

## A Critical Analysis of Selected Political Accounts in Al-Iluriy's Historical Work

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### Abstract

Documentation of African history enjoyed the attention of local and foreign writers. While the works of some foreign writers laid foundation for nationalist historiography, some others served as the causes for the wake-up to writing African history in the African way and to challenge Eurocentric views on African past. As the historical works of Arab travelers and historians such as Al-Mas'udi, Ibn Haukal, Al-Bakri, Al-Idrisi, Yaqut, Al-Umari, Ibn Batuta, Ibn Khaldun to mention a few, served as the backbone for the early history of Africa in general and West Africa in particular, later indigenous Arabic authors such as Al-Iluriy played continuity role on development of nationalist historiography, with more focus on West Africa. Parts of Al-Iluriy's contributions to historical documentation of political events, actors and institutions in West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular are accounted for in his historical work titled *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Shaykh Uthman bn Fudiyo* (Islam in Nigeria and Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio, published 1950 and later 1971) amongst others. This paper aimed at reviewing them in comparison with other authors' works. Analytical and comparative methodological approaches were adopted in the study. With critical observation and comparison of methodological approaches, it concluded that like some foreign and indigenous Arabic authors, the submissions of Al-Iluriy do not separate the hands of God from historical events, and while they agree with submissions of English authors on some issues, they disagree on others.

**Keywords:** *Africa, Al-Iluriy, Analysis, Nigeria, Political history*

### Introduction

Adam Abdullah Al-Iluriy was a twentieth century Nigerian Arabic and Islamic studies scholar. He hailed from Ilorin, the capital of present day Kwara State of North central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. After several years of both direct and indirect local and international studentship, he obtained scholarship in geography and history through personal efforts in research, dialogue and travelling. He posited that anyone who fails to attach importance to the study of history is doing neither himself nor the community any good. It is on the basis of this that he authored

his historical works such as *Akhbaru al-Qurun* (Chronicles of the past generations), *Al-Imam al-Maghili wa atharuhu fi al-Hukumat al-Islamiyyah* (Imam Maghili and his influences on the Islamic state), *Al-jugrafiyyat wa al-Tarikh* (Geography and History), *Al-Islam al-Yawm wagadhan fi Naijiriya* (Islam today and tomorrow in Nigeria), *Aslu Qabaili Yuruba* (Origin of the Yoruba tribes), *Lamhat al-Balur fi Mashahir Ulamai Ilurin* (Succinct accounts of the Crystals among the Famous Scholars of Ilorin), *Mujaz al-Tarikh Naijiriya al-Qadim wa al-Hadith* (An Abridgement of classical and modern Nigerian history), *Nasimu Sabai*

*fi akhbari al-Islam wa ulama biladi Yuruba* (The morning breeze concerning information about Islam and Yoruba scholars ), *Nizam at-Ta'lim al-Arabi wa at-Tarikhu* (Methodology of Arabic teaching and its history), *Tarikh bidayat solat al-Jum'at fi al-Islam* (The beginning of Jumat prayer in Islam), *Tarikh da'wah ila Llah* (History of Islamic proselytization), *Tawjih da'wat wa-Dua't* (Directing the affairs of (Islamic) Missionary and its propagators) and *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Shaykh Uthman bn Fudiyo* (Islam in Nigeria and Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio) to mention a few. Selected political accounts in *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Shaykh Uthman bn Fudiyo* are analyzed by this study under headings on political actors and institutions.

### **The Blacks by Al-Iluriy**

Al-Iluriy in the above work extensively discussed states and empires in West Africa. From a Latin origin, he said Negro means the dark in complexion man and that the term has been used to qualify West Africans and Australians, the way the Arabs used to call them Zinji or Sudan people. In relation to the blacks, the Arabs described the river that flows down from Upper part of Futa Jalon upto Timbuctu and from there down to Lokoja as the Sudan River. The same river flows into

river Benue from Adamawa and links to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Sudan River is the second longest river in Africa, while others are Nile, Congo and river Senegal. Al-Iluriy explained that every human settlement that is having contact with the Sudan River is what is referred to as the Negro land. This means that every human settlement that lies behind the desert southward and westward upto the Congo borders is what the foremost historians used to refer to as Western Sudan as illustrated by writers such as Ibu Khadun, At-Timbucti and Al – Su'di. And it is equally known as the land of Tekrur as illustrated by later writers such as Sultan Muhammad Ballo in his work *Infaq al-mai suri fi Tarikh Bilad Tekrur*. These communities have in some epoch existed under a single control of empires such as Ghana, Mali, Tekrur and Songhai.

