

# Domestication of Arabo-Islamic Words in the Ilorin Dialect of Yorùbá

Abdulrazaq Mohammed Katibi  
Department of Linguistics, Arabic and French Languages  
Kwara State University  
Malete, Nigeria  
[abdulrazaq.katibi@gmail.com](mailto:abdulrazaq.katibi@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Language is a dynamic phenomenon which develops-among other things-with the introduction of new concept. Yoruba language-like many other living languages- has developed for its ability to accommodate new concepts into its vocabulary. With the introduction of Islam to many parts of the world, Arabic becomes the instrument to convey its concepts. Some of these concepts are either adopted as a loan word or being literally translated. However, Yoruba dialect spoken in Ilorin adopts a strategy of domesticating some of the Arab-Islamic words despite the fact that some of these concepts do not exist in Yoruba Language. This work therefore aims at identifying and trace the origin of the domesticated Arabic of Islamic concept popularly used in the dialect of Ilorin people. Forty (40) of such words are selected in the areas of Islamic doctrine, civilization and materials. Meanwhile simple percentage is used to analyze some variables in the work. After the study it is discovered that the heterogenic composition of Ilorin assisted in the domestication of Islamic concept from Arabic. A sizeable of them are from Yoruba origin coined and adopted from Yoruba while some of these words are from other Languages. Interestingly these words only do not find their ways in Yoruba dictionary but are also regularly used among Yoruba people in Nigeria. It is recommended that further studies should be conducted in this area for the purpose of enriching relationship between Arabic and Yoruba Languages.

**Keywords:** Arabic language, Ilorin Dialect, Arabo-Islamic, Islamic Words, and Theory of Domestication

## **Introduction**

Language is one of the socio-cultural phenomena. It is basically confined to human beings in their environment or society. Language develops when new concepts, ideas, and technologies are introduced into the society and the people are ready to accept and adopt them into their lexicon. This is done by either to translate, borrow or create another word for the new concept. With the introduction of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century which is built upon Arabic socio-cultural and linguistic background. Most of its belief, activities and ideologies are derived from Arabic language which are commonly adapted and adopted by the receiving communities. However, it is noticed that many Islamic concept words used in Ilorin are neither borrowed nor translated from Arabic which require some investigation on how these words emerge and from which source.

Therefore, the main concern of this work is to identify some of these Arabic-Islamic words that are domesticated in the Ilorin Yorùbá dialect. It will also trace the origin of the domesticated word, state and explain the Arabic words of the concept and analyze how prevalent these words are used in relationship with others. The data were collected from the Yorùbá dialect spoken in all the areas that form the Ilorin emirate. The impact of this work, after its completion, lies on the fact that it will erase the erroneous belief that all Arabic of Islamic concepts are totally adopted and adapted in Arabic. In addition to these it will also show how Arabic words enrich the local dialect of Ilorin people which later extend to other Yorùbá speaking societies in Nigeria. Finally, this work will show how Arabic has contributed to the expansion of Yorùbá vocabularies not only by borrowing but by forcing the language to create new words to express the new concept. This research shall make use of sources and resources from Arabic, Islamic and Yorùbá.

## **Concept of Islamic Words and Theory of Domestication**

The origin of Islamic words is traced to the advent of Islam in the Arabian peninsulas in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century through Prophet Mohammed. The followers were made to believe in the new concept of the creator and act of worship. This new development metamorphosed into either introduction of new lexicon or restructuring of semantic level of the already existing Arabic words. For example, the word *Allah*, *Salat*, *Sawm*, *Hajj* etc. existed and frequently used by Arabs before the advent of Islam but later their meanings were redefined

to suit the new religion (Islam). Meanwhile, words like *Janat*, *Jahanam*, *Ma-laika*, *Iman*, *Quran* etc. are among selection of new words introduced to Arabic lexicon. The two types of the two groups are termed *Alfadh-Islamiyyah* (Islamic words) (Daif, 1986). Each community embracing the religion (Islam) automatically embraces the Arabic words to express all the aspect of the religion. Subsequently the Arabic words become part of the religion.

