

Historical Works of Al-Iluriy: An Evaluation

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Abstract

At the eve of Nigeria's independence, its historiography got branded with 3Rs; Reconstruction, Rebranding and Re-presentation. This auspicious development was orchestrated by emergence of indigenous historians as authorities at the history departments of Nigerian universities. The magnanimous efforts of K.O. Dike, Saburi Biobaku, J. C. Anene, and Yusuf Bala Usman to mention a few, presented later generations of historians with an indispensable historiography tagged 'Nationalist historiography'. Nationalist historiography is that which is embedded with presentation of historical facts in the perspectives of nationals. Nationalist historiography freed African past from the shackles of Eurocentric views on African history, and it holds its acknowledgements to the works of Muslim-Arab historians, the chief of who were Al-Mas'udi, Al-Bakri, and Ibn Batuta among others. Some indigenous Arab writers of history were however in existence before the founders of the Ibadan School of history and its contemporaries. Some of them are Usman Dan Fodio, Abdullah bn Fodio, and Abubakar Ahmad Ikororo, who in 1912 wrote *Ta'lif Akhbarul Qurun min Umarai Ilurin* (History of the Emirs of Ilorin). It was in continuity of the efforts of these writers that Al-Iluriy published his historical works. Adopting analytical approach, this paper aims at reviewing the background to Al-Iluriy's history writing scholarship, his adopted approaches in the reconstruction of past, extent of accuracy and objectivity in those his works and quantification of their contributions to Arab and nationalist historiographies. This study concludes that the historical works of Al-Iluriy did not only contribute to nationalist historiography, but also redirected attention of their audiences to the raw sources of African history i.e., the records of Muslim-Arab historians.

Keywords: Al-Iluriy, History, Historiography, Nationalist, Nigeria, Africa

Introduction

Historians are individuals who took the custody of information about past events, and historical works are the written accounts or studies with which significant past events of societies, cultures and individuals are documented (Vansina 279). While ample indigenous scholars' historical works for English audience exist on the history of Nigeria, some notable others are available for Arabic audience too. Amongst other indigenous Arabic writers of Nigerian history, Al-Iluriy made himself an outstanding phenomenon by authoring his classical historical works. Some of his historical works include *Akhbaru al-Qurun* (Chronicles of 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 Najiriya* (Islam today and tomorrow in Nigeria), *Al-Islam fi Nijiriya wa Shaykh Usman bn Fudiyo* (Islam in Nigeria and Shaykh Usman Dan Fodio), *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 Nijiriya 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-Tarikhuhu* (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) and

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Tawjih al-Da'wat wa al-Dua't (Directing the affairs of (Islamic) Missionary and its propagators) to mention a few.

Either written for English or Arabic audience, historical works are examined through historiography which refers to the study of how history is been written and interpreted over time (Burke 261). It is through historiography that the methodologies, biases and approaches adopted by a historian in his historical work(s) are evaluated. Such evaluation of historical works in the lenses of historiography substantiates the ingenuity of objective data interpretation and submissions by the historian. It was in attempt to evaluate the historical works of Al-Iluriy that this paper was put together. After brief introduction, the paper gave concise information on the family and educational background of Al-Iluriy. This was followed by examination of the adopted approaches by Al-Iluriy in his historical works, then evaluation of accuracy and objectivity in his data interpretation and submissions. Next to this was quantification of Al-Iluriy's contribution to Arab historiography through his historical works, then conclusion.