Al-Iluriy further pointed out that the states that constitute the Tekrur land indeed have different languages that are related in pronunciation. They have similar religio-cultural practices, likely in scope of self and communal defense against invaders. There were no national boundaries, they had similar complexion and indeed, inter-communal socio-economic relations. As it is, every tribe has its own language which is mostly impossible for others to understand except

through learning. The only common language among them is Fulfude which has its link to Mandingo and Wolof in Senegal, Mali, Ghana and Nigeria, then Hausa language that shares similar principle, letters and way of pronunciation with Arabic and Swahili language of South Africa. Others are the Yoruba, Kanuri and Nupe languages.<sup>1</sup>

This description by Al- Iluriy is not far from what other writers on the history of the blacks have provided us with. Bovil, in his work stated that the great belt of country that lies between the Sahara and the tropical forest provides the home of great variety of different peoples. In the valley of Senegal, and in the country between the Senegal and the Gambia, the two dominant people are the Wolof and the Tucolor. Between the Senegal and the Niger, and in the valley of the upper Niger and its tributaries, live a number of peoples - Soninke, Madingo, Bambara, and Dyula are the most prominent among them. They have many basic features in common, such as language and social organization. He equally mentioned that most of the people of West Africa speak languages that have been recognized as belonging to a single family. The languages are referred to by some writers as Niger-Congo. He also pointed out that many people of West Africa, whether they live in the Savannah or in

the forest, may have their origin in a common stock.<sup>2</sup>

Still on description of the land, Al-Iluriy wrote on certain links between North and West Africa and their modes of contact since the period of the Phoenicians and Roman visitors. The only barrier between them is the desert. He mentioned that some communities that have flourished in the past and only have their names on pages of books at present; they have in reality gone into oblivion. Some of them were Denanke kingdom (1460 – 1776) and Sultanate of Damagara (1731 - 1851). While on the other hand, some communities and states that are existing today, have no name in the historical records of ancient settlements. They did not exist in the past 400 years.<sup>3</sup>

These descriptions made by Al-Iluriy would be considered genuine ones as the geography of the settlements still have those natural descriptions as part of their features. However, he did not give us any example on the observations he made on the states which have ceased to exist and those ones that just evolved. According to him, several empires have existed and collapsed. Some of them grew from within the Negro land while some came from outside the Tekrur land and conquered states in the Sudan. Few of them such as Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Borno Empires to

mention a few still have their names popular, even in the hands of contemporary writers.<sup>4</sup>

### **Ghana Empire and Al-Iluriy**

The Ghana Empire as he described it evolved around the second century A.D and it recorded emergence of fourteen white rulers before it became governed by the blacks. The whites were those who have mixed up with the indigenes and studied their socio-cultural ways of life, thus founded an empire with and over them. Ghana Empire was popular among the Arabs and was visited by most Arab historians and geographers who wrote extensively about her developments. Parts of the Arab visitors to Ghana were Ibn Haukal from Nisibis, Upper Mesopotamia, who was at Northern Ghana in 972 A. D and Muhammed al- Bakri from Andalusia, he was equally at Ghana in 1028 A.D. Ghana Empire got to apogee of her development in the tenth century.<sup>5</sup>

This description of Ghana by Al- Iluriy as an empire which had been under the rulership of some whites before the blacks is fairy. This is because African historiography has not recorded anything of such and other sources of African history have not claimed same. Could it be that Eurocentric historiography has in one way or the other influenced his thought on this, or that he got it as a myth other than historical fact? Also, contrary to the writing of Al-Iluriy

on the presence of Al- Bakri in Ghana, Stride and Ifeka who wrote their works in the same year this work of Al- Iluriy was republished (1971) stated that Al- Bakri never visited the western Sudan himself, but his book was based on information supplied by Muslim merchants who traded across the Sahara from Morocco to purchase gold and other items of trade.<sup>6</sup> However, Al- Iluriy claims that the visitation of Al- Bakri was proclaimed by himself in his writings.

While discussing the membership of the Murabitun (an adopted name for group of some united Muslims. The word was wrongly pronounced and documented by European researchers as Al-moravids), Al-Iluriy stated that two individuals actually played major roles on the establishment of the Al-Moravid rulership. They were Abdullah bn Yasin and Al-Amir Abubakar bn Amr Al-Lamtuni. He claimed that from the Sonhaja dynasty, many Muslim rulers emerged. Parts of them were Emir Muhammed bin Tafari Al-lamatuni. Emir Abdullah bin Muhammed that waged various jihads until his death on a battle field, Emir Yahya bn Ibrahim that travelled for the holy pilgrimage in Makkah and renovated the capital at his arrival and made the state Sharia ruling one.