As time goes on, the receiving communities adopt different linguistic strategies to domesticate the Arabic Islamic words to suit their psycho-social linguistic level. The adaptation of Arabic words comes at different levels which include: Phonologically such as replacement of non-available Arabic sound in the receiving language eg. Q to K as in Quran to Kuran, Z to S as in Zakat to Sàkà. Hajj to Ajj etc. the phonological differences between Arabic and most African and Nigerian languages has been studied at different levels of Arabic studies and in all academic stages. Among whom are Katibi (2013) and Abdulraheem (2016). Meanwhile, this writer observes that non-Arab communities usually adopt three strategies for the domestication of Arabic Islamic words in their languages namely: Translation, Borrowing from Arabic sources and Creation of new words.

A. Translation: This is a situation where the Arabic-Islamic words have equivalent in the receiving language. Therefore, the local language is fully adopted with no reference to Arabic. This is due to the fact that the local language possesses similar ideology, concept and adequate lexicon. Examples include *Rasul*, *Òjìṣé* (Yor.) (Messenger)

B. Borrowing from Arabic Sources: This is applicable where there are no equivalent words in the receiving languages, thereby forcing them to borrow the Arabic words in the phonological restricted form to suit the receiving language. Al-muhajir (*al-majiri*); the needy traveller, al- Quran (*al-qurani*); quran, Sadaq (sadaqi), As-Subh (Assubah); early morning prayer, A<sup>c</sup>sr (*àlásàri*); pre dusk prayer, Maghrib (magribi); evening prayer, I<sup>c</sup>sha (Ìṣàí); night prayer, du-a (*àdúhà*); supplication, Imam (*lèámàmù*); Prayer leader, kabah (*kàábà*); Holy mosque in Makkah.

C. Creation of New Words: This is a condition where another word is completely created by the non-Arab community to represent Islamic word. Examples of such are: Sawm (*àwè*) Fasting, Salat (*irun*); Prayer.

### **Ìlorin-Yorùbá Dialect**

Ìlorin is presently the capital city of Kwara state and also the capital of Ìlorin emirate which comprises of five local governments of Kwara state namely: *Asà*, Ìlorin East, Ìlorin South, Ìlorin West and Mórò. It is located in the north central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The indigenes of this area

consist of Arabs, Bàrùbá, Borno, Fulani, Gwari, Hausa, Kemberi, Mali, Nupe, and Yorùbá. The conglomerates of these ethnic groups choose the Yorùbá dialect for communication for social and commercial interaction. According to Oloşo (2017) in her study opined that the Yorùbá dialect of Ìlòrín is distinct to other dialect of Yorùbá in the areas of lexical variation. Even though, phonological difference could be observed from the dialect. Presently, with the influx of people and proximity of the area to Yorùbá land, most of linguistic features known for Ìlòrín dialect are gradually fading away but still retain and maintain the major facts of them (Katibi, 2011). It is pertinent to note that the dialect of Yorùbá has greatly influence other Yorùbá dialect being the major source for the spread of Islam in the area. Nevertheless, the Yorùbá language which is spoken in the south western part of Nigeria and spread across other areas like Kogi, Kwara, Edo, and Delta states. Although, the language has its root in the Niger-congo language family and of kwa-sub family group and commonly characterized as tonal language despite this, the language contains a lot of Arabic words. Some scholars such as: Ogunbiyi (1984) and Al-Ilori (2012) opine that this is so because of genetic relationship between the Arabs and the Yorùbá in the Pre-historic era and that quantum of the Arabic words in the Yorùbá lexicon are far beyond the spread of Islam in the area. However, globalization, education, commercial trips and electronic media are among other minor factors that further enrich Yorùbá language with Arabic language and culture. Furthermore, scholars of Arabic studies have proven that Arabic and Yorùbá shared some morphology and syntactic relationship which include the position of adjective and adverb, transitive and intransitive verbs, and in some areas of rhetoric (Abubakr, 2004). With the above analysis, Ìlòrín dialect of Yorùbá derives its lexicon from Yorùbá root and from other languages spoken in the area which are, Hausa, Nupe, Fulfulde and Arabic.

