

**AN APPRAISAL OF THE INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF
MALLAM MUHAMMAD MUQADDAM MAIMASA TO ISLAMIC
SCHOLARSHIP**

By

GAMBARI, MUHAMMAD ALIYU

Department of Islamic Studies,

Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin.

Abstract

There is no denying the fact that Muslim Scholars, the heirs of the Prophetic treasures play a vital role in preserving Islamic legacy. Shaykh Muhammad Muqaddam Maimasa is one of the outstanding scholars of the contemporary age that left indelible impression in Ilorin Emirate and neighboring towns in Nigeria on the aspect of Islamic Scholarship. The present paper however, is an attempt to appraise his intellectual contribution. Similarly, effort is made to relate relevance of his intellectual ideology to the present era in the field of da'wah activities. It was discovered after the study that Shaykh Muhammad Muqaddam Maimasa was a prolific Arabic writer, who made a huge contribution to the development of Arabic Language and Sufism. It was also discovered that he was a Qadiriyyah Sufi order but he does not discriminate among the two popular tariqah in Nigeria. The paper however, suggested to Nigerian Sufism and researchers to pay more attentions on the works of West African Muslim Scholars in the field of Qur'anic exegesis, Sufism, poetry etc.

1.0 Introduction

The virtue of knowledge acquisition in Islam cannot be overemphasized. More than any other religion of the world, Islam places high premium on seeking for knowledge. According to Malik (2000), the importance which Islam attaches to education can be explained from three sources of the Qur'an, Prophetic Traditions and the sayings of the wise men. While the first revelation centres on the virtue of knowledge, and the Prophet regards its acquisition a great form of *Jihad, alahnaf* was reported in one of his wise sayings to have said "Every glory unsupported by learning will soon varnish and be replaced by humiliation" (Malik, 2000P. 88-89).

Based upon this fact, the house of *arqam* in Makkah, and the Prophetic mosque in Madinah served as a centre of educational learning for the first generation of the Muslims. Later, various schools and mosques emerged in post-Prophetic era to promote the culture of learning. It is remarkable to note the influence of *Baytul Hikmah* (House of wisdom) established by caliph Ma'mun, the Nizamiyyah academy in Baghdad and Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Latif (1996) asserts that the consciousness of the Muslim generations on knowledge has helped to produce men like Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Al-Ghazali, Al-Auzai and host of others, whose contributions to the world of religion, international relations, socio-economic sciences among others are of immense impact to the legacy of Islam (Latif 1996, P.2)

In the Nigerian environment however, numerous scholars have made enormous impact in promoting the cultural heritage of Islam in education. Some of them are Shayky Uthman bn Foduye (d1817), Muhammad Nasir Kabara, Sheik Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori (d1992), Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adaby (d2005) to mention but a few. Gambari (2004) cited that Ilorin town has produced venerable scholars of Islam who had contributed in large measure to Islamic Education, among whom are:

Shaykh Alimi bn Janta, Shaykh Muhammad Yambu and others. Gambari (2004, P.25), it can be safely said that Shaykh Muhammad bn Ibrahim Muqaddam Maimasa was among the prominent scholars of Ilorin whose personality is the focus of the paper. We hope that this paper will serve as a guide and inspiration for young Muslim scholars who aspire to disseminate Islamic message.

2.0 Personality Profile of Shaykh Muhammad Muqaddam Maimasa

Shaykh Muhammad bn Ibrahim bn Salih Muqaddam Maimasa Al-Ilori was a Nupe by tribe, but Yoruba by nationality. His grand father, Shaykh Salih, a Nupe man hailed from Bida Local Government in Niger State, he migrated and settled down at Maimasa's compound, Ojagboro Ilorin Kwara State during the reign of the first Emir, Abdus-Salam bn Shaykh Alimi. His father, Shaykh Ibrahim bn Salih was a great scholar (Gambari, 2000, P.32-33).