He later met with the head of the Muslim clerics of Susi, Abu Muhammed al-Lamatuni

and requested from him a scholar that could assist in teaching his people the understanding of Islam. Eventually, he was given Abdullah ibn Yasin. Abdullah was born in Jazulat village of Susi and studied at Andalus (Spain). He chose to move with Emir Yahya for Jihad and religious propagation activities. They were faced with several challenges then he chose to seclude with few of his students at a place outside the community. They lived a Bedouin life but later got more people flocking into the settlement. Their population increased upto a thousand, then they got the name Al-Murabitun and continuously, their population got increased so rapidly. He later asked his students to take jihad to the Sudan; they fought the ruler of Zanj (Zanj) and established the Al-Moravid rulership. The capital was made to be at Odagishtu in 1020 A.D and Abdullah bn Yasin made Abubakar bn Amir a ruler of a region and his brother Yahya bn Amr ruler of another region. The latter was later killed by the Zanj at a war front. This made Abu Bakr to remain the general ruler of the kingdoms covering all the Sudan upto Northern Senegal, Northern Ghana, Northern Dahomey and Northern Nigeria.<sup>7</sup>

In the same vein, Bovil stated that in 1042, the Almoravids, with Ibn Yasin as their head, started a jihad against the jedala and the Lemtuna, who till then had rejected the new

doctrine. The alternatives of death or conversion resulted in a triumph for the Almoravids, but victory was robbed of its sweetness.<sup>8</sup> In essence, the description of both Al- Iluriy and that of other historians in this aspect are not contradictory. Though, he did not make clear to his audience what region was actually ruled by Abu bakr.

### **Mali Empire and Al-Iluriy**

Al- Iluriy described the emergence of Mali empire by pointing out that the great Mali empire recorded emergence of 22 white kings or rulers and until after their period that the Blacks took over. Mali Empire according to him was carved out of the old Ghana Empire. The ruler that founded it out of Ghana was 'Mari Jatta' (probably the bastardised name as Sundiata) who put Ghana down in 1240 A.D. He was able to put under the Mali Empire, the lands of Ghana, Tekrur and Songhai. He strove enough for the survival of the state until his death in 1300 A.D.

This description of his on Mali like Ghana as an empire which has earlier ruled by foreigners is not clear enough and it has no backing from other available sources. Equally, while he claims that Mari Jatta was the founder, could it now be that the latter was a white or it was after his foundation of the empire that white visitors overthrew him or his successors.

The kings of Mali were known as Manza and the most popular among them was Manza Kanka Musa, the grandson of “Mari Jatta. Manza Musa travelled to Makkah for the holy pilgrimage with an entourage of sixty thousand men and five hundred slaves. Each of them handling a staff made from gold. Manza Musa invited an Arab engineer to come and build a castle and gigantic mosque for him with cement and blocks and when the construction was completed, he paid him with twelve thousand worth of gold. The engineer settled down in West Africa and engaged in construction of building for people. He made land mass achievements in Mali, Timbuctu and Borno until his death in Timbuctu.<sup>9</sup>

Stride and Ifeka equally wrote about the evolvement of Mali that the founders of the greatest empire of Mali were Madingo, Negro people whose homeland was the Madinka plateau between the upper streams of the Senegal and Niger. During the period of Ghana's ascendancy, they lived in scattered village-states about which little is known except that one Madingo chief was persuaded to become a Muslim in return for the prayers of a Muslim cleric to end serious drought; and that Madingo political unity was carved out as racial reaction against the oppressive rule of the Sumanguru of Susu.<sup>10</sup>

In comparison between Al-Iluriy's submission and the works of other historians, it could be seen that while he was contradicting himself, others maintain that the Mali Empire was an initiation of the blacks.