Family and Educational Background of Al-Iluriy

Al-Iluriy, Adam Abdullah was from Ilorin, Nigeria and his mother was from Wassa, Republic of Benin (Alketuwiy). His grandfather, Habeebullah, was from Atiba, Oyo-Ile, from where he migrated to Ilorin and later gave birth to AbdulBaqi who fathered Al-Iluriy, Adam Abdullah. Habeebullah, before migration, served as horse-guard to the Alaafin. He settled in the household of an Islamic cleric, Imam Aidaagbe from where he later moved to Omoda where he co-built the Omoda mosque with the community's leader and emerged the first Imam of the mosque around 1870. He then took up the responsibility of tutoring kids on Qur'anic education and graduated numbers of students. When he became aged, he made Imam Kuranga, a Muslim preacher and traveller from Iseyin his assistant (AbduLlah, Lamahat al-Balur 88) Al-Iluriy was born in Wassa in 1917. His father, AbdulBaqi, an itinerant preacher was on preaching mission there. AbdulBaqi studied under his father, Habeebullah, and later his brother, Ilyas. He travelled down to Borgo then Dende to study more about Islamic doctrines and later settled down in Wassa, where he was made a religious leader. AbdulBaqi married Aisha, mother of Adam who was a daughter of the ruler of Wassa. Al-Iluriy grew up in Benin Republic. When he became 13 years old, he returned with his parents to Ilorin in 1929 and enrolled as a pupil under Shaykhs Malik Alausa and Hashimi Arikewuyo (AbduLlah, Lamhat al-Balur 89).

Al-Iluriy's father tutored him elementary Arabic and Islamic studies. His father sought prayers for him from many Shaykhs; Al- Hassan (Dahomey), Muhammad Waziri (Bida), and some others in Ilorin (AbduLlah, Lamhat al-Balur 89). He was taught for three years by Shaykh Solih, son of his father's teacher who later advised him to learn more from Alhaji Umar Agbaji in Lagos. Later, he met Shaykh Adam Nam'aji who discovered him in company of Northern Muslims and retailers of Arabic texts. His prowess in Arabic conversation got the attention of Nam'aji who then picked interest in him for mentoring. Al-Iluriy was exposed to international scholarship by the Arab travellers he later met. Through continuous contacts with researcher friends, mostly from the Arab world, he developed self-confidence and enhanced high esteem (AbduLlah, Lamhat al-Balur 90).

In the search for scholarship and recognition, he travelled to some Islamic and Arabic speaking countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan to mention a few. He embarked on the journeys at intervals to gain exposure to international scholarship in his career (Abbas 75). As rightly mentioned by Umar Al-Amiriy, Al-Iluriy did not only travel to attend several international conferences in the Arab world for a sole reason of participation as either audience or speaker, but to increase in exposure and gain more reputation. In fulfilment of his objectives most individuals who had contact with him were indeed enticed by his scholarship and they affirmed it (AbduLlah, Al-Islam fi Naijiriya 4). His continuous efforts later fetched him international recognitions. He was the first black African to win the coveted Egyptian Gold Medal in

Arabic literature which was presented to him by the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak in 1989 at Al-Azhar University (Abbas 75).

At a very tender age, Al-Iluriy joined the Islamic preachers in Yoruba land. His twentieth century activities complimented the efforts of the pioneers of Islamic and Arabic studies in Yoruba land (Clarke 224). Part of his achievements as an Islamic cleric include the establishment of *Marcaz Ta'leemil Arabi Al- Islamiy* (Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies) at Abeokuta (Ogun state, Nigeria) in 1952, which he later moved to Agege (Lagos state, Nigeria) in 1954. He directly taught and produced students in large number from Nigeria and the Diaspora. His students form a large percentage of Islamic preachers in the whole of South-Western part of Nigeria and beyond. They took after his method of reciting the Quran with a dynamic intonation, the *Markazy*, especially during their Ramadan preaching. He was the first Imam to present Friday *khutbah* (pre-congregational prayer sermon) using simultaneous Arabic and Yoruba translation. He published more than thirty books on Arabic language, Islamic studies, Geography, Politics and History (Animashaun 51).

His interest in history writing was noteworthy as he used to say; *"I love History the way my father did, I became influenced and adopted the methods of As-Suyuti, Ibn Khaldun and Al- Gazali in research"*. (AbduLlah, Lamhat al-Balur 90). The philosophy of Al- Iluriy on the concept of History was that the knowledge of history accrues more reputation and relevance to the historians. It gives them honour as their services are honourable (AbduLlah, Al-Islam fi Naijiriya 11).

