

**From the Kanuri of Kanem-Borno to the Kannike of Ilorin Emirate:
Tracing the Impacts of Islamic Hijra in Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study explores the historical migration of the Kanuri people from the Kanem-Borno Empire to Ilorin, the present-day capital of Kwara State in North-Central Nigeria, where they later became known as the Kannike. Although Ilorin shares linguistic ties with the Yoruba-speaking Southwest, it remains culturally and religiously part of Northern Nigeria, with strong Islamic foundations. The research investigates the religious motivations behind the Kanuri migration, emphasizing the role of *Hijra*, Islamic migration, undertaken for the preservation and propagation of faith. Significantly, the study also notes that Kanuri migrants who settled in other Yoruba-speaking regions such as Epe, Ibadan, Ilaro, Iseyin, and Iwo were similarly referred to as Kannike by the host communities, largely due to their shared language and visible proximity with Ilorin. Drawing on historical records, oral traditions, and secondary sources, the research examines how Islamic tradition influenced the Kanuri migration and how their settlement contributed to Islamic development in Ilorin. The findings reveal that this migration facilitated the spread of Islamic knowledge, leadership, and cultural influence, and that the term Kannike became a socioreligious identifier across several regions. This study contributes to broader understandings of Islamic migration in West Africa and the processes of identity preservation, adaptation, and religious continuity along with inter ethnic integration.

Keywords: *Hijra*, Ilorin, Kanem-Borno, Kannike, Kanuri

Introduction

The spread of Islam in Nigeria has been significantly shaped by deliberate migrations motivated by religious devotion, political shifts, and the quest for spiritual security.¹ A key example is the migration of Kanuri Muslims from the Kanem-Borno Empire, an early Islamic center in West Africa, to various regions, notably Ilorin, the capital of present-day Kwara State. Though Ilorin lies within a Yoruba-speaking zone, it is culturally and religiously aligned with Northern Nigeria, bearing strong Islamic traditions and governance.

This study centers on the religious impetus for Kanuri migration, particularly through the Islamic concept of *Hijra*; migration for the sake of faith. In Ilorin, Kanuri

migrants integrated into the emirate's Islamic framework and played vital roles in religious, political and educational spheres. Over time, they became known as **Kannike**, a socioreligious identity reflecting both their Kanuri heritage and Ilorin's Islamic milieu. This label extended to Kanuri Muslims in other Yoruba-speaking areas such as Iseyin, Ilaro, Ibadan and Iwo, where shared Islamic ties, proximity to Ilorin and visible tribal marks contributed to the adoption of the term.ⁱⁱ In his inaugural lecture, Amuda-Kannike asserts that the Kannike clan extends beyond Kwara, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, and Lagos to countries such as Estonia, the U.S., Jamaica, England, the UAE, Finland, France, India, Spain, and Uganda, with 58% of Kannikes residing in Africa.ⁱⁱⁱ

Despite their long-standing influence, the religious motivations and historical roots of the **Kannike** community remain under-explored in academic literature. Much of the existing narrative emphasizes political and cultural integration, often overlooking **Hijra** as a spiritually driven force behind their migration. This gap has obscured the understanding of how the **Kannike** identity formed and contributed to Ilorin's Islamic and sociocultural development. Reducing their identity to ethnic or linguistic terms ignores the deeper religious agency that shaped their journey.

To address this, the study traces the impact of Islamic **Hijra** on the transformation of Kanuri migrants into the **Kannike**, highlighting their enduring contributions to Islamic civilization in Ilorin and across Nigeria. It begins with a historical overview of Kanem-Borno and Ilorin Emirate, clarifies key concepts (Kanuri and Kannike) and analyzes the role of **Hijra** in West African Islamic history as a mechanism for **Da'wah** and identity preservation. It further examines Kanuri migration patterns, the cultural dynamics of Ilorin and the formation of the **Kannike** identity. The research concludes by evaluating the community's contributions to Islamic and secular education, commerce, governance and their role in sustaining Islamic values within and beyond the Ilorin Emirate.