Al-Ilury also mentioned that in a book titled “Subh al- A'sha”, Manza Musa bn Abubakar passed through Egypt on his way to Makkah in 1324 and was welcomed by the Sultan of Egypt, Sultan Nasir Muhammed bn Qalawun. When Manza was asked about his reason for coming to visit him, he replied saying “My Uncle, the past Manza (Muhammed bn Qu) had the notion that the Atlantic Ocean has an end indeed. So, he sent hundreds of ships fully loaded with men and their materials for survival and commanded their sail in the Atlantic Ocean for a voyage on the search for end of the ocean. The ships went for a long time and none returned except one. The only returning ship's leader explained to the Manza that waves of the ocean have caused the death of all other men and their ships have perished. The Manza was not convinced with the reply he got, he set for the journey by himself with two thousand ships full of men and a thousand ship for their foods and made his uncle's son Mansa Musa the ruler of the land. Unfortunately for him he never returned.<sup>11</sup>

It was during the reign of Manza Musa, according to Al-Ilury that Islam got to

Yorubaland. The reign of Mansa Musa as described by Al- Iluriy is supported by other scholars who equally pointed out how his death brought about the decline of the Mali Empire. History has it that, after the death of Mansa Musa the fortunes of Mali declined through the profligacy and incompetence of his successors. The throne first passed to his son Maghan who, in a reign of only four years, permitted his splendid heritage to suffer major reverses.<sup>12</sup> One major issue that calls for our attention is the lack of direct references by Al- Iluriy on these his stands.

### **Songhai Empire and Al-Iluriy**

Al-Iluriy stated that the Songhai Empire was situated beside the land of Dahomey and Upper Volta up to the axis of Bussa in Northern Nigeria. Its capital was Gaw, close to present day Zogo city. He claimed that he read the history of Songhai and its evolution in the comments of a North African Jihadist, Muhyidin al-Qulaybi. Muhyidin wrote that verily the rulers of Songhai were from Yemen. It was actually as a consequence of some two brothers who fled from Yemen and settled down at a place where the eldest made himself the king under the name of Dhiya of Yemen. He mentioned that, Al-Su'di equally said similar thing in his book "*Tarikh al- Sudan*" that the Songhians were Yemenis who moved

to Sudan during the reign of Pharaoh. Their rulers during the period of ignorance were up to fourteen in number of succession and their names used to start with Za. His reference to this is not equally supplied.

The first to have embraced Islam among the Zas according to Al- Iluriy was Za Kaman in year 1022 A.D. After a while their rulers adopted the title, Sonni and the most influential among them was Sonni Ali that succeeded his Muslim father as a ruler between 1464 and 1492. He also discussed how Sonni Ali and the ruler of Portugal, whose name he did not mention came in contact with one another and how many Portuguese came in and settled down in Songhai. He equally described how the scholars of Timbuctu and Jenne opposed his mission and how he was able to defeat them, killed their scholars, and sold their children and how ruler ship was lost by him to the hands of Askiya Muhammad bn Abi Bakr Turay and his generation.<sup>13</sup>

In this his narrative on Songhai Empire, the economic importance of the empire was neglected. Other writers who though, have not in any way opposed the postulation of his on the history of Songhai provided us with adequate information on the economic strength of Songhai. They mentioned that in the days of Songhai Empire Agades prospered as the chief intrepot for the gold trade Gaw carried on with

Tripoli and Egypt. It was the Moorish conquest that eventually killed the trade and impoverished Agades. Though, its political importance was left unaffected.<sup>14</sup>

### **Muhammad bn Abi Bakr Turay and Al-Iluriy**

Muhammad bn Abi Bakr Turay was described by Al- Iluriy as a pristine and conscious Muslim. He hailed from Zindar and settled down in Songhai. Sonni Ali made him his right hand man, but never yielded to his advices. Muhammad bn Turay was patient enough to have remained with Ali, correcting his errors until when the latter died. At the death of Sonni Ali, the scholars and elders of Songhai made a consensus that Ibn Turay be made the ruler of the empire for he had qualities of good leadership and has gathered experience after working under Sonni Ali for thirty years. He equally had good reputations. He was made the leader in 1494 A.D. He was known as Askiya Muhammad. The tribe of Sonni Ali stood against him but had no support to put down his government.<sup>15</sup>

In history of mankind, a war leader of equal genius to that of Sonni Ali and that was more skilled in the art of peace emerged. He was intelligent, wise, calculating, temperate and urbane. He was Askiya Muhammad. He realized fully, the need for associating all the

important elements of Songhai society in the social development.<sup>16</sup> Al-Iluriy narrated how Shaykh Al-Imam Muhammad bn Abdul kareem Al-Maghili arrived Songhai as a visitor under the ruler ship of Askiya Muhammad and was consulted for some rulings on some religio-political issues. Askiya asked al-Maghili about the legitimacy of his enthronement. Al-Iluriy presented the description made by Askiya about his relationship with Sonni Ali and him and why he has emerged the new ruler of Songhai. He equally presented the responses of Al- Maghili and how the verdict made Askiya to be more devoted to the ruler ship of the empire. Part of what he said was that Sonni Ali and his people would not be considered unbelievers but cheaters and bad leaders, while the Jihad of Askiya against them was justified. Askiya was recorded to have ruled for 36 years while he had in Songhai, nobles like Al-Iman As-Suyuti, Khalid al- Azhary and some other clerics of Islam. He later left the throne for his son Musa in 1528 and his lineage remained the rulers of Songhai until the time of the last Askiya, Askiya Naoh in 1594.<sup>17</sup>