Approaches in the Historical Works of Al-Iluriy

There are several approaches adopted by historians in the reconstruction of the past as exemplified in the historical works of Al-Iluriy and evaluated by this study. Among them are the descriptive and the analytical approaches. The approaches in historiography are what inform readers of historical works about what the historian wants them to realize as the learning or studying outcome. Availability of the approaches is consequence of the evolution of different schools of historiography. The schools of historiography have developed various methods that contribute to the development of historiography and its approaches.

There is *Big History* i.e. a method that examines history on a large scale across long frames through a multi-disciplinary approach; *Cliometric* i.e. a method that refers to the systematic application of economic theory, econometric techniques and other mathematical methods to the study of history (especially social and economic history); *comparative history* i.e. that involves the comparison between different societies at a given time or sharing similar conditions of culture; and there are several others. These methods are what the researcher or examiner of the historian's work(s) watch out for to be able to identify his adopted approach (Harrison).

Analytical approach is the discovery and interpretation of meaningful patterns in data collection. Scientifically, it is referred to as the use of analysis to break a problem down into necessary elements to solve it. It is the same with formal analysis. The approach could be seen as that which involves a method that enables the researcher to analyse certain historical reports with the involvement of his own understanding of the available data. It is an approach that demonstrates the historian's ability to apply logical thinking to breaking down the reason a particular actor or an institution has played a certain role in a historical event under review.

On the other hand, the descriptive approach of writing is the method that does not necessarily indicate that the writer is developing any argument. It focuses merely on setting the background within which an argument can be developed. A historian who works with the descriptive approach is the one who presents the situation as it is, without presenting any analysis or discussion (Emmanuel).

Descriptive approach of writing history is relatively simple. It involves using the historian's words in the description of the event which happened in his presence or rather, that which has been narrated to him via oral transmission. In the use of descriptive approach, the historian would not need to be transforming data from how he got them to other meaning. This is a major distinction between the analytical and descriptive approaches. In the use of analytical approach, the historian would need to consider the quality of the evidence and argument he has at hand. But the descriptive approach of history writing does not call for this, thus, indicating a major difference between them (Jacob). Analytical approach calls for the examination/evaluation of arguments that are relevant and useful to the actualization of fact other than fiction and as against submission of opinion by the historian. Haven described the approaches; this study tends to evaluate the historical works of Al-Iluriy in respect of their approaches.

In the work titled *Lamhat al-Balur fi Mashahir Ulamai Ilurin* in which Al-Iluriy gave reports on the actors in the development of Islam and its proselytization in Ilorin and Yorubaland in general, he adopted the descriptive approach. Accounting for historical periods and people who lived and impacted on their environments, Al-Iluriy was more descriptive. The work was written based on periodic categorization other than thematic one. The author did not bring up arguments in the work. He only made few comparisons between the actors and their contemporaries. For example, he compared Shaykh Muhammad Kamaludeen popularly known as A'jubat al-Zaman with Imams Al-Shafi, Ibn Taymiyyah and Al-Suyuti. He pointed out that A'jubat Al-Zaman was born and brought up by the blacks and was one of those whose scholarship and its popularity got international attention especially by memorizing the whole Qur'an at age ten and preaching at age fifteen. (AbduLlah, *Lamhat al-Balur* 79). He concluded that while Imams Shafi', Ibn Taymiyya and Suyuti had the privilege of emerging such an international status of scholarship and reputation because of their environments of origin and the types of upbringing they enjoyed, A'jubat had no such opportunity to the environmental and parenting luxuries passed through by the former trio, and that his international scholarship recognition was divinely influenced and was nicknamed A'jubat al-Zaman by Muhammad bn Ibrahim Dende (AbduLlah, *Lamhat al-Balur* 80). The book is full of descriptions. The reason for the adoption of the descriptive approach in the work could be because Al-Iluriy was solely interested in presenting the individual scholars with adequate information on their lives. He mentioned that no Yoruba historian has done the exercise of keeping historical records on the lives of Yoruba Islamic scholars before him.