### **List of Domesticated Islamic words of Arabic Origin**

It is the particular concern of this work to identify words of Ìlòrín origin used to describe some aspects of Islamic belief, doctrine, act, civilization, name and material. These words must not be in Arabic form or transformed and solely confined to Ìlòrín. For example, words like *Àlùbàríkà*, *Àlìjànnà*, *Làdàní*, *Mòsàláşì* etc. because they are of Arabic origin. Meanwhile, these domesticated Islamic words of Arabic origin may include borrowed word from other languages which form Ìlòrín dialect.

S/N	ARABIC	DOMESTICATED WORDS	ORIGIN	ENGLISH MEANING	CONCEPT	TYPE
1.	Solat	<i>Ìrun</i>	Yorùbá	Prayer	A five times daily prayer which every Muslim must observe. Non observers shall be punished in the here-after.	Doctrine
2.	Sawm	<i>Ààwẹ̀</i>	Yorùbá	Fasting	Muslim must fast for 29 or 30 days during Ramadan. Whoever intentionally refuses to observe it shall be punished, while the observer shall be rewarded greatly.	Doctrine

3.	Thamar	<i>Làbíðùn</i>	H a u s a ( f r o m dàbínù)	Palm date	The faithful is encouraged to break his fast during Ramadan with Palm date. As it is reported from Prophet Muhammed (S. A.W).	Doctrine
4.	Sodaqah	<i>Sàràà</i>		Alms giving	A non-compulsory alms given to the needy at any time. The reward for it is believed to be great.	Doctrine
5.	Rihutoy- iba	<i>Tùràré</i>	Hausa	Incense	Islam encourages Muslims to be clean and smell nice with the use of perfume	Doctrine

6.	Madhu	<i>Yònbó</i>	Hausa	Praise/Eu-logy	Every Muslim is mandated to praise prophet Mo-hammed (S.A.W) any time his name is mentioned or being remembered.	Doctrine
7.	Dir <sup>u</sup> (Kharuf)	<i>Húdà</i>		Two colored skin Rams	Some Muslims believe that slaughtering a two colored Ram during Eid-l-Adha is more rewarding than any other sacrifice.	Doc-trine
8.	Solatul Zuhr	<i>Àìlà</i>		Noon prayer	One of the five daily prayers usually observed during the noon time.	Doc-trine

9.	Zakatul fitr	<i>Jákáà</i>		End of Ramadan Alms	Food items (usually grain) given out to the needy shortly before Ramadan festival.	Doctrine
10.	Jazau	<i>Láádá</i>	Hausa	Reward	The belief that every good action attracts reward from Allah.	Doctrine
11.	Tasua <sup>c</sup> / <sup>c</sup> Ashurah	<i>Káyó-káyó</i>	Yorùbá	Ninth and Tenth of <i>Mu-harram</i> (First Islamic Calendar Month)	The two days of voluntary fasting to commemorate the escape of Musa (Moses) from Pharaoh. Some Muslims feed the poor in the evening of the days.	Doctrine
12.	At-tahara	<i>Táábà</i>	Hausa	Purification of the private part	Act of cleaning the private parts of the body after urination, defecation and others	Act