Kanem-Borno

The **Kanem-Borno Empire** was a major political and cultural force in the Central Sudan region of Africa, flourishing from approximately the **9th century to the 19th century**. It developed around **Lake Chad**, covering present-day **northeastern Nigeria, western Chad, parts of Niger, Cameroon**, and southern Libya.^{iv} The empire initially emerged as Kanem, under the rule of the Sayfawa dynasty, which traced its ancestry to Arab roots. The Kanem-Borno Empire historically spanned a vast area, with its Kanem portion largely situated in what is now the Republic of Chad. Following its union with Borno, the combined territory came to be commonly known as the Kanem-Borno Kingdom or simply Borno Empire. At its height, the empire stretched from northern Chad down to the Kwararafa region in the south and from the Kano area in the west to Wadai in the east. The Kanuri people, who are the dominant ethnic group in Borno, also speak the Kanuri language.^v

Kanem-Borno was said to be one of the longest lasting empires in the world. It began in the eight century, and lasted to the beginning of the nineteenth century.^{vi} The empire became one of the earliest African states to embrace Islam, officially adopting the religion in the 11th century during the reign of Mai (King) Umme Jilmi (1085-1097 CE). The empire reached its golden age under the leadership of **Mai Idris Alooma** (1571–1603CE). Islam played a central role in unifying the state and shaping its legal system, diplomacy, and educational institutions.^{vii} Although the Kanem-Borno Empire was ethnically diverse, comprising various Sudanic, Saharan, and Sahelian groups, the Kanuri people rose to prominence as the dominant ethnic group. Speaking a Nilo-Saharan language, the Kanuri became the political and cultural core of the empire. They are renowned for their strong sense of identity, deep Islamic roots, and long-standing traditions in scholarship, commerce, and military organization. Eventually, the name “Kanem-Borno” became synonymous with Kanuri civilization.^{viii}

Borno remained a significant power until the **19th century**, when it began to decline due to internal weakness, attacks from Fulani forces, and the eventual conquest by **Rabih az-Zubayr** in 1893.^{ix} The region later came under British colonial rule, but the **Kanuri identity and Islamic legacy** of the Kanem-Borno Empire remain strong in **Borno State, Nigeria**, and among Kanuri communities across West Africa.

Ilorin Emirate

Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara State, is located in Nigeria’s North Central geopolitical zone. As of 2024, the city’s estimated population stands at 1,063,713, reflecting significant growth from the 777,667 recorded in the 2006 national census. This increase positions Ilorin as the sixth most populous city in Nigeria.^x The City, which lies along Lagos-Kaduna highway with 409 km distance from Abuja, the Nigerian Federal Capital Territory, is located at latitude 80°30’N and longitude 4°35’E.^{xi} Historically, Ilorin Province, alongside Middle Niger Province, was one of the first two provinces established by the British colonial administration in Northern Nigeria in 1900. The former Ilorin Province extended beyond the present-day Ilorin Emirate to include parts of Nupe, Ibolu, and Igbomina/Ekiti territories.^{xii}

Ilorin holds a strategically important location in Nigeria, lying approximately midway between the northwestern and southwestern regions of the country. This geographical positioning justifies its description as a gateway connecting Northern and Southern Nigeria.^{xiii} Abubakre has aptly observed, “Ilorin as a gateway to the north and the south is left with a choice of which of the two directions to follow.”^{xiv} This central role has made Ilorin a unique cultural crossroads, blending dominant northern influences with select cultural elements from the south. It has also contributed to what researchers refer to as “acculturation in Ilorin”.^{xv} While some researchers consider how the various distinct cultures dissolved into a uniquely composite one, which obscures the inherent cultural pluralism, refer to the phenomenon as apparent “yorubatisation” others assert that Ilorin culture or language

is not analogous to any other Yoruba speaking community; it should rather be described as, simply, "Ilorin culture"^{xvi}. Based on this premise, Amuda-Kannike, as cited by Chioma, recommends that whenever a native of Ilorin is required to indicate their tribe on a form, they should simply write 'Ilorin'.^{xvii}

Researchers also insist that Ilorin dialect of Yoruba has its own features distinct from those of other Yoruba speaking communities. Katibi, who indicates that in Ilorin dialect, some words and phrases of the typical Yoruba have changed their semantic status.^{xviii} He explains further that the Yoruba language spoken by the people of Ilorin has distinct semantic and contrastive features characterized by some minor and major factors^{xix}. One of the reasons for this dissimilarity is traced to the fact that the dialect spoken in Ilorin is widely characterized and influenced by the languages of both the north and the south; as it contains divergent linguistic composition namely: Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Kanuri, Baruba, Arabic and others^{xx}.