In his other work titled *Al-Imam al-Maghili*, Al-Iluriy adopted both analytical and descriptive approaches. The work was full of description of history theatres. He described in it the places visited by Al-Maghili and how citizens and political leaders of several settlements consulted him for advice and Islamic guide on more appropriate system of government. A part of the work was dedicated to the description of the books of Al-Maghili as with reference to the work of Baba Al-Timbucti; *Miftahu al-Nadhar fi 'Ilm Al-Athar*, *Misbahul Arwah fi Usul al-Falah*, *Mukhtasar Talkhis al-Miftah*, *Sharh Jumal al-Khawanji*, *Manhu al-Wahab*, *Rijz al-Maghili* and *Tanbih al-Ghafilin 'an Makr al-Mulabisina bida'wah Maqamat al-'Arifin* (AbduLlah, *Al-Imam al-Maghili* 13). After describing the personality of al-Maghili and his travels around West Africa, he critically analysed his efforts there and made comparison between him and other scholars. He compared the works of Al-Maghili with those of Al-Akhdhari. He equally compared the personality of Al-Maghili with that of As-Suyuti and their respective impacts on Islamic proselytization.

In making his analyses more extensive, Al-Iluriy made commentaries on each of the writings and arguments of both individuals on *'Ilm Al-Mantiq*. According to him, *'Ilm Al-Mantiq* (Science of Logic) has been a common field of studies in the *Maghrib* (West Africa) and Sudan and Al-Maghili was one of those who propagated the field of knowledge in West Africa. Meanwhile, there have been critics of its studies from among international Muslim scholars such as Ibn Salah, Ibn Taymiya and An-Nawawi; on

whose postulation was the idea of As-Suyuti. At the arrival of As-Suyuti to West Africa, he preached against the study of Science of Logic which Al-Maghili was propagating. Books of references that were upheld by As-Suyuti I the castigation of studying logic included the books of Ibn Taymiyya such as *Nasihah al-Iman fi al-Radd 'ala Mantiq al-Yunan*, *Juhd al-Qarihat fi Tajrid al-Naseehah* and *Sawn al-mantiq wal kalam 'an Fani al-Mantiq wal Kalam*. These developments brought about academic and ideological dichotomy between them as they involved in a 'cold war' via publications (AbduLlah, Al-Imam al-Maghili 23). After presenting available arguments in their various publications, Al-Iluriy took side. He posited that the Science of Logic is worthy of being studied.

Al-Iluriy did not also hesitate to analyse the principles of governance that were provided by Al-Maghili and the letter of As-Suyuti (as presented in verbatim). The use of analytical approach in these works could be because he was interested in making past arguments on the study of logic science (which remains point of contention between contemporary scholars of Islamic legal systems) available and to make the justification of his point that Al-Maghili was effective in West Africa during his visitations.

In addition to that, it would have been enough for him to mention that Al-Maghili successfully provided accurate answers to the questions put before him, but Al-Iluriy went further to provide the questions and answers in details (AbduLlah, Al-Imam al-Maghili 68).

In his work titled *Al-Jugrafiyyah wa At-Tarikh*, Al-Iluriy adopted descriptive approach in the introduction of terms, their definitions, and classifications. Parts of the issues discussed in the work included origin of human race, origin of diets, initiation of shelters, origin of transportation and transport systems, history of writing art, origin of selected world religions, theories of the evolution of animals etc. He opted for analytical approach in arguing his points in religious perspectives. Wherever he presented other writers' postulations, he provided Quranic back-ups and or counterpoints to them. For example, his chapter on the invention and the first use of ark by man was referenced to that of Nuh. (AbduLlah, *Al-Jugrafiyyah wa Tarikhu* 30). It is possible that his adoption of descriptive approach in this work was because he was not presenting new information but was comparing key the points, he was able to deduce from the Qur'an and works of other history writers.

