

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SHAYKH ADAM ABDULLAHI AL-ILORI TO THE ISLAMIC LAW OF SUCCESSION

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Abstract

Islamic law of succession constitutes a sacred and respected aspect of discipline in Islam. The subject continues to be relevant due to the contributions of prominent Islamic scholars across ages to the development of his contents, practice and implementation. One of the few prominent scholars who have left their footprints on the sands of this subject, most especially in Yorubaland of Nigeria is Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori (1917-1992). This article examines Al-Ilori's contribution towards the Islamic law of succession. Analytical method of research is adopted to explain how Al-Ilori has made his contribution to the field. The study shows that Al-Ilori made his contributions to the development of the subject through its integration into his madrasah syllabus, publication of a course-material on the subject and teaching. The study recommends further interrogation of Al-Ilori's contributions to the subject.

Keywords: *Bayānul mirath*; Shaykh Adam Al- Ilori; Inheritance; Islam; law of Succession.

Introduction

Shaykh Adam 'Adam 'Abdullah Al-Ilori was a prominent Islamic scholar who played a significant role in the field of Islamic Jurispendence, especially the law of succession among the Indigenous Ulama' (Islamic Scholars) in Ilorin, Nigeria. His contributions in Islamic legal thought and practice, particularly in the context of Ilorin, Shaykh Al-Ilori's profound understanding of Islamic law and his commitment to education laid a strong foundation for the dissemination and application of the Islamic law of Succession, ensuring its relevance and application in contemporary society.

Shaykh Al-Ilori's influence stemmed from his extensive education and dedication to Arabic and Islamic Studies. His efforts were not confined to theoretical knowledge; he actively engaged in the practical application of Islamic studies. His efforts were not confined to theoretical knowledge; he actively engaged in the practical application of Islamic law, addressing local issues and disputes with clarity and authority. His scholarly works, teaching and community engagements significantly enhanced the understanding and implementation of the law of succession, a crucial aspect of Islamic jurisprudence, among the indigenous people in Ilorin.

This paper aims to explore Shaykh Al-Ilori's contributions to the law of succession, highlighting his impact on Islamic legal practices. By examining his teachings, writings, and practical interventions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of his role in advancing the Islamic legal thought and practice in the region. The study aims to investigate the specific contributions of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori to the advancement and understanding of the law of succession.

A Brief History of Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori

Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori was a renowned scholar known for his erudition, piety, and dedication to Islamic education. Born in 1917 (1340 AH) to Abdul Baqi, son of Habibullah, and Aisha, a princess from the Kingdom of Benin in the Republic of Benin, Shaykh Adam hailed from a noble family. His father, of Yoruba descent, settled in Ilorin during the era of Emir Abdul-Salam Salih, while his mother was esteemed for her royal lineage and piety (Al-Ilori, 1987). Growing up in an educationally rich environment, Shaykh Adam began his Arabic and Islamic studies under his

father's guidance. He often accompanied his father to visit scholars, where he subsequently studied under some of them. Through his contact with them, he mastered works such as Al-Hukmu al-'Ulawiyyah, Manzumat al-Zuhd, Al-Ishnawiyyah, and Burdat al-Busairiyy (AbdulRahman, 2005).

Shaykh Adam furthered his education at Madrasat al-Imam Umar al-Abhajiy in Ilorin and later studied under Shaykh Adam Namaji in Kano. He also broadened his knowledge base under both Arab and non-Arab scholars like Nasir Kabara and Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin. His quest for knowledge eventually led him to Al-Azhar University in Egypt, where he obtained a certificate equivalent to a secondary school diploma, empowering him to teach, preach, and author numerous works (Awang, 2014).

Throughout his life, Shaykh Adam distinguished himself in teaching, writing, and preaching, earning widespread recognition for his contributions to Islamic scholarship. His legacy includes a wealth of academic works that have significantly advanced Arabic and Islamic education in Nigeria and across the globe (Abubakar, 2012).

Contributions of Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori to Islamic Inheritance

Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori made substantial contributions to the dissemination and practice of Islamic law of inheritance among the 'Ulamā in Ilorin through his teaching activities. His approach combined theoretical instruction with practical application, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter by students. Al-Ilori conducted extensive lessons on the principles of Islamic law of inheritance at his Markaz in Agege (Kajola, 2021).

He designed an organized curriculum for the students of Markaz, developing a structured approach to teaching Islamic inheritance across different educational levels. Recognizing the importance of this subject in Islamic jurisprudence, he integrated it into the curriculum from an early age. At the elementary level, Shaykh Adam introduced students to the fundamental concepts of Islamic law of inheritance using the book Muqaddimatul Izzīyah, which served as a foundational resource, providing young learners with a basic understanding of inheritance in Islamic law (Abdul, 2018).

To ensure quality instruction, Shaykh Adam appointed two prominent teachers: Shaykh Siddiq Farouk Abu Ridoh and Ustaz AbdulRahman Saaro, both experts in Islamic jurisprudence and graduates of Madinah University, to teach inheritance law. Their expertise enabled the accurate transmission of knowledge to students, establishing a strong foundation for future scholars (Kajola, 2021).

At the senior secondary (tawjīh) level, students engaged in a more advanced and detailed study of inheritance law, delving into complex cases and practical applications. This progressive structure ensured that students developed a comprehensive and applicable understanding of inheritance law, producing many prominent 'Ulamā who later taught the subject across Ilorin and beyond (Aminu, 2022).