Part of the contributions of Askiya as described by other writers is not contrary to the writings of Al- Iluriy on him. It was mentioned that the conquest of Askiaya the Great had endowed the Songhai with immense surplus wealth.

Their vast dominions, stretching from the rain forest in the south of the Sahara in the north, and from Hausa in the east almost to the Atlantic in the West, had natural resources which more than sufficed for their needs.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Borno and Kanem Empires and Al-Iluriy**

Al-Iluriy wrote on Kanem and Borno that they were empires that situated beside the Chad basin, the capital was Kanem and later moved to Borno. He described the states that share border with them, on the western, eastern northern and southern parts. He explained that the indigenes of Borno and Kanem were originally from Barbar, a place sharing border with Upper Egypt. They migrated to the place before the advent of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The first Islamic capital of Kanem – Borno was established in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.H (1122 A.D). Militarily, Karem-Borno was not at the earlier stage formidable, that made it to be conquered severally by Ghana and Mali empires and they made her part of them at different periods. It was later that its rulers secured independence.<sup>19</sup> He described how Ibn Khaldun in his *Tarikh* presented Kanem-Borno and how popular it was in Tunis around 655A.H (127 A.D)

Al-Iluriy noted that it was discussed in *Subh al-A'sha* that the founder of Borno was a man from among the descendants of Uthman bn

Affan and that he came from Egypt through the Nupe land and established a Kingdom of Borno at arrival. The earliest Kings of Borno were known as Hume, the later ones were Mais, from whom the leadership got to the hands of Shaikhs.<sup>20</sup>

Some writers dwelled more on the personality of Idris Alooma, who ruled between 1572 and 1603, in the growth of Bornu empire, mentioning that he was the most famous of all rulers of the empire.<sup>23</sup> Borno, as discussed by Al-Iluriy got to the peak of her development during the reign of Idris 1 and Idris III. The latter was popularly known as Alooma. Alooma emerged in 1572 C.E. he had a formidable army, contributed more to the scholarship of his people by providing a school of Islamic jurisprudences for them in Cairo with hostels. It was mentioned that when Ibn Batuta came to West Africa and visited Timbuktu and Mali to mention a few, he wished to visit Borno but he did not later do that because he was informed that the ruler does not appear before people except once in every year and does not have talk with strangers.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Iluriy pointed out that Borno before the birth of Dan Fodio was a state whose inhabitants used to involve in syncretism. They claimed Islam, but have totally neglected the pristine Islamic teachings and practices. Some others

were worshipping stones, irons, trees, rivers etc. At the time Dan Fodio was born from an Islamic household, the Borno community was ideologically divided into four groups.<sup>24</sup>

There were (i) Pagans who only worship idols, (ii) converts from Islam due to their interactions with disbelievers, these were called the “Magano”, (iii) Muslims who observe the salat, zakat, fast and other rituals of Islam but were ignorant of the religious rules in relation to their practices and that involved in innovations and practices of the illiterate, and there were (iv) Muslim scholars that had relationship with the rulers and preferred to dance to the tunes of the rulers at the detriment of the masses interest and the religious preaching. They chose not to command right and forbid evils for the purpose of worldly benefits. Part of them, as mentioned by Al-Ilury, were same as those Askiya Muhammad described to Shaykh al-Maghili in this line. There was also the challenge on those whom the trust of guardianship of the land lays. They have limited knowledge in Arabic language and Islamic scholarship. They give verdicts with mediocrity and yet made followership of their opinion a compulsion and claim to be the prophet's successors.<sup>25</sup> The other category was the (v) pious and devout scholars who were teaching the masses Islam and referred to the Quran and Hadith. It was

from some of them that Dan Fodio learnt. He and his companions with their orientation played major role in the correction of abnormalities in the society.