Born in Ilorin town of Kwara State in 1908, Mallam Maimasa started his early education from his parents (precisely his father), who taught him elementary knowledge of Arabic and considerable parts of the Qur'an. He completed his Qur'anic education from Shaykh Issa Marafa Az-Zamfarawi. He studied several branches of Islamic knowledge, such as Arabic grammar (*Nahw*), morphology (*sarf*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), literature among others. He traveled to northern part of Nigeria in quest of knowledge. He pupiled to numerous scholars in Zaria, Kontagora, Kano among others. Notably, he visited Shaykh Nasir Kabara from whom he was initiated into Qadriyyah Suyfi order (Gambari, 2004 P.38-39 & Gbodofu, 2000).

Mallam Maimasa married a daughter of his close friend, Alhaji Sulayman Bolugi in 1933. He was blessed with many children, among whom are: Alhaji Imam Salih, Alhaji Mukhtar Muhammad, Alhaja Safiyah Muhammad, Alhaja Rabiah Muhammad among others. He was survived by ten children. He died in 1982.

Throughout his life time, he was known with a high sense of humility, dedication and commitment to the service of Allah as well the course of humanity, kindness to the indigent and destitute members of the Muslim populace in Ilorin and its environs and above all, consciousness to the worship of Allah (Gambari, 2004 P. 77-78 & Gbodofu, 2000).

Shaykh Maimasa was renowned scholar of Islam who immensely contributed to the development of Islam and Islamic Education in general. He established his house as a centre of learning Arabic and Islamic Studies from dawn to dusk. He displayed untiring effort in dissemination of knowledge. People trooped to him with different Islamic books, such as *kitab usulul fiqh*, *bulugul mirami*, *sahih bukhari*, *mukhtc.sor ahadith*, *tafsir jalalayn*, *kitab nahw wa sarf* (ie books on Arabic grammar and morphology), *kitab balaghah* (rhetoric), *kitab ilm falaq* (books on astronomical sciences), books on mathematics, and others (Gambari 2004 P. 55-56). Based upon this, he produced many students that are famous in the Muslim community. Notable among them are late Chief Imam Musa bn Ahmad (d1983) and Chief Imam Abdul Malik bn Dasuki (d 1980), both of them studied under him a great number of books on shariah, hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. Others are Alhaji justice, Imam Saheed, Alhaji Imam Yusuf Amuda (d 2005) (the father of Dr. Lanre Badmos, a lecturer of Islamic Studies and presently the Head of Religions Department at the University, of Ilorin) and others.

Mallam Maimasa contributed greatly to the development of Islamic mysticism (tasawwuf). As a Qadriyyah *Sufist*, he initiated numerous people into the Qadriyyah *Sufi* order, and a considerable number of them later became *khalifah*, *Muqaddam* and *Murid* respectively. He showed diligent effort at striking harmonious relationship between the *Qadriyyah* and *Tijaniyah Sufi* order. His disciples established schools together with *zawayah* in their respective localities for spiritual

training of the Muslims. Some of these schools were: the school of Khalifah Ibrahim Maimasa Ilorin, the school of Mallam Jamiu Yunus Sokoto, the book was intentionally written as a rejoinder to some young Muslim preachers who consider Sufism as obstacle to the development of Islam and Da'wah work. The committee of Sufi fraternity was commissioned by the Emir of Ilorin to write a treatise that would expatiate the veracity of Sufi doctrines as part and parcel of Islamic. Shaykh Aliyu Jabata and Shaykh Muhammad Maimasa were appointed to compile the submissions of the Sufi elders.

The introductory part of the book was written by Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori, where he explained that Sufism cannot be removed from Islam in so far as it is based on spiritual purification. Otherwise, it will be tantamount to destroying half of Islamic values. He expressed further that reputable scholars of contemporary da'wah such as Ibn bas and others pass complimentary remarks on early Sufi scholars except those that were influenced by alien ideologies of Platonism, Buddhism, concept of reincarnation from Christianity and others. Al-Ilori states that the Sufi scholars had made a giant stride in propagation of Islam throughout the West Africa, as quite noticeable in the personalities of Ibn Foduye, Umar Al-Futi (d 1864), Al-Maghili (d 1500) and others. Al-Ilori, finally enjoined *Sufi* community to avoid extremism in their *Sufi* practices (An-Nufawi and Jabata, 1978:4-10).