While Shaykh Al-Ilori is best known for his educational reforms and Arabic scholarship, he also contributed significantly to the understanding and teaching of Islamic inheritance law (*al-farā'iḍ*), which is a crucial aspect of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Below are some of his contributions:

Teaching and Dissemination of Inheritance Law

- Curriculum Development:** At Markaz Agege, Shaykh Al-Ilori incorporated Islamic inheritance law into the curriculum. Students were trained in the principles of *farā'iḍ* using both classical and modern methods. He emphasized logical reasoning and clarity in teaching complex inheritance cases, encouraging students to master calculations and jurisprudential principles.

2. **Authorship and Writings:** Shaykh Al-Ilori authored numerous books, many in Arabic, and some touched on jurisprudence including al-farā'iḍ. Though inheritance law was not his most famous area, he addressed it in broader works of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and Arabic instruction, particularly in works meant for West African audiences.

Promotion of Ijtihād (Independent Reasoning)

- i. He encouraged independent thinking and critical analysis in understanding Islamic legal issues, including inheritance, rather than blind following (taqlīd).
- ii. This helped students contextualize classical rulings in a modern African setting where social and legal challenges often required nuanced applications of Islamic law.

Institutional Legacy

- i. Through the thousands of students he trained across Nigeria and West Africa, many became scholars, judges (qadis), and teachers, continuing to teach Islamic inheritance principles in schools, mosques, and courts.
- ii. His educational model contributed to the standardization of Islamic legal education, including farā'iḍ, in Nigeria and beyond.

Translation and Accessibility

One of his goals was to make Arabic and Islamic knowledge accessible to non-Arabic-speaking Africans. This indirectly helped more people understand topics like inheritance, which had often been restricted to elite scholars.

Bayān al-Mīrāth: The Celebrated mirath work of Al-Ilori

In an attempt to simplify the understanding of Islamic law of inheritance, Shaykh Adam Al-Ilori authored Bayān al-Mīrāth (The Clarification of Inheritance), which stands as a seminal work in the field of Islamic inheritance law in Nigeria. The book serves as a comprehensive guide for both beginners and professionals, offering detailed explanations of inheritance principles in Islam (Kajola, 2021). Bayān al-Mīrāth comprises twenty-four sections, each addressing key aspects of inheritance law with clarity and accessibility. His writing style simplified complex legal concepts, making them comprehensible to a wider audience, including both scholars and elites. The book's structure and explanations facilitated easier understanding and application of inheritance rules, significantly enhancing the knowledge base of Islamic inheritance law among contemporary scholars in Ilorin (Abdul, 2018; Kajola, 2021). Through Bayān al-Mīrāth and other publications, Shaykh Adam made the understanding and application of Islamic inheritance law easier among Ilorin's scholars. His works preserved traditional knowledge while also making it relevant to modern practice, ensuring the continued vitality of Islamic jurisprudence in the region (Awang, 2014).

In the history of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi (1917-1992) Shaykh Adam was a prolific writer and a multi-talented scholar. He wrote well over hundred books, journal articles and manuscripts on Islam and other related subjects. A lot of his books have been used as source documents for a number of B.A., long essays, M.A. dissertations, Doctoral Thesis and articles in recognized journals. His book, bayanul mirath, is one of the most consulted references on the study of inheritance for the beginner and professionals in Nigeria. This book is a text book for law of succession in Arabic version written by Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory, with different topics of law of inheritance.

The book contains of twenty four (24) sections and fourteen (14) pages which brief definition for each topic in the book in order to make easy for students that want to study the subject. The author Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory used the easiest method in writing of the book entitled Bayanul

mirath and put it in a standard way, the beginners in studying of inheritance would benefit from this book and researchers on this work as well as professional, the author also arranged the work correspondingly.

The science of inheritance is one of the highest sciences in rank and advantage and has great benefit, and it is one of the most important sciences that every Muslim man needs in order for each one to know his religion. That is why Shaykh Adam put this book to clarify and simplify it for the students who have been away from studying it on the grounds of its difficult. In general, the book (Bayanul mirath) is showing the Islamic estate administration system and its laws are influencing factors apart from its relation to individual awareness in achieving better property management.

Conclusion

Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori's contributions to the understanding and practice of Islamic law of inheritance among the 'Ulamā of Ilorin have been profound and enduring. Through his writings, da'wah, teachings, and direct involvement in estate distribution, he played a crucial role in shaping the implementation of Islamic law of succession in the region. His work strengthened the fabric of Muslim communities in Ilorin and beyond, promoting justice and harmony in matters of inheritance (Kajola, 2021).

Recommendations

- i. Documentation and Preservation: Efforts should be made to document and preserve Shaykh Al-Ilori's teachings, rulings, and methodologies in estate distribution as valuable resources for future scholars.
- ii. Education Programs: Institutions of Islamic learning in Ilorin should integrate Al-Ilori's works into their curricula to ensure continuity of his intellectual legacy.
- iii. Public Awareness Campaigns: Organize workshops, seminars, and lectures to promote awareness of inheritance law using Al-Ilori's teaching models.
- iv. Comparative Studies: Encourage research comparing Al-Ilori's interpretations with other scholars, historical and contemporary, to enrich academic discourse.
- v. Practical Training: Develop training programs for Islamic judges (Qādīs) incorporating Al-Ilori's practical experience to bridge theory and application.

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