Al-Ilury described the dawah methodologies adopted by Dan Fodio both at Borno and outside. The periods and manners of dawah activities made him to have large court of followers. He embarked on journey to other several communities where he had large number of revert to Islam. He was at Zamfara, Kebbi etc. for dawah activities before he returned to Borno. Dan Fodio did not use to relate with rulers and kings and he did not visit or welcome their invitations. But when the rulers of Gobir (Sao) heard about him and his reformation struggle, he invited him. Dan Fodio welcomed the invitation and attended the sitting called by the king. Eventually for the trustworthiness of Fodio in his campaign, the king made him his major adviser.<sup>26</sup> In addition to this, Al-Iluriy explained how the other clerics worked on how to pull him down and put end to his progressive campaign. And part of what they used to preach against him was the presence of women at his lecture gatherings.

Al-Iluriy presented the reply of Dan Fodio to them and other steps taken by the former and latter. He described also how the other clerics tactically caused disunity between Dan Fodio

and the Sao (ruler of Gobir) and how the latter wanted to use prize to put down the integrity of the former. But Dan Fodio was strategic enough to have detected their plan. So he escaped. He had larger congregation after the event but not with the influence of relationship with the rulers.<sup>27</sup>

The issue of the planned assassination of Dan Fodio and his men by the king was also noted along how he settled in neighboring community and later traveled for certain reasons. The increment in number of the inhabitants of Gobir who joined him at the new place of settlement and the population of the people who have left including those that were planning to leave, kept the king of Gobir in dilemma. He was forced by the reality on ground to re-invite Dan Fodio, but the Jihadist declined. He claimed that if he would return, the king would have to return to the pristine Islam and rule people with justice, return goods of the Muslim stopped from joining him at his new place of settlement and worship. Al-Iluriy described the advice of Muslim cleric gave the king when he sought their advice on the conditions given to him by Dan Fodio. He equated them as same as advice of the Jew to the non-believers among the Quraish on the event that transpired between them and the Prophet. They said that the king was right and Dan Fodio was wrong, and that the king should

be stricter and focused on his approach of ruling the people. With this, he did not either feel remorse or repent. Instead of compliance, the king wrote to Dan Fodio and his group that he would attack them and put end to them and their conspiracy. The notice of the planned war got to Dan Fodio and he prepared the mind of his people. This was the immediate effect on the making of Dan Fodio, a war commander, as his followers entered into covenant with him and promised him steadfastness at all times. Hence he took the title "Amir".

For Al-Iluriy, Jihad was a necessity for the emergence of an Islamic state and rulership system, the way the consumption of the forbidden fruit made Adam to live on the surface of the earth which already has been created for him and his descendants, and the way the Prophet migration had fast tracked the establishment of an Islamic government in Madina.<sup>28</sup>

The first person to enter covenant with Dan Fodio was his brother Abdullahi, followed by his friend Umar Al-Kuny and then his son Muhammed Bello after whom some other individuals joined. After the covenant he sets up the Islamic state by appointing ministers from among his followers for a shariah (Islamic law) operating state. On the side of the Gobir king, he was prepared for the war; he got the support of soldiers from the Hausa land and

those of Nupe. As they set out for his attack, the soldiers of Dan Fodio which were led by Abdullahi also set out and the two armies met at Koto where the battle took place. The army of Dan Fodio had upper hand and that made Abdullahi to put up a poem on the appraisal of the Jihadist and in consolation to the souls of the fallen heroes.<sup>29</sup>

Usman Dan Fodio was equally described by other writers who observed the skillfulness in him and how far he was able to go in changing a religio-political thinking of his people. His upbringing must have played major roles in his kind of philosophy, while the impacts of some two individuals could never be wiped out of his being. They were his uncle, Usman Binduri who enjoined him on focusing on the correction of abnormalities in the human society, and his revolutionary mentor Jibril Ibn Umar.<sup>30</sup>

He equally noted that the Hausa rulers came together on policies that could reduce the strength and influence of Dan Fodio and his followers in Hausa land. When Dan Fodio heard about that, he sent to the Hausa rulers (Habe rulers) that they should support him in the reformation campaign instead of attacking him and his followers. The Hausa rulers declined and Fodio sent to his followers all over the Hausa and Fulani land that they should be more vigilant on security and seek

God's protection. This was followed by the issue of how flag-bearers took oaths with Dan Fodio and how they too gathered army and followers. In all, Dan Fodio had nothing less than fourteen flag-bearers and they were able to defeat Gobir, Kebbi and Zamfara putting end to their kings' rulership. Though, some flag bearers (Muhammad bn al-Hassan and Jina Muhammad Thambo) were killed along with some other men.

