 1830. People at Oyo- Ile of Ife told them that their parents were created and from whence all Africa where peopled (Robin Law, 1978:70-72). Another source had it later that Ife became the cradle of all humanity. In 1840s, Samuel Ajayi Crowther published an account of the migration of the ancestors of the Yoruba from nowhere precisely. According to him these people had to wade across a vast expanse of water until they were able to create dry land in the middle of this water at Ife (Crowther, 1857:315-320). This account indeed is the first hint of the migration version of Yoruba origin. What follows thereafter is the rationalization of the original tradition of the creation of mankind at Ife and Crowther's migration version of Yoruba origin by Thomas Bowen in 1850s.

A further rationalization of both views was done by George when in 1890s he claimed that the original home of the Yoruba was from the North, Precisely from the confines of the Hausa countries. This view leads us to the third factor militating against a consensus opinion on the origin of the Yoruba the influence of Islam. Although Islam was not introduced into Yorubaland until the seventeenth century, there is this Hausa tradition at least since 1890s which connects the Yoruba with Hausa genetically. In the Hausa tradition of Hausa Bakwai 'the legitimate Hausa', there is also the recognition of the Banza Bakwai which means Bastard Hausa or 'illegitimate Hausa'. The Yoruba belong to the latter. They are both said to have common ancestors from Borno and more remotely from the Middle East (Smith, 1978:14). Earlier in this study reference was made to a book written by Muhammad Bello where he linked the origin of the Yoruba with the tribe of Kana'an, the kindered to Nimrod an important personality in Arabian Peninsula. Robin Law also cited the example of Ya'rab bn Qahatan a figure from the early Arab genealogies, who was implicated as an attempt to explain the name 'Yoruba'. It could be seen from the above explanation that there is a deliberate attempt to connect the Yoruba genetically with the Arab. But one might equally be tempted to ask what motivated the Yoruba to have wanted to be connected with

the Arab genetically. Phillips Steven asserted that with the introduction of Islam in the nineteenth century or much earlier, the historical accounts of many southern Sudanic peoples were altered, making migration routes of their ancestors begin from Mecca (Phillips, 1985:102-104). The same view is equally expressed by Robin Law where he says:

> The claim to origin from Mecca probably arouse from the desire of Yoruba in contact with Islam the relationship of their own civilization to that of the Muslim world, in a way which claimed for the former an antiquity and status comparable to that of the latter, and perhaps also accounted for the points of similarity between them, while at the same time stressing the separation between the two (Robin Law, 1973:219).

There are indications that early written evidences on the origin of the Yoruba are deficient in research methodology hence the emergence of conflicting and contradicting traditions. Evidences have also shown that most of the early writers failed to adhere to the laid down rules in transmitting oral traditions and making systematic enquiries about Yoruba origins. Crowther in 1840 wrote from far away Sierra-Leone, collecting data from freed slaves who had settled down in Free Town. Bowen 1890 travelled widely but did not visit Oyo where the Lamurudu story was to be recorded by Johnson some few years later. George who reported the genetic connection of the Yoruba with the Hausa despite his close link with people who should have known about Oyo tradition restricted his activities to Lagos and Abeokuta. Adeyemi, an early writer who had a tradition that is independent of Johnson version corroborated the latter's account of migration from the Middle East. Going back to the assertion made earlier by Robin Law after a due consideration of the various claims referred to above, it is obvious that silence of sources earlier than Johnson and paucity of evidence for traditions of origin from the Middle East encouraged the emergence of Johnson's version as the only official version on Yoruba origin.

Johnson's tradition of Yoruba's descent from Lamurudu suffered a serious setback with the participation of the Yoruba 'ulamā in the debate. A scrutiny of the contribution of the Muslim 'ulamā of Yoruba origin to the subject matter is long overdue, especially when viewed from the background that most of the writers who had contributed so far on the issue are largely non-Muslims. It becomes more worrisome when the subject matter indirectly affects Islam and its most sacred city, Mecca. Adam Abdullahi al-Ilūrī opened the floodgates of criticisms against Johnson's version of tradition of origin of the Yoruba (Al-Iluri, 1991:15). Mustapha Zuglūl as-Sanusi later followed up with his own write up on the issue. He devoted a chapter to the origin of Yoruba where he expressed his views and criticisms on the issue. Others include Abubakr another pupil of Al-Ilūrī, who wrote an article on the topic and briefly explained the position of Adam in his 'aslu qabaili Yuruba vis-à-vis other historical data. Another pupil of Al-Ilūri, Adam Yahya al-Fulani added his own opinion, but he took a different view from that of his teacher. He challenged the position taken by his mentor, Al-Ilūri, and Mustapha Sanusi Zuglūl on various issues bordering on Yoruba race most especially on its origin.

