

AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF SHAYKH USMAN AYINLA (BABA PAKATA) ON HIS PEOPLE

By

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Introduction

Ilorin has produced a number of scholars who have contributed to the socio-political wellbeing of their areas. One of such scholars is Shaykh Usman Ayinla commonly referred to by some of his students and disciple as Baba Pakata (the old man of Pakata). He belonged to Makondoro sect. He has even contributed to the spread and understanding of the sect. yet, his achievement and influence on his people have not attracted the attention of academia. This motivates the present researcher to conduct research on this scholar with the aim of assessing his socio-political influence on his people.

Historical Background of Shaykh Usman Ayinla

Shaykh Usman Ayinla known as Baba Pakata (the old man of Pakata) was born in 1923 to a family known for its Islamic learning. His father Shaykh Mustapha was a son of Muhammad Bukhari of Agaka compound in Pakata Area of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. History has it that his father Shaykh Mustapha, son of Muhammad Bukhari Agaka migrated from Agaka Oja Area of Ilorin and settled in Pataka Area. Hence his house was named after Agaka, the area he migrated from. His mother, Rodiat was a daughter of Shaykh Abdulsalam Oniwiridi a family known for its Sufi activities, especially Tijjaniyah order. Shaykh Usman Ayinla died on 7th of December, 2002 after a brief illness at the age of 79years.¹

Shaykh Usman was brought up under the care of his father who later took him to Alhaji Shehu Adisa as apprentice in weaving of cloth that produced what is called Aso-oke, a common traditional apprenticeship in Ilorin. Perhaps he was introduced to the apprenticeship as a means to compliment his Islamic education.

His Early Life and Education

Shaykh Usman Ayinla since his childhood to the age of adolescence, acquired type of training and knowledge which prepared him for future challenges and made him to face reality of life. For instance, he started his formal education at the age of seven years, when his father

enrolled him at the school of Alfa Ayerinisa of Idi-Igba for the study of the Holy Qur'an, later he was transferred to his mother uncle Alfa Yusuf at Ita-ogunbo in Agbaji Area of Ilorin where he continued with his study and read up to twenty Hizb of the Holy Qur'an.

Shaykh Usman Ayinla later relocated to Alhaji Mustapha Alaaya and followed him to Ibadan now in Oyo State where he continued his education under him. Later he travelled together with the oldest son of Alhaji Mustapha Alaaya, Alfa Saliu to Iragbiji in the present day of Osun State before they returned back to Ilorin where he continued his Qur'anic study together with the apprenticeship of weaving Aso-oke. He even used the money realized from the cloth weaving to purchase some Arabic and Islamic books which needed by then such as *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Muqadimat al-Izziya*, *Matn Ashmawy* and other valuable books.

His Education under Alhaji Yusuf Agbaji

Shaykh Usman Ayinla in 1938 at the age of fifteen years become a registered student of Alfa Yusuf Agbaji who was residing in Ibadan by then. He joined him there and stayed with him for about three years before the latter finally decided to return to Ilorin. Shaykh Usman Ayinla followed him and finally settled with him at Ilorin² for more than twenty years studying different aspects of Islamic Education. Notable books which he studied under the tutelage of Alfa Yusuf Agbaji include *Akhdar*, *al-Risalah*, *Duraid* and *Rijalun Sitat*. In line with the educational system of Makondoro sect, Shaykh Usman Ayinla celebrated graduation ceremony (Walimah) when he completed his study of *Tafsir Jalalain* at the house of his teacher in Agbaji.

His Marital Life

Shaykh Usman Ayinla began his marital life in 1953 at the age of thirty years, when he was married to his first-wife called Iya Agba of Jagbani near Alaaya Compound, Pakata Area. The father of Iya Agba was a scholar who decided to give out his daughter to Shaykh Usman Ayinla by away known in Ilorin marriage culture as Sadaqah.³ After the marriage, Iya Agba was put to purdah (known as Eleha) in line with the Shaykh Usman Ayinla for nine years, before she divorced Shaykh Usman Ayinla. Perhaps what was responsible for the divorce was the fact that all the four children she had for the Shaykh died in infancy. The second wife, Shafawu daughter of Alfa Abdulkadir of Oniwakansi compound of Ilorin was blessed with seven childrens, they are: Alhaja Iyabo, Maryam, Asiat, Nimatallahi, Abdulsalam, Yusuf and Mahmud Bolakale.