Of more descriptive approach is Al-Iluriy's most recommended historical work, *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa As-Shaykh Usman bn Fodiyo al-Fulani*. He gave descriptions on states, people, political institutions, religious struggles, international relations, actors, and institutions in development of civilizations, socio-economic relations among states and communities to mention a few. He did not hesitate to include his arguments as some of his submissions in the work indicated that he also embraced analytical approach in it. His analyses on the submissions of Abdullah bn Fodio on the religions of the southerners appeared as a counter argument to the former. While Abdullah bn Fodio erroneously posited that Islamic preachings started in Yoruba land as a result of the Jihad of the Fulani jihadists, Al-Iluriy presented evidences on the existence of Islam and Islamic proselytization in Yoruba land since epochs earlier than 19th century Fulani Jihad period (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya* 133). Al-Iluriy accounted for experience of Nigerians under colonial government, nationalism and struggle for independence and its attainment and regional governments (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya* 154). He equally presented his personal observations on the factors responsible for the supposed victory of Nigeria during the civil war (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya* 168).

He made mention of what could be the responsible factors for the challenges of Islam and Muslims in Nigeria. While giving a review of past events, he gave his personal opinions on what could be the ways-out. He described as part of the causes, as he observed to include leadership challenge, problem of disunity among the Muslim communities and disintegration within some of them and the differences in ideology and sectarianism. Another point he made was the influence of political parties on the Muslim communities. According to him partisan politics made the Nigerian Muslim community a house divided within itself

(AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Najjiriya* 169). While this was observed by him as a challenge to the Muslim community, it could be observed by another person as an essential tool for the formation of a formidable Muslim community. In essence the work combines both descriptive and analytical approaches.

In his description of Usman Dan Fodio and his impacts on the development of Islam in West Africa he was more descriptive. He firstly described the origin of the Fulanis with account of some unidentified historians that the Fulanis were of either Asian, Jewish, Arab or Romans origin. After much description of the Fulanis, he described the tribe of Dan Fodio and listed the tribe's genealogy up to Baba bn Musa Jakolo whom he said migrated to Futa Toro from Hijaz in present day Saudi Arabia. It was after this lengthy narration that he then talked about the birth of Dan Fodio in 1169 A.H. (1744 C.E.) and how he was brought up. He mentioned the names of the teachers and mentors of Dan Fodio, and that the first person to tutor him was his father. The ideology and the schools of thought Dan Fodio embraced, and his jihad methods and techniques were equally described (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Najjiriya* 93).

In his other work titled *Nizam Ta'lim al-Arabi wa Tarikhuhu*, Al-Iluriy gave historical description of teaching and teaching methods and their evolution and development. He talked about the ideological positions of some Muslim intellectuals on methods of teaching (AbduLlah, *Nizam Ta'lim* 81). Analytically, he compared between the scope of teaching and learning in religions. While he was discussing methodologies of teaching and their developments, he argued in support of Qur'anic points of view.

In the work titled *Al-Islam al-Yawm wa Ghadhan fi Najjiriya*, Al-Iluriy started almost all topics with presentation of his opinions and others. Amongst other topics, Al-Iluriy gave historical account on the origin of Islam and its spread in West Africa (AbduLlah, *Islam al-Yawm* 53), the cold war and how it aided the spread of Christianity in Nigeria (AbduLlah, *Islam al-Yawm* 65), roles of Christian missions in the spread of western education to northern Nigeria and their challenges, (AbduLlah, *Islam al-Yawm* 75), History of Islamic organization in Nigeria and the roles in the pursuit of formidable future for Nigerian Muslims (AbduLlah, *Islam al-Yawm* 78), actors in the progress and development of Arabic education and Islam in Nigeria etc. (AbduLlah, *Islam al-Yawm* 90),

In the work titled *Aslu Qabail Yuruba*, Al-Iluriy started with analyses of what has been written on origin of man in general. He brought counter opinion based on religious scriptures (AbduLlah, *Aslu Qabail* 42). He analysed the writings of Samuel Johnson and Adam Nam'aji on the origin and history of the Yorubas in relation to Oduduwa. He spilled more ink countering their writings on the Yoruba history. The works that he criticized most were the *Azhar al-Riba and Infaq al-Maysuri* of Sultan Muhammad Ballo bn Uthman bn Fodio. From the above attempts, one can conclude that the historical works of Al-Iluriy were written with combination of both analytical and descriptive approaches of writing. Some of the works showcased his personal interpretation of historical events. Like earlier Muslim-Arab historians, Al-Iluriy did not separate the hands of the Supreme Being in historical developments.