History addresses the question of first settler and founding period of Ilorin. One of the two contrasting narrations puts it that the founding of Ilorin was by a Baruba hermit who lived in the sixteenth century while the other indicates that it was by a Yoruba hunter, Ojo who had his sojourn in the seventeenth century; the former appears more acceptable though not more popular than the latter.^{xxi} On the exact date that Ilorin was founded, it is considered more adequate to say that the Town was founded in the sixteenth century. Among other reliable literature on this, Danmole, who substantiates his opinion with reference to works of early scholars like Abdullahi Smith, I.A. Akinjogbin, R.S. Smith, Robin Law, J.A. Atanda and others such as Abubakar's *Talif akhbar al-qurun min umara bilad ilurin* (sic), Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yoruba* and O.S. Ojo's *Short History of Ilorin*, argues that "the town had been a very important centre in northern Yorubaland for many centuries before the beginning of the nineteenth century"^{xxii}.

The path to the formation of an emirate in Ilorin started with the arrival of Shaykh Salihu Ālimi Janta (1740-1820 C.E) in the early nineteenth century. The Shaykh arrived when various groups of settlers were located and predominated in four quarters of the town. These included the Yoruba at Idi Ape and the Fulani at *Gaa Olufadi* (Olufadi's camp). While Gambari quarters comprised of migrants from Northern part of Nigeria (Hausa, Nupe, Gwari, Kanuri, etc.) *Oke Suna* was settled exclusively by Muslims of various origins (Kanuri, Nupe, Yoruba, Baruba, etc.).^{xxiii} Apart from amalgamation of these four quarters into one entity named Ilorin, other landmark achievements such as islamisation of the City, fluorescence of Arabic knowledge, establishment of Ālimi-islamic dynasty, institution of different wings of supportive leadership, and creation of the Emirate, are all traceable to the politico-religious roles played by the 'Ulamā', particularly under the leadership of Shaykh Ālimi and his two sons who subsequently became the first and the second emirs in the Ilorin Emirate.^{xxiv} The two sons, Abdul Salam and Shitta, who reigned from 1820 to 1836 and from 1836 to 1861 respectively, were not only the pioneers but also the sole

progenitors whose descendants have continued to occupy the emirship of Ilorin to this day. The Emirate was successfully created in 1829 and it has survived to the present era of the eleventh emir, Alhaji Ibrahim son of Emir Dhul-Qarnayn Gambari (1995 till date).^{xxv}

The *Hijra* in Islamic Tradition and Its Role in Muslim History

The concept of *Hijra* (migration) is deeply rooted in Islamic history and theology, signifying both a physical movement and a profound spiritual undertaking. The origin of *Hijra* is anchored in the momentous migration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE to escape religious persecution and establish a society grounded in Islamic principles.^{xxvi} This event did not only mark a turning point in Islamic civilization but also inaugurated the Islamic lunar calendar (*Hijri* calendar). The Qur'ān recognizes *Hijra* as a noble and necessary act for the protection and practice of faith. Allah praises those who migrate for the sake of their religion:

Indeed, those whom the angels take (in death) while wronging themselves, [the angels] will say, 'In what (condition) were you?' They will say, 'We were oppressed in the land.' The angels will say, 'Was not the earth of Allah spacious (enough) for you to emigrate therein?' (Qur'ān 4:97)

The above verse does not only encourage migration from places of religious oppression but makes the act a moral obligation for those who are able. The reward for such endeavour is also emphasized:

And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many (alternative) locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him, his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. (Qur'ān 4:100)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) affirmed the enduring spiritual and moral relevance of *Hijra*, even after its original historical context had passed. In a well-known hadith reported in both *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* and *Sahīh Muslim*, he declared: "There is no *Hijra* after the conquest (of Makkah), but (there is) *Jihād* and intention. And when you are called to fight, then go forth."^{xxvii,xxviii} This statement indicates that while the specific obligation of physical migration to Madinah ceased with the consolidation of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the ethical and spiritual principles that relate to *Hijra*, such as striving in the cause of Allah (*Jihād*) and maintaining

sincere intention (*niyyah*), remain perpetually valid. Thus, *Hijra* evolved from a physical act of relocation to a broader, enduring paradigm of moral commitment and active engagement in the preservation and propagation of Islamic values, especially in contexts of adversity or the need for religious reform.

In the context of West African Islamic history, *Hijra* extended beyond Arabia as a religious and reformative principle. Muslim scholars and communities migrated to areas conducive to the free practice of Islam and religious propagation. This practice was not only a spiritual migration but also a strategic movement to establish Islamic governance, promote learning, and escape persecution. Prominent figures such as **al-Hajj Salīm Suwarī** of the Suwarian tradition, who encouraged peaceful coexistence and migration to non-Muslim lands for da‘wah and scholarship, exemplified this model.^{xxix} Others like **al-Hajj Umar al-Futi Tal**, who led a major reformist jihad and migration across the Western Sudan, and **Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse**, whose movement spread throughout West Africa in the 20th century, also embodied this legacy.^{xxx} Most notably, **Shaykh Uthman dan Fodio** undertook such a movement in the late 18th century, leading to significant Islamic reforms, the Sokoto Caliphate, and the establishment of enduring scholarly and political communities across the region.^{xxxi}

Within this historical framework, the migration of Kanuri Muslims from the Kanem-Borno empire to Ilorin and other Yoruba-speaking areas, such as Iseyin, Ilaro, Iwo and Ibadan, reflects the spirit of *Hijra*. These migrations, grounded in religious motivation, were parts of broader efforts to preserve Islamic identity, sustain *Da‘wah*, and transmit Islamic scholarship. The result was the formation of the Kannike identity, Kanuri descendants integrated into new cultural settings but bound by their Islamic faith and educational traditions.

Kanuri Migration and the Cultural Complexity of Ilorin

Migration (*Hijra*) has played a central role in shaping the history, identity, politics and Islamic development of the Kanuri people and the Kanem-Bornu Empire. There are three major phases of Kanuri migration. The first occurred in the 9th century CE, involving settlers of Zaghawa and Tebu descent migrating from Arab regions such as North Africa and the Nile Valley to the Lake Chad area, leading to the establishment of the Kanem Empire.^{xxxii} Motivated by trade, settlement and the spread of Islam, the Kanem rulers adopted Islam by the 11th century, forming the Sayfawa dynasty.^{xxxiii}

The second migration in the 13th century was due to dynastic conflicts and military threats from the Bulala, prompting the Sayfawa to relocate westward to Borno, where the empire flourished under leaders like Mai Idris Alooma.^{xxxiv} Borno became a hub for Islamic scholarship, attracting scholars from Spain, Egypt, Tripoli and Sudan.^{xxxv} The third migration was a more dispersed movement of Kanuri people to regions across West Africa including Ilorin, driven by Islamic missionary activities,

commerce, political shifts, warfare and insecurity during the 18th and 19th centuries.^{xxxvi} Gazali affirms that population movement significantly contributed to the spread of Islamic education and by 1830, Kanuri scholars were documented arriving in Yorubaland through Ilorin.^{xxxvii}

Ilorin, receiving migrants from various backgrounds, hosted early Islamic scholars in areas like Okesuna, founded as early as 1714 CE, becoming the first Islamic learning center in Yorubaland.^{xxxviii} Among them were scholars of Kanuri, Hausa and Baruba origin, including Shaykh At-Tahir Solagberu, Shaykh Tsansaini,^{xxxix} Shaykh Muhammad Yanbu and his wife Āsiyah, Shaykh Sanusi, and Shaykh Thāniy Kanuri.^{xl}