The third wife was Belawu Ibadi-ori, a daughter of one of Shaykh Usman's students known as Alfa Mahmud Amori of Ibadi ori compound. She was blessed with five children who

are: Alhaji Abdulraheem, Muhammad Baba Ola, Ahmed Bolaji, Rabiat Bolanle and Ruqayyat. The fourth wife was Shafawu daughter of Abdulkadir from Gada area in Ilorin, who was blessed with nine children including the present Khalifah of Shaykh Usman Ayinla who is Khalifah Mustapha. Others are Muhammad Muritala, Ahmad Olanrewaju, Shaykh Abdulkadir, Nafisat, Fatimat Iyalaje, Biliqis, Halimat Matayo and Hasanat. The fifth wife whom Shaykh married after the divorce of the first wife was Toyyibat from Ogbomosho town in Oyo State. She was also a daughter of one of the Shaykh by name Alfa Abdullahi. She was blessed with only one child named Muhammad Jamiu.⁴ By the time Shaykh Usman Ayinla died on the 7th December, 2002, he was survived by four wives and twenty-two children.

Social and Political Influence of Shaykh Usman Ayinla on His People

In an attempt to assess the socio-political influence of Shaykh Usman Ayinla on his people, certain aspects of his life are to be discussed. These aspects are centred on his personality as explained below.

Shaykh Usman Ayinla as a Member of Makondoro Sect

A Muslim sect known as Zumuratul-Mumini normally referred to by some people as Makondoro which is abbreviated from (Imo ti omo kodoro) knowledge which is fully pure.⁵ The sect emerged in the Agbaji Area of Ilorin in 1840.⁶ He was one of the disciples of Shaykh Taj al-Adab. The Makondoro sect has certain peculiar characteristics. These include the following: members of the sect make it mandatory on themselves to put on turban always especially whenever they are reciting the Glorious Qur'an. They also encouraged the growing of beards and their wives are normally kept in purdah; and whenever their wives are to transact any business during the day outside their houses, their faces are covered.⁷

By the time Shaykh Usman Ayinla enrolled at the *Madrasat* of Shaykh Yusuf Agbaji, he automatically became members of the sect. This explains why his wives are put in purdah and when he completed the study of *Tafsir Jalalain* he organized *Walimah* as a way to celebrate his graduation ceremony. Since he has become member of the sect, he conducted his teaching and preaching in accordance with the teaching and practice of the sect.

Shaykh Usman Ayinla as a Teacher

Shaykh Usman Ayinla, like many members of Makondoro sect, believed in establishing schools where knowledge of Qur'an and prophetic tradition (Sunnah) and other aspects of Arabic and Islamic education would be imparted to the people. Based on this belief, he established school of both elementary and advanced stages at his Pakata residence, where

students of different categories and different socio-cultural background from various places, especially, Ilorin and some towns in Yoruba land attended. He attended and established his school during the life time of his teacher and mentor, Shaykh Yusuf Agbaji. By the establishment of the School, the members of Makondoro increased in number and spread beyond where it was, as all his students and disciples automatically became members of the sect.

Shaykh Usman Ayinla in imparting knowledge to his students who exposed them to Islamic Moral Teachings by creating good relationship with them, demonstrating kindness and love to them, and even treating them as his biological children. He taught them free of charge without collecting any amount of money from them as school fees. Perhaps it is due to the relationship which Shaykh created between his students and himself that motivated some of them to marry their daughters to him as wives, as was the case of both Belawu Ibadi-ori and muslimat from Ogbomosho.