Accuracy and Objectivity in the Historical Works of Al-Iluriy

The question of objectivity was a major challenge of the historical works of Al-Iluriy. He was not able to dissociate his religion from his writings. For example, in *Aslu Qabail Yuruba* his presentation of different account on the origin of the Yorubas (contrary to the Oduduwa myth) and objection to the idea of accepting Ooni of Ife as the spiritual head of the Yoruba race were influenced by his religion. In an alternative, he presented an account that promotes the relationship of Yorubas with the Arabs and held unto the Qur'anic revelations on the origin of human race. The problem of accuracy in this work was that he failed to present the source of his narration on the origin of the Yorubas from Arabia.

Also, Al-Iluriy could be observed to be too religiously sentimental in his writings especially in the ways he presented actors in history that were not Muslims. For example, he described Afonja, the Old Oyo

generalissimo as an adamant idol worshipper that did not want the progress of Islam in Ilorin (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Najjiriya* 135). He could have presented Afonja as an Oyo warrior without necessarily condemning him on religious basis. He was not concerned about the way the Fulani got the leadership of Ilorin community. Instead, he focused on the history of the establishment of an Islamic emirate there and he was much enticed by it. This observed sentiments in his discussed titles brought about the conclusion that rather than being an objective nationalist historian, Al-Iluriy was more an emirate historian.

Religious bias also made him to present Biafra as a land of the unbelievers. He presented the Nigerian civil war as one outside the ordinary political realm (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Najjiriya* 168). In fact, the traditional medicine in Benin prior to her relation and introduction to Islam was qualified as magic. He presented it as a black magic which was ungodly. What he should have done and that was expected of him as a historian was to mention the religio-political and socio-economic practices of the people without any form of castigation on them. He supposed to present history the way he has seen or read it.

Another problem with the works of Al-Iluriy is the challenge of dates. Use of dates and dating methods are necessary in the evaluation of historical works in respect to their accuracy and objectivity. In the aspect of chronology, some of the works of Al-Iluriy are not different from those of other Muslim - Arab historians. Most of their works were dated with either accurate or relative dating methods. In addition to the *Isnad* (chain of transmission) which has been accurate in ensuring proper dating, Muslim - Arab historians relied also on the Hijrah calendar (part of which were calculated by translators to the Gregorian calendar in their works). However, inconsistency in the adopted dating method in a single text can be confusing and inconsequential. For example, in *Al-Islam fi Najjiriya wa As-Shaykh Usman bn Fodiyo al-Fulani* while events in some topics were majorly dated with the Gregorian calendar dates (e.g. the history of Islam in Bini and Igbo land), some were presented with hijrah calendar (e.g. spread of Islam to West Africa) and some were not dated at all (e.g. Dan Fodio's flag bearers in Yoruba land).

Also, Al-Iluriy's works like those of the missionary historians do not separate the hands of God from history. The missionary sources were criticized by Kemi Rotimi of religious bias. Rotimi mentioned precisely that the works of Samuel Johnson were influenced by his relationship with and working under David Hinderer, a Christian who respected Oyo so much and had bias for Ijebu and Ijesa, thus, making him subjective in presentation of facts and opinions (Rotimi 15). Al-Iluriy in his submissions on the end of the Nigerian civil war posited that Nigerian army was not only able to defeat the Biafran soldiers due to larger supply of weapons and large number of fighters on its side, but with the intervention of the Supreme Being. He posited that Nigeria was an Islamic state and so, during the civil war years, it enjoyed spiritual aid through daily supplications, prayers, alms giving and continuous fast in request for victory for Nigeria by citizens of neighbouring Muslim countries (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Najjiriya* 168). This conclusion of his clearly indicated that he did not separate the hands of God from historical developments. This to a large extent is an indication of lack of objectivity in his historical works.