Other notable migrants in Ilorin included Malam Ibrahim Bako of Zamfara origin, the first Sarkin Gambari; Shaykh Abdul-Mumin Dogo, a Kanuri scholar from Nupeland, the first Imam Gambari; Olufadi, a Fulani; and Afonja, a Yoruba warrior.^{xli} Early migrants typically settled in one of four main quarters; Okesuna (for scholars), Gambari (occupied by the northern Nigerians), Gaa Fulani (inhabited by the Fulani), and Idiape (populated by the Yoruba).^{xlii} Over time, Ilorin evolved into a multiethnic society due to sustained Kanuri and other migrations. However, the Yoruba language became the dominant medium, masking the cultural diversity and giving a false impression of a homogenous identity.^{xliii}

The Emergence of the Identity and Status of the Kannike in Ilorin

The development of the Kannike identity in Ilorin represents a significant outcome of cultural integration, religious scholarship, and ethnic interaction following the settlement of Kanuri Muslims in the city. As Ilorin evolved into a diverse Islamic center attracting scholars and settlers from across northern Nigeria and beyond, the Kanuri, renowned for their deep Islamic heritage rooted in the Kanem Borno Empire, began to play a visible role in shaping the religious and intellectual landscape of the emirate. Over time, their distinct presence gave rise to what came to be known as the Kannike identity, an identity that carried not only ethnic significance but also conferred religious prestige and scholarly legitimacy. It is therefore important to study the historical processes that led to the formation of the Kannike identity, as well as the status and role of those who bore this identity within the social, religious and political structure of Ilorin Emirate.

The most symbolic indicator that distinguished Kanuri in the midst of other migrants that were arriving in batches to Ilorin at the time was the Kanuri tribal mark. The facial tribal mark became an ethnic identifier and was equally named kannike as the people carrying it on their faces. The Kannike mark had since become a heritage symbol for certain families. They maintain up to the present time their identity of tribe facial marks as found on the faces of their progenitors who migrated from Borno to Ilorin.^{xliv} The full pattern of the facial marks is in three parts: **Forehead, Under-the-eyes and Cheeks. Forehead Mark is a single vertical line** carved into the center of

the forehead, extending downward toward the area between the eyebrows. This mark is symbolic and prominent, indicating ancestry and community alignment. **Under-the-eye Marks** are short **horizontal lines under each eye**, precisely positioned just beneath the lower eyelid. These are part of the facial identity and provide symmetry to the pattern. **Cheek Marks** are visible on each side of the face, **long vertical lines** descend **from the sides of the head down to the jawline**. These cheek lines are the most dominant feature of the Kannike mark.^{xlvi} Variations exist among different families: Some have a **single continuous stripe** down each cheek. Others **break the stripe into two or three lines**, or even **multiple fine strokes**, depending on family or sub-lineage customs. These variations still fall under the broad classification of Kannike but can indicate finer distinctions within the Kannike communities of Ilorin.

As more migrants arrived from Borno, the Ilorin early migrants directed them to where they could meet their brothers. Consequently, Gambari, the quarters dominated with migrants from northern Nigeria, became the Ilorin home for the migrants of the Kanem Borno. About twenty-eight houses in Ilorin were recently estimated to be of the Kanuri origin and using the Kannike identity. The family houses of the Kannikes were grouped into six zones. Zone 1: Ile Baba Tolotolo, Elekoyagan and Ile Olororo. Zone 2: Enkule, Ile Panu, Ile Natahala and Ile Leramo. Zone 3: Ile Kabido, Ile Alh Saidu Eleja, Ile Abba, Ile Omo ate, Hakatanpo and Soro. Zone 4: Ile Alfa Amuda Kannike, Ile Dan Maraya, Ile Mai Solati and Ile Natahala. Zone 5: Ile Ubandawaki, Ile Tantama, Ile Amuda Kannike and Okesuna. Zone 6: Gbari, Karuma, Awodi 1 & 2, Adabata, Agaka, Sanni Okin and Taiwo. Out of these twenty-eight houses, only the last four are located outside Gambari quarters. Though all the houses in Zone 6 scattered around different locations in the emirate, majority of the Kanuri families clustered around the same location in Gambari quarters called Isale Kannike^{xlvi}.