Shaykh Usman Ayinla as a Preacher

Preaching is another means of propagating Islam which some capable Muslim scholars usually adopted. Shaykh Usman Ayinla belonged to this category of scholars. His audience comprises of his family both immediate and extended ones, his students and disciples, passerby and many others. The focus of his preaching is basically on the teaching of Islam with particular references to the doctrine of his sect i.e. Makondoro, such as the practice of purdah, importance of congregational prayers, respect for elders and a host of many others.

Establishment of 'Id Praying Ground at Pakata

In Islam, there are two great festivals. These festivals are known as 'id which means "a recurring happiness"⁸ The first is called *'id al-Fitr* (the festival of breaking the fast). It falls on the first day of Shawwal. The second is called *'id al-adha* (the festival of sacrifice) it falls on the tenth day of Dhul al-Hijjah.⁹ It is stipulated in Islam that the *'id al-Fitr* follows the sighting of the new moon that signifies the end of the fast at the month of Ramadan.¹⁰ Based on the directive of Prophet Muhammad that stated thus.

إذا رأيتموه فصوموا وإذا رأيتموه فأفطروا فإن غم عليكم فاقدروا له يعني هلال رمضان.

Meaning:

When you see the crescent of the month of Ramadan, start observing Sawm (fast) and when you see the crescent (of the month of Shawwal) stop observing Sawm (fast), and if the sky is overcast (and you can't see it) then regard the crescent (month) of Ramadan (as of 30days).¹¹

Considering the above fact, one can state that the idea of establishing ʿid praying ground at Pakata by the followers of Shaykh Usman Ayinla might have been based on the principle of Makondoro sect, who do not believe in hearsay as far as moon sighting is concerned, especially as regard the commencement and ending of Ramadan fasting. Rather, they prefer physical sighting of the crescent, as was demonstrated by the sect in 1967 when the members of Makondoro sect did not go to ʿid praying ground, because they alleged that crescent was not sighted contrary to the public announcement indicating an end to fasting period. They therefore continued with their fasting till the following day when they performed their ʿid al-fitr at Agbaji with their teacher Shaykh Yusuf Agbaji.

It was after the death of Shaykh Yusuf Agbaji in 1978, during Lailatul Quadri (night of Majesty) which its significance is explained in the Glorious Qur'an chapter 97 verse 1 – 5 where the night is described to be better than one thousand months. The Muslims usually celebrate the night by organizing different forms of worship. It was during the celebration in 1978 held at Pakata house of Shaykh Usman Ayinla that a suggestion was made by some of his students on the need to have an ʿid praying ground at Pakata. After considerable deliberation, disciples of Shaykh Usman Ayinla unanimously agreed with the suggestion. Eventually the Shaykh was elected to be leading the ʿid prayer. Since then, Shaykh Usman Ayinla became the Chief Imam of Pakata ʿid praying ground, while Alfa Muhammad Awwal Hadi known as Alfa Okutagidi was mandated to be offering post ʿid special prayer to the congregation. All the amount of money realized as *Sadaqah* at the ʿid prayer is usually forwarded to Shaykh Ayinla as a means of seeking *Barakah*. Sequel to the death of Shaykh Usman Ayinla in 2002, his eldest son, Shaykh Mustapha was selected and made the Khalifah of the Shaykh and Chief Imam of Pakata ʿid praying ground.¹²

It is however on record that by the time the ʿid prayer took off, disciples of Shaykh Usman Ayinla did not seek permission from anybody and nobody raised eyebrow on it. The position attained by Shaykh as a teacher, preacher and Imam are the major factors that were responsible for the influence which Shaykh Usman Ayinla had on his people. Such influences which are social and political contributed to the survival of his legacy some years after his death.

Conclusion

In the previous passage, efforts have been made to discuss the life and socio-political influence of Shaykh Usman Ayinla of Pakata area of Ilorin. His socio-political influence was

highlighted through his activities as a member of *Zumuratul-al-Mumini* (Makondoro) who took teaching and preaching as his profession. The acceptance he secured as a result of the profession accounted for the success of Pakata ʿid praying ground. All these summed together spoke of his socio-political influence on his people and consequently accounted of the contribution of his legacy some years after his death.

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