Al-Iluriy compared the Jihad of Dan Fodio and his followers with that of the early Muslims and claimed they are similar in all respects. He wrote that the Dan Fodio's preaching started the way the call to Islam started, the unbelievers and rebels in Gobir rejected the way the unbelievers among the Quraish did. Dan Fodio had to migrate to a desert – new-settlement with his people the way the foremost Muslims did to Medina. The Gobir army was stopping and cutting believers from their land to join Dan Fodio the way the Quraish did the foremost Muhajirun (Migrants from Makkah to Medina). When the Gobir rulers discovered that the Muslims were gaining ground after settlement they planned to attack them the way the Quraish did plan against foremost Muslims after Hijrah (migration). The army of Dan Fodio and the enemies met at Kawutu the same way the Muslims and unbelievers met at Badr. The

followers of Dan Fodio were victorious the way the Muslims defeated Quraish at Badr. Dan Fodio's group lost the second battle the same the Muslims lost to the second battle at Uhud. The army of Dan Fodio won the third battle the same way the Muslims won the Khandaq (third war), Dan Fodio and followers conquered kalami the way the Muslims conquered the city of Makkah.<sup>31</sup> This comparison should however not be noted as presentation of Dan Fodio as reincarnate of the Prophet.

Writing on the flag bearers of Dan Fodio, Al-Iluriy claimed that the first among them was the ruler of 'Ahir' community, a place near Sokoto that was endowed with both material and human resources. They were so much religious and wanted to know more about its duties and rights. Their ruler was Sultan Muhammad al-Bakir. He discussed how the king wished and eventually had contact with Dan Fodio after hearing about him. The shaykh had an agreement with him on issues essential to the development of his mission. The king died soon, so his brother took over and followed what was on ground between them. Al-Iluriy equally presented what is contained in the letter of Sultan Bakir who wrote to the king of Maghrib, Malay Ahmad and how he presented Dan Fodio to him. There were flag-bearers at Katsina, Zaria, Bauchi, Gombe,

Upper Benue, Daira, Nupe and Yoruba lands etc. Names of the flag bearers were mentioned including those of their successors (where remembered), their strategies, activities and how they have been able to put end to the unjust rulership styles there and established a shariah practicing state.

Al-Iluriy made comparison between Dan Fodio and El-kanemi in their methodologies. Analyzing the personality of El-kanemi, he mentioned how he was not in total support of the method of Dan Fodio Jihad. Al-Iluriy presented the letter written by El-kanemi to Dan Fodio and his men claiming that the Jihad of theirs against the rulers in the Fulani, Hausa and other lands could not be justified. El-kanemi pointed out that the level of abnormalities and maladministration carried out by the rulers could not make the Jihad against them justifiable. He expressed his opinion that, if the rulers were observed to have carried out what Dan Fodio and his followers would refer to as innovations, the innovations are not accepted in the religion but instead of waging war against the innovators, it is better to correct them without considering them as unbelievers. He said, though, slaughtering of animals at graves is part of your arguments on their disbelief, but there is a community between Egypt and Syria known as "Dimyat" that the people slaughter animals

for a sacrifice. Mean while, despite the region it happens, where Islamic knowledge and scholarship is advance, nobody had declared them as disbeliever. Equally, the exposing of hair by women is prohibited by the Quran, but instead of killing the offenders it's better to enlighten them. These amongst others were the content of the letter of El-kanemi to Dan Fodio's jamaa. And he concluded that what is most irksome to him and made him flabbergasted was that the activities and the strives of the jihadists shall fetch them no reward except punishment if they fail to repent.<sup>33</sup> In the thought of El-Kanemi, Dan Fodio had political ambition.

Al-Iluriy presented to us the response of Muhammad Bello, the son of Dan Fodio to El-kanemi and his people in relation to the letter. He noted that most of the allegations raised against the Jihadists by El-kanemi were with exaggeration while he gave reasons for the jihad and concluded by saying that El-kenemi had done his deed in hatred and grudges against the Jamah waging the Jihad.<sup>34</sup> On the argument between Dan Fodio and El- Kanemi, Smith wrote in support of the writings of Al-Iluriy. He had the opinion after reading about the campaign that part of the problems of the Jihad was that it was observed to be racial and religious war. But, it differs from other Jihads on number of the Nomads that joined. In the

other Jihads, religion is often used for acquisition of worldly materials.<sup>35</sup>