13.	Kibla	<i>Gábási</i>	Hausa	Direction of the holy mosque (Kaaba)	A place where all Muslims face during prayer every-day	Doctrine
14.	Rajab	<i>Ààwè` Arùgbó</i>	Yorùbá	Ninth month of Islamic calendar	Some Muslims fast part or whole of this month	Doctrine
15.	Dhul qada	<i>Ràg- bò-ràgbò</i>	Yorùbá	The eleventh Month of the Islamic calendar	Muslims start buying rams for sacrifice for the month that follows ( <i>Dhul-hijja</i> )	Civilization
16.	Haddu	<i>Taàrá</i>	Hausa	Punishment	Punishment described for offenders by Islamic law	Act
17.	Manar	<i>Sóró</i>		Minaret	One or more pillar built on the top of the mosques	Civilization
18.	Qirah	<i>Kéhu</i>	Fulfulde	Reading	Act of reading or learning Arabic or Islamic Studies	Civilization
19.	Shaikh	<i>Àlùfáà</i>	Madingo	Islamic scholars	Somebody who is learned and teaches Arabic/Islamic studies	Civilization
20.	Diwan	<i>Kúndí</i>	Hausa	File	Files where documents are kept	Civilization

21.	Ama'mah	<i>Láwàní</i>	Hausa	Turban	A long cloth material usually tied around the head, mouth and nose	Civilization
22.	Gina'u	<i>Wéré</i>	Yorùbá	Islamic song	A type of Islamic band usually performed during Ramadan midnight meal to awaken Muslims	Civilization
23.	Gina'u	<i>Wákà</i>	Hausa	Islamic song	A popular Islamic song usually performed by Muslim scholars or women during an Islamic occasion	Civilization
24.	Haqibah	<i>Gááfàkà</i>	Fulfulde	Bag where Qur'an or Islamic books are kept	A small bag usually made with leather and used to keep or convey Qur'an or Islamic books	Civilization
25.	Tahjiha	<i>Ajítú</i>	Yorùbá	Spelling	Art of spelling of joined letters in Arabic	Civilization

26.	Tasawur	<i>Báàrà</i>	Hausa	Begging	A condemnable act of begging people for financial assistance	Act
27.	Tarawih	<i>Aásámú</i>		Special prayer during Ramadan usually in the night	A special prayer usually conducted during Ramadan night	Act
28	Fa'siq/ Fajir	<i>Pòkù</i>		Impious	Someone who disobeys Allah's command	Act
29	Nikkah	<i>Yìgì</i>		Marriage	Act of joining married couples in Islamic way	Act
30.	Dhibhu	<i>Dúnú</i>	Hausa	Slaughter	Act of slaughtering animals in Islamic way	Act
31.	Ibrahim	<i>Déndè</i>	Fulfulde	Abraham	A prophet of Allah, known as Father of Faith in Islam	Name
32.	Abdullah	<i>Gógá</i>	Fulfulde	Servant of Allah	One of the preferred name of Muslim and encouraged by prophet Mohammed	Name
33.	Maryam	<i>Màìró/ Mèró</i>	Fulfulde	Mary	The mother of prophet Issa	Name
34.	Aliyu	<i>Dòdó</i>	Fulfulde		The fourth caliphate of Islam	Name

35.	Abubakr	<i>Gárúbà</i>	Fulfude		The first caliphate of Islam	Name
36.	Mu-hammed	<i>Gídádò, Tukur, Kúrángà, Sámò, Bèlò</i>	Fulfulde		The last prophet of Islam	Name
37.	Umar	<i>Sàndá</i>	Hausa		The second caliphate of Islam. The Rich and powerful	Name
38.	Kitab	<i>Tirà</i>	Fulfulde	Book	Collections of Arabic words sheet bound together	Civilization
39.	Ibrik	<i>Àgé</i>	Yorùbá	Kettle	Brick/Plastic water Container used by Muslims to perform ablution	Material
40.	Jumu'ah	<i>Ojó-ńlá</i>	Yorùbá	Friday	A special day of Islamic Week. It is presumed that the World will end that day. Allah accepts Prayer during the day.	Doctrine