The origin of the Yoruba according to Al-Ilūri is from the East precisely from Yemen. According to him the word Yoruba is an adulterated word of Ya'rab from Ya'rab bn; Qahaṭan their Progenitor. They migrated from Yemen to Abysinnia to Egypt and finally to Nubian country before settling down finally in Yorubaland. Al-Ilūri believed that the Yoruba are genetically connected with the Hadinduwat tribe, the Nubians, the Bujahs and the Berbers of Upper Egypt, who were originally Arabs. He used socio-linguistic data to explain this

connection. He claimed that the evidence which prove that the Yoruba, Kanuri, Borgu and Nupe are kindered is that, all of them migrated and lived as neighbours in West Africa (peacefully), fully aware that they all originated from the East (Al-Iluri, 1991:36).

Mustapha Zuglūl al-Sunusi believes strongly that the Yoruba are most likely to have migrated from either East Africa or from North Africa. He claims that they are of Arab stock. However, he is of the view that the migration of the Yoruba to Ile-Ife took place after the advent of Islam. According to him, the ancestors of the Yoruba are already familiar with names of the kings and the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an (for example names such as Nimrud and Pharaoh) although the religion of Islam remains yet unknown to the people of Ile-Ife. He queried the authenticity of the claim that it was the itinerant Yoruba 'ulamā that might have informed the people of these names. Mustapha cited evidences from historical artefacts dug out from many cities in Yorubaland especially at Ife which he used to prove that there existed between the ancestors of the Yoruba and that of Egypt a strong tie Mustapha drew from Davidson's conclusion that the interaction between Africa and the East from Nile to Lake Chad and from Lake Chad to the Nile came through trade routes whereby they carried alongside their goods, their culture and belief system. There are no known or famous tribes in West Africa that do not claim ancestral lineage with either the East or the North as recorded by transmitted oral traditions (Al-Sanusi, 1987:62).

In his own contribution to the true origin of the Yoruba, Adam Yahya Abdul Rahmon al-Fulāni in his book entitled *Ma'al-almukharikhaeni* fi bilad Yoruba (with the two Historians in Yorubaland), begins by questioning the source of Yoruba history of the past which depend entirely on oral traditions, which also contain distorted facts. According to al-Fulāni there were no written records of the origin of the Yoruba and there is no other systematic way of preserving information. In his words, 'they do not have ability to memorize traditions'. He started his contribution by examining the relationship Al-Ilūri and Zuglūl claimed existed between the Yoruba and the Egyptian ancestors. Contrary to the views of both Shaykh Adam and Mustapha Zuglūl that there existed a symbiotic relationship between the Yoruba and the Egyptians, al-Fulāni claimed that the relationship that existed was rather between the African Negroes and the Egyptian ancestors which was a master servant relationship (Al-Fulāni, 2007:18-24). Hence all what was said about similarity in culture, monument and so on were indeed the influence of the Egyptians who were the master of the Negro slaves. He refuted the argument of Al-Ilūri that Yoruba is an adulterated form of Ya'rab, saying that the word 'Arab' is indeed the synonym of the word "Ya'rab" He wondered why the Arab did not recognise their black kinsmen if truly they are connected with them genetically. According to him, there is no evidence of genealogical relationship between the Arab and the black recorded anywhere in Arab history (Al-Fulāni, 2007:18-28).