However, Mallam Maimasa in the body of the work expresses deplorable condition of some so-called Daiyah in the dissipation of their efforts and energies to attack Sufism rather than channeling their strengths towards Winning converts, fighting against social corruptions and anomalies. He stresses that people in West Africa understood Islam by the virtue of the *Sufi* Scholars. He further states

"وإن جاءنا اليوم واحد من أي بلد يكفرنا على ما أدركنا عليه أهل النفاوى وجباتا." (نقول لمن يكفر العلماء الأولين أن هؤلاء الذين كفرتهم اليوم هم الذين حملو إليك الإسلام والإيمان والإحسان والقرآن, ثم إنهم كانوا

أعلم منك واتقى الله منك وقد عبدوا الله بما كفرتهم عليه حتى ماتوا على الإيمان والإسلام والشهادة ان لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله. العلم الإسلام جميعا في هذه البلاد فإنما يريد هدم الإسلام من قلوب المسلمين

"... if anyone comes to us from any town, condemning us as Kafir based upon the practices of the men of knowledge and Islam which we altogether met, such person is willfully destroying Islam from the heart of the Muslims. We say to such persons that condemning the early scholars as infidels that those people whom you regard as infidels are the carriers of the concept of Islam, Iman lhsan and Qur'an to you. They are more knowledgeable and pious than you. They have worshipped Allah with what you declare them as infidels, till they lew their last breath on Iman, Islam and testimony that there is no deity except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger"

Based upon this submission, we understand that Mallam Maimasa drew the attention of the Duat to the danger inherent in considering themselves better than others. The efforts and commitment of predecessors need to be acknowledged in the process of propagating Islam. This opinion of Mallam Maimasa corresponds with the *Qur'anic* injunction which discourages the act of disparaging the fellow Muslims (Qur'an 49:11).

Furthermore, Mallam Maimasa clarifies that imitation of "Ulama in their practices does not mean that they are taken as object of worship. He cites Q9:30 which the *Sufi* antagonists commonly take as reference to condemn veneration of Sufi elders. He explains that the verse was revealed in respect to Jews and Christians who followed the whims of their priests in legalizing and prohibitions of acts of worship. He further illuminates that Imam Malik as reputable as he is, used to adopt the traditions of the people of Madinah in lieu of Prophetic tradition, and above all,

Allah urges the Prophet in the Qur'an to emulate the guidance of the previous Prophets. In respect of this, He says"

We, group of Qadiriyyah and Tijjaniyyah fraternities do not follow our elders in prohibiting where is lawful neither do we follow them to legalize what is prohibited, we they follow them on the base of what explained to us of their ijtiḥad on the book of Allah and Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah"

The modern scholars of Islam disapprove blind imitation. They emphasize that religious practice should not be based on dogmatism. This view of Mallam Maimasa is similar with the position of Abdalati that Islam does not recognize faith when it is attained through blind imitation (Abdalati 1999:105). Mallam Maimasa expressed further the opinion of Ulama on the concept of Bid'ah that any practice that is outside or not in conformity with the Book, *Sunnah* of the Prophet and consensus is termed *bid'ah*, contrary to the antagonists view that *bid'ah* is any practice that occurs after the demise of the Prophet. Mallam Maimasa adds that *sama* song and beating of duff or *Bandir* are sort of permissible things since they lead the worshiper to concentrate in Allah. He states thus:

...أما ما كان لغير الفساد فحائز. وإنما حرم الشرح الملاهى والمزامير لما يحدث فيها من الفساد وما يلهو عن ذكر الله وما يهيجه الشيطان من الشهوات). النفاوى وجباتنا

...surely the Law Giver (Allah) prohibits musical instruments because they can lead to Corruption, distraction from remembrance of Allah and cause of carnal desire. But in it so-far it does not lead to corruption, such is permissible

The submission of Mallam Maimasa is expressed correspondingly by Imam Al-Khushayri as permissible in as much as they are not in contradiction with *Shari'ah* principles. (Al-Khushayri 2005:p.363), Mallam Maimasa States further that there abound in the Qur'an and Hadith allegorical expression (*mutashabihat*) such as the settlement of Allah on the throne and descending of Allah to the world every night. Based upon this, he maintains that mystical utterances of Sufi saints who are known to be upright ought to be interpreted to conform with *Shari'ah* rather than regarding them as infidels. This opinion is seen to be in line with Al-Ilori's stand that the Sufi attitudes are of emotional mysticism which is inexplicable and they are to be excused for their utterances as long as they are in such spiritual trances (Al-Ilori p.33).