### Comments and Analysis

Among the major objectives of this work is to investigate how prevalence of Islamic words in the Yorùbá dialect of Ìlòrín and how the people are able to localize those words and use them in their daily expressions. Meanwhile, in the cause of compiling those words certain facts emerged. Simple percentage is used to extract some information for analysis. In an effort to domesticate these foreign Arabic words in to the Yorùbá dialect of Ìlòrín, some strategies were adopted which conform to Adeniran A.S theory

in *Yorùbá Metalanguage* (1992). These are: borrowing, special coinage and loan words. For instance, words like: *Áìlà* (noon prayer), *Ààwẹ̀* (fasting), *Wéré* (midnight song) are derived from Yorùbá language. Meanwhile, words like: *Ìrun* (prayer), *Káyó-káyó* (9<sup>th</sup> day of the first month of lunar calendar), *Ràgbò-ràgbò* (11<sup>th</sup> month of lunar calendar), *Oṣù Arúgbó* (7<sup>th</sup> month of Lunar Calendar) are examples for special coinage. For instances *ìrun* (prayer) is coined from Yorùbá word *Orún* (five) to indicate that major Muslim prayers are performed five times daily. While *Ààwẹ̀* (fasting) is presumed to have being from cleansing or meaning cleanliness from all sins during the period of fasting. The meaning of other examples given reflects from the word itself. The remaining words are borrowed from existing dialects spoken in Ìlọ̀rin. The languages are Yorùbá (9) (22.5%), Hausa (13) (32.5%), Fulfulde (9) (22.5%), Madingo (1) (2.5%). The word may have sneaked into Ìlọ̀rin dialect because of the presence of Mali communities (Ìmàlẹ̀). The remaining 8 words which constitute 20%, are yet to be identified with any language. These inform the facts that Ìlọ̀rin is a Heterogeneous and Multilingual setting which derives its principle of Islam controlling the social cultural entity of the area. Some other facts include: frequent use of this domesticated Arabic words of Islamic concept both at oral and written expressions. Also, there is no alternative words for most of these localized words such as: *Ìrun* (prayer), *Ààwẹ̀* (fasting), *Kéwú* (Arabic reading), *Àlùfáà* (Islamic scholars) etc. However, word like *Ágé* is presently used in Ìlọ̀rin dialect to replace *Al-kidiri* or *Séntẹ̀lì* meaning kettle. In the same vein names like *Gídádò*, *Tukur*, *Déńdẹ̀*, *Gógá*, *Dòdó*, *Gárùbà* etc. which serves as cognomen for Muhammed, Abdullah, Ali, Ibrahim, Abubakr are fading away and mostly beard by elderly people or sometimes serves as surname for people in Ìlọ̀rin emirate. This category constitutes 15% of the total domesticated words.

Another issue of concern in this research is the availability of some of these Arabic words in the Yorùbá dictionary even though there are numerous others which could not be found. However, some of the available ones are not properly given the right meaning. This is largely due to the fact that the Arabic words studied are strictly religious (Islamic) and confined to Ìlọ̀rin dialect of Yorùbá which are yet to be adapted to Yorùbá lexicon. This also confirmed the argument that in the process of domesticating a foreign word, there is tendency that the source language may not be properly captured either by indicating semantic shrinking or semantic extension. All these factors are noticed from the work under study. At this juncture, scholars of Arabic and Yorùbá are advised to collaborate for the purpose to correct an imbalance between the two Languages.

Furthermore, this research endeavors to categorize all the domesticated Arabic words used in this study into five (5) namely: Doctrine, Act,

Civilization, Name and Material. This is done to discover how extensive the Islamic words cum Islamic concept permeate through Ìlòrin culture and its dialect. The table indicates that out of 40 words identified in the study. Doctrine has (14) representing 35% while Act has (7) equal to 17.5% out of the total amount. While, words that are related to Islamic civilization (11) representing 27.5% while common Islamic names have (7) representing 17.5%. Islamic material commonly used by the people of Ìlòrin is just one (1) representing 2.5% the least of this category. A further analysis of this category reveals that doctrine and civilization take (25) out of (40) words representing 62.5% close to two third ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) out of the words studied. This may be due to symbiotic and interactive relationship between doctrine and civilization. More so, all Islamic civilizations are extracted from Islamic belief. Interestingly, one may not see direct connection between Islamic acts and Islamic names but the two are inseparable. This is better explained with the fact that the two categories have the same number of words 7 each representing 17.5% if the two are merged together they represent 35% more than one-third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of the total domesticated Arabic words from Islamic concept.