Thereafter, he declared that the Yoruba are indeed the native Negro of Africa who are the founders of the ancient empires of Africa such as the Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires. He claimed that the actual origin of the Yoruba is from Mali and to be specific from Kawkaw, one of the states that made up the big empire of Mali. According to him the inhabitants of Kawkaw are the Yariba tribe who became highly civilized and technologically advanced during the golden era of Mali. He quoted copiously from the works of the travellers. Arab travellers such as *Masālik al Absār* of Ahmad bn Yahya bn Fadullahi al-umari, Ibn Sa'eed al-Maghribi, Ibn Batuta, and from *Subuhi al-'asha* of al-Qalqashand – to prove

his claim. He later said that, it was this Yariba tribe who were forced by war to migrate to southern part of Africa that later settled in Yorubaland with the native Negro. Those who migrated to Yorubaland of present Nigeria are called the Malawiyyin. Al-Fulāni strongly believes that the native negro of Africa originated from Africa and no other place, and that the Yoruba emerged from this people. Thus, he remarks that:

> It is certain that the original inhabitants among the Negroes neither migrated from Yemen nor from any other town in the East, but they emerged from the negroland itself i.e. the land that the ancient Sudanic Kingdom originated and the one we know today as African continent (Al-Fulāni, 2007:30).

A critical appraisal of the Yoruba ʻulamā historical writings reveals that there is substantial evidence to support either the migration of some foreign elements from beyond Yorubaland to this place, or the mixing of different peoples within their linguistic and cultural zone. The claim of Semitic background of the Yoruba by some scholars is definitely a non-sentimental one. Scholars have come up with findings based on universally accepted methods. Adam Abdullahi al-Ilūrī adopted socio-linguistic evidence and cultural trait methods to arrive at a conclusion. He concludes that the obvious similarities in language and cultures that exist between the Yoruba and the Egyptian ancestor could not have been a mere coincidence. In the view of Abubakre (1987:72), the occurrence of many words in Yoruba language whose origin could be traced to Arabic language goes beyond mere borrowing or diffusion of words through contact of Yoruba people with Islam. According to him, certain factors influence a language; these factors are time, needs and environment. In the principle of language continuum, the farther a language is to the main source the more unintelligible it becomes. He cited the examples of the emergence of Queen English from the Elizabethan English. Furthermore he gave the example of Latin language which has split into three forms: Spanish, Italian and French, with the result that the mother language has ceased to exist. In the case of Yoruba, the farther the language is to the mother language due to migration the more unintelligible it is when compared to the Quraysh dialect. He used the emergence of different dialect in Arabic language to prove the theories of language continuum (Abubakre, 1987:72-75). Put differently, the existence or emergence of various Yoruba dialects is a further prove of the theory. The use of a single evidence based on socio linguistic and cultural traits as used by al-Fulāni is not enough an evidence to rubbish the weighty evidence as provided by both Al-Ilūri and Zuglūl in support of their claim that the Yoruba are genetically connected to the Arab. Finally, the findings of the majority of the Yoruba scholars both past and present reveal that the evidences in support of this claim far outweigh those that are against it.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The historical writings of Adam Abdullah al-Ilūrī and Mustapha Sanusi Zuglūl reflect a unique blend of religious, cultural, and scientific approaches that distinguished them among Yoruba ʻulamāʾ. Their works employed oral, written, archaeological, and socio-linguistic evidence to trace Yoruba origins and cultural identity, often linking the Yoruba with Arab ancestry while simultaneously defending their indigenous heritage. Although their methodologies and conclusions have attracted criticism, contradictions, and selective use of sources, their scholarship remains influential in debates on Yoruba identity, underlining the complexity of reconstructing Yoruba history and highlighting the interplay of migration narratives and local traditions. Generally, al-

Ilūrī and Zuglūl advanced historiography by combining rigorous methodological principles with cultural and religious insights, setting a benchmark for subsequent scholars in Yoruba studies, even as their works continue to stimulate debate reflecting the tension between historical reconstruction and identity formation. In view of this, the study recommends:

Future scholars critically re-examine the oral, archaeological, and socio-linguistic sources underlying claims of Yoruba-Arab origin, subjecting them to more rigorous cross-verification rather than accepting them at face value.

Yoruba Muslim historians and researchers adopt stricter referencing standards and transparent source attribution, following the model set by al-Ilūrī, to strengthen the empirical credibility and international acceptability of Yoruba Islamic historiography.

Further comparative studies be undertaken to reconcile the divergent positions of al-Ilūrī, al-Sanusi, and their critics such as Adam Yahya al-Fulāni, so as to arrive at a more balanced and evidence-based understanding of Yoruba origins that separates historical fact from religious and cultural sentiment.

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