Al-Iluriy's Contributions to Islamic Historiography

The historical works of Al-Iluriy have contributed generally to nationalist historiography and Islamic/Arab historiography. Al-Iluriy adopted the historical methods and traditions of Arab historians and his works had some significance. The works play the role of re-presenting some of the facts in the books of early Arab historians with inclusion of the author's personal interpretations. In addition to this, the works made new Arabic writings available for Nigerian history, especially on historical developments in the 19th and 20th centuries. The works of Dan Fodio, Abdullah and Muhammad Ballo were majorly on the historical developments in Nigeria, but with limitation to the 19th century and earlier epochs. Those historical works of Al-Iluriy cover some significant events in the pre-historical and historical periods.

The works equally call historians' attention to the writing of historical works with consciousness on divine scriptures narrations and their comparison with narrations from other sources. The works of earlier Muslim Arab historians did not hesitate to relate historical evidences with Qur'anic views; in fact, it was a yardstick

in their accuracy attainment. Although, some Arab writers presented their facts in such ways that depict non- involvement of the Supreme Being in historical happenings. Al-Iluriy presented Qur'anic positions on issues and made them yardsticks in his postulations. There have been several works by Muslim Arab historians who have not been accessed by many students of history and other researchers for a long period ago; the works of Al-Iluriy re-introduced the contents of those works and exposed his audiences to their values. The essence of the historical works of Al-Iluriy in the Islamic historiography and their contributions to its development are significant. Al-Iluriy was mentioned by Shaykh Nasiru Muhammad Kabara to have, with his works and precisely *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya wa Uthman bn Fudiyo*, paid the debt of Muslim scholars in Nigeria on the reconstruction of Islamic history in Nigeria and beyond. He further stated that, Al-Iluriy with his works has displayed himself as a Nationalist historian. The works of Al-Iluriy really brought back to our memory the past of the trade and trading routes, the awesome Muslim propagators, the founding fathers of empires and kingdoms. Indeed, he has resurrected the dead from the grave and put life back into rotten bones” (AbduLlah, *Al-Islam fi Naijiriya* 7-8).

Al-Iluriy's works also serve the purpose of preserving the records of history makers in the societies covered by them. In his *Lamhat al- Balur fi Mashahir Ulamai Ilurin*, he mentioned that indeed few or nothing tangible has been written by the Scholars of Yorubaland on the records of the past Muslim preachers of the land. He claimed that the few available information he was aware of was the ones put together by his mentor, Adam Nam'aji, his friends Shaykh Muhammad Nasiru Kabara and Dr. Aliyu Abubakr. In fact, he stated that his work was the first detailed book on the account of Ilorin scholars who preached Islam in Yorubaland (AbduLlah, *Lamhat al-Balur* 92).

Conclusion

To evaluate the historical works of Al-Iluriy, Adam Abdullah, some selected works of his were identified by this study. An investigation into his academic background showcased that he became interested in studying and writing history because of his studentship experiences and travels around the world. After successful discussions on the contents of his selected historical works and evaluations of the postulations embedded in them in the light of the determining factors on ingenuity of historical works such as the questions of objectivity and accuracy, appraisals were made on the works generally. Contrary to the idea that the historical works of Al-Iluriy are not historical in kind, there are several values attached to them, part of which include the re-presentation of already available information in new dimensions and in Arabic, another foreign language. This provided audiences and literates in the language with the opportunity to the information therein.

The works also provide audience with Qur'anic based arguments on historical facts. Al-Iluriy's manner of presenting historical narrations redirects the attention of readers to belief in the Supreme Being. As did Al-Iluriy, the belief that God has a place in history is what both national and international Muslim Arab historians did not oppose. While some historical narratives in his works were lengthily presented, some others were in summary forms. This study concludes that the contributions of the historical works of Al-Iluriy to both nationalist and Arab historiographies are enormous, especially in respects of re-introduction of the facts in the works of earlier Muslim – Arab historians to the audience. As pointed out by Professor Falola, such works of Al-Iluriy could serve as alternative sources to researchers, especially Arabic audiences. They are significant and not irrelevant. Historical facts could live and remain sacred until when some other more accurate ones are realized. The historical works of Al-Iluriy have contributed to the historical awareness of the audience in their own ways.

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