### **The City of Kano and Al-Iluriy**

Al-Iluriy noted that Kano has been the most populous, largest and most financially buoyant city in Hausa land. It was founded in the 10th century C.E. by some emigrants from North Africa to West Africa. Its first king according to history records was Baguda the son of Bawa. Bawa was noted to be a son to Abdul Yazid, a Great Arab to whom all the seven Hausa kings could trace their origins. The Bawo clan has been the ruling dynasty at Kano for over one hundred and forty years before it got to the hand of the Rumfa dynasty. The most popular among them was Muhammad Zunfa bn Yakub. It was during his reign that Al-Imam Maghili traveled down to Kano. Al-Maghili married at Kano and had three children: Ahmed, Isa and Sayyid Abyad (Mr. White).<sup>36</sup> But it is necessary to ask the question of why are the Hausas so dark in complexion if they are from the Arab origin. Other writings on the history of Kano have it that the earliest inhabitants of the settlement were Negro of Abagayawa, whose descendants still live in the city today. They were blacksmiths who had settled on Dala hill to work its supplies of ironstone. Their most famous ruler, probably the founder of the settlement was known as Barbushe.<sup>37</sup>

Al-Iluriy equally pointed out that Al-Maghili forwarded a memorandum for Muhammad Rumfa on the Islamic principles in governance. Al-Iluriy described the memorandum to be similar in kind to that which was written by Umar bn Al-Khattab (the second successor and commander of the Muslims after the prophet) to Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari on legal issues. He equally brought similarity between it and that of Al-Hassan Al-basari to Umar bn Abdul Azeez in the qualities of a just leader and to the letter of ethics and conduct written by Maliki to Hakim al-Rashid.

Al-Maghili equally wrote a compendium to Saïd, king of Kano. The compendium according to Al-Iluriy was basically on leadership, organization and societal management. He equally equated the compendium with the principles of leadership (*Al-Akhan al-Sultaniyyah*) of Al-Mawardi (d. 450 A.H/ 1072 C.E) and with the Islamic leadership (*As-Siyasat al-Islamiyyat*) of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 A.H/ 1350 C.E).

Al-Iluriy presented the memorandum the way it was written and after it, presented the compendium. The content of the memorandum according to Al-Iluriy indicated that it was Muhammad Rumfa of Kano that requested it written so that it could serve as a guide for him in ruling the state. The memorandum ended

with a piece of reminder as death and life after death.

The compendium discussed what is essential in the ruler in relation to his good manner. What is essential in every ruler in relation to government appointment of officials, what is essential in the ruler in relation to diplomatic relating, what is essential in the ruler in relation to being just with the common men, what is essential to be known by the ruler in relation to internal revenue, what is essential to be known by the ruler in relation to budget and allocation of fees and protects finance. Al-Maghili's memorandum and compendium were rich with advices and ruling from the Quran and the hadith. Some of the written documents were in form of poem while the others took letter approach.<sup>38</sup> The rulership of the people with justice and being skillful on development of the state were extensively described by Al-Maghili to the ruler of kano when he wrote in poems. These poems included those Al- Iluriy could assess on in the reconstruction of the relationship between the scholar and the rulers of Kano.<sup>39</sup>

## **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it would be deduced that analyzing Al-Iluriy's submissions in his historical work titled *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Shaykh Uthman bn Fodiyo* is an academic

exercise that better informs audiences about the quality of the work. In addition to the above selected few accounts, other issues accounted for in the work included political organizations and institutions in West Africa, colonialism and colonial governments in West Africa, nationalism and attainment of independence by Nigeria, regional governments, political parties formations and activities, coups and civil war in Nigeria etc. The accounts in the work are embedded with essential information for students and researchers on Nigerian and West African histories. It is on this basis that this study concludes that consulting the work shall provide learners with additional information on the histories of actors and institutions in political developments in West Africa. Also, through comparison of the accounts in the historical work, this study opened the door for further investigations on matters that were presented by the author in contending and contrary perceptions to those

of other authors, especially English authors. Availability of differences in his accounts and those of other authors negates the arguments by some critics that Al-Iluriy's sources of historical works were the publications by English authors, and that he only translated some of their works to Arabic which was his language of writing. On the contrary, the sources of his historical works as enlisted in this analyzed text (*Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Shaykh Uthman bn Fodiyo*) and others included oral traditions, manuscripts and published works of both indigenous and foreign Arabic authors of West African history. Identifying the contributions of this work - *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Shaykh Uthman bn Fodiyo* – and other historical works of Al-Iluriy to the preservation of Nigerian and West African histories, this study recommends their translations to English and other foreign languages for the benefit of none Arab audiences.

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