3.0 Relevance of Mallam Maimasa Intellectual Ideology to Contemporary

Da'wah

Mallam Maimasa is one of the great scholars of Islam in Ilorin that attempt reconciliation between *Shari'ah* and *Sufism*. His great erudition is seen in the sense that he acquired profound knowledge in several branches of the Islamic knowledge. This virtue, as we observe has helped him a lot in carrying out his da'wah work successfully. Closely related to this, is his good manner and attitude which makes him acceptable to the generality of the society.

Also, Mallam Maimasa was able to strike a balance between the application of knowledge and practice. He was neither an extremist nor a negligent. He showed concerted effort in rendering Islam comprehensively to every Muslims. He made the Muslims of his age realized that condemnation of scholars, Muslim brothers, cannot bring great achievement in the propagation of Islam. This ideology of Mallam Maimasa was shared by Al-Ilori that the *salafis* need to create mutual understanding

with the *Sufi* community since their numbers cannot be ignored from the Muslim Ummah.

Al-Ilori (2006:135) AI-Talib (1991:37). In the same vein states that for successful *da'wah* work to be achieved, individuals need to work in unions with one another with a clear plan and a sense of direct. It is only through this, that tremendous energy they expand could be able to yield positive result (Al-Talib, 1991 P.37)

4.0 Recommendations

With regards to the personality of Shaykh Muqaddam Maimasa under study, the community of Ilorin Township and its neighboring cities need to put much premium on Islamic Education. It is the invaluable legacy of Islam which every Muslim community ought to cherish dearly. Every members or the community should maintain concerted effort in ensuring that the cultural values of Islam are uphold. This could only be properly ascertained if must respect and honour are given to Muslim scholars.

The present day students need a lot to emulate from the great Shaykh. Most importantly, the wisdom of *da'wah* methodology should be adopted from his life. The students of today, who are potential scholars should put the zeal of knowledge acquisition an utmost interest with the goal of effecting positive changes in their immediate environment.

Similarly, the government should give more encouragement to religious education. It is our belief that this would improve the moral standard of Nigerian citizenry and pave way for socio-political and economic progress of the nation. The government should give adequate support to religious bodies in their diligent effort

to eschew religious bigotry, fanaticism and violence which could invariably destabilize peace and tranquility.

Lastly, the present days Mallams are to establish and enhance the institution of Islamic scholarship with a better approach to promote Islamic interest. They need to build on the disparagement of the efforts and commitment of some Muslim scholars, particularly the local or traditional Mallams would do more havoc to Islamic work than it would repair, acknowledgement of others contributions is indeed a hallmark of great erudition, and this we quite observe in the personality trait of Shaykh Mallam Muqaddam Maimasa.

5.0 Conclusion

We have been able to discuss in this paper the personality profile, the contributions and dedication of Mallam Maimasa to the development of Islam. Also, we have attempted to define the roles played by the great scholar in making Islam understood by the Muslim populace. The intellectual achievements of the scholar, most especially in the aspect of *Sufism* have been thoroughly discussed. The contributions of Shaykh Muqaddam Maimasa to educational enlightenment, most especially in the aspect of *Sufi* practice is highly appreciated by us. It could have been more meaningful as we observe, if the great Shaykh can appealed to the opponent of *tasawwuf* in form of health dialogue. Not only that, the approach would mitigate the tension between the youth and the *Sufi* scholars, but also enhance the spirit of Islamic scholarship. It is hoped that Islamic *da'wah* activities will grow steadily if many of the present *dua't* could emulate the attitude of Mallam Maimasa in knowledge application and *da'wah* methodology of constructive approach to Islamic propagation

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