## Conclusion

This work is aimed at identifying and analyzing how some Arabic words from Islamic concept are domesticated and used in Ìlòrin dialect of Yorùbá. More importantly, it is aimed at investigating how Arabic language generally has contributed to the expansion of Yorùbá lexicon. In order to achieve this, the researcher reviewed some that are related to the subject matter which include: Islamic concept, theory of domestication, Ìlòrin dialect among others. The list of the identified domesticated Arabic words into Yorùbá was given containing some variable which include: list of Arabic words, domesticated words, origin, English meaning, concept and type. The data are collected from the Ìlòrin dialect commonly used by contemporary Ìlòrin people. All the major facts are extracted from the table using observation and sometimes by using simple percentage.

After the discussion and analysis, it was discovered that Arabic and Yorùbá have linguistic relationship far beyond loan words. And that effort to domesticate some Islamic concepts of Arabic origin commenced very long time ago through the effort of the local communities. Moreover, the domestication of these Arabic words has greatly impacted on Yorùbá lexicon i.e. adding to Yorùbá words. In the same vein, it could be concluded that Ìlòrin dialect of Yorùbá has also influence the domestication and borrowing of Arabic words relating to Islamic concept because of the prevalence of Arabic language in Ìlòrin, its Islamic setting and its proximity to Yorùbá land. The study also

revealed categorically that non Yorùbá words from the local languages are freely used in the process of domestication of those Arabic words which some of them are easily formed in the Yorùbá dictionary. Therefore, it is recommended that effort should be made by the concerned authority to regularize some linguistic anomalies especially in the areas of lexicon-semantic between Arabic and Yorùbá in the areas of expressing Islamic concept.

## References

- Abdul Raheem, H.I Introduction to Arabic phonology. Second edition. Ilorin; Al-Hudah Printing & Publishing (2017).
- Abraham R.C and M A D. *Lit. Dictionary of Modern Yoruba*. University of Ibadan London Press Ltd. 2<sup>nd</sup> impression (1970). Abubakre, R.D. *Interplay Between Arabic and Yoruba cultures of western Nigeria*. Iwo-Nigeria: Darul Ilm (2004).
- Bamgbose, Ayo. (ed.) *Yoruba Meta Language (Ede-Iperi Yoruba)* in Ayo Bamgbose Vol 1. Ibadan: University Press 1992.
- Al-Ilori, Adam. *Aslu Qabail Yoruba* (The Origin of the Yoruba's). Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah (2012).
- Daif, Shawqi. *Tarikh Al-Adab Al-Arabi: Al-Asr Al-Islami*. Eleventh edition. Cairo: Darul Ma-arif (1989).
- Elias, E. *Al-Qamus Al-Asr* (Modern Dictionary). Cairo. Elias Modern Publishing House & Co (1986).
- Katibi, ARM. *Arabic and Non-Arabic Elements in the Ilorin dialect of Yoruba. Ilorin journal of linguistics, Literature & Culture*. Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages. University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. Vol. 2 (2011).
- Katibi, ARM. The impact of Hausa Language on the Arabic Letters in the Traditional Quranic School System in Ilorin. *Ilorin: History, Culture and Lessons of Peaceful Co-existence*. Oladosu. AGAS Et al. (Ed). Publication of Centre for Ilorin Studies. Ilorin: Unilorin Press (2013).
- Ogunbiyi, I.A. *Arabic Loan Words in the Yoruba Language in the Light of Arabs/Yoruba Relation from Pre-historic times*. Arab Journal of Language Studies. Khartoum International Institute for the Teaching of Arabic Language for non-speakers. Vol 3 No 1(1984).
- Oloso, Y.O *Politics of Language and Identity in Ilorin Emirate*. A Ph.D. thesis submitted to department of Linguistics, Faculty of arts, University of Ibadan (2017).