Scholarship in Arabic and Islamic Studies is a defining feature of the Kannike in Ilorin. Among the successors of their early migrants, the most prominent was Shaykh Abubakr Omo-Hiya (1865–1988), son of Shaykh Mustapha al-Barnawi Kannike Soro, who preserved his predecessors' legacies.^{xlvi} He authored notable manuscripts in Arabic literature and Islamic theology, and issued numerous fatāwa based on the Maliki School, serving as consultant to Emirs Abdul Qadir (1919–1959) and Sulu Gambari (1959–1992). Renowned for his erudition and fluency in Arabic, Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfude, Baruba, and Yoruba, he attracted students and researchers from far and near.^{xlvi} Among the prominent Kannike scholars who were his students was the late Imam of Sarkin-Zango mosque, Shaykh Musa Abubakar Kannike (d. 18/1/2013). The seven sons of Shaykh Abubakr were all reputable scholars whose impacts on the Ilorin Emirate were remarkable. The first and the last were Khalifah Ma'mun Abubakr and Shaykh Mukhtar Abubakr. Formidable Muslim societies were coordinated by Shaykh Saeed Abubakr and Shaykh Shittu Abubakr, while one of the most largely attended Ramadan *Tafsīr* in the city was delivered by Shaykh Faruq

Abubakr. The Omo-Hiya group of schools was founded by Shaykh Khalilullah Abubakr Soro II. Inspired by their father, these sons, along with other Kannike descendants, proudly claimed Borno as their origin in their appellations and utterances.^{xlix} For example, the current patriarch of Soro family and renowned Muslim scholar, Shaykh Sulayman Abubakr Soro (b. 1938), is famously known as *Dan-Borno*, meaning “son or indigen of Borno”.¹ In appreciation of his enormous contributions to scholarship and the progress of Ilorin Emirate, Shaykh Dan-Borno was on 22nd February 2013 conferred with the title of Grand Muqaddam of Ilorin by the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari.^{li}

The Kannike people hold significant commercial influence within Ilorin, particularly in the livestock trade. At the helm of this economic activity is their traditional leader, the Sarkin-Zango, who hails from one of the foremost Kannike families to have settled in Ilorin. By tradition, the Sarkin-Zango is not only the cultural head of the Kannike descendants but also the recognized leader of all cattle sellers in the major cattle markets across the Ilorin Emirate. The current Sarkin-Zango, Alhaji Shuaib Baba Muhammad Kannike (b. 1944), was appointed in 2004 by the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, following the passing of his predecessor, Alhaji Ibrahim Ayinde, who served in the position for approximately twenty-five years.^{lii} The appointment of a Sarkin-Zango by the Emir is a dual affirmation. It formally acknowledges the appointee as the traditional leader responsible for the welfare, peace and unity of the Kannike community, while simultaneously vesting him with authority over all cattle traders in the emirate. This includes oversight of cattle trade in prominent markets such as Ipata and Zango, thereby reinforcing the Kannike's enduring role in the commercial life of Ilorin.

Numerous of Kannike descendants have been remarkably successful in the cattle business. Alhaji Yusuf Amuda Kannike (1913-1997) grew in the cattle business that he had his empire both in Ilorin and Ikirun. He solely supplied cattle to Offa, Erin-ile, Oyan, Ijabe, Konta, Okuku, Igbaye among other places across southern Nigeria. His honesty and sincerity earned him the famous nick-name “*Kariya babu*” (Lies are not acceptable). Until his death, he was the chairman, Kwara State Cattle Dealers Association. Among other successful Kannike natives in the cattle industry were Alhaji Saidu Abubakar Kannike (b. 1920) and Alhaji Yahya Mohammed Ubandawaki (1919-1994). The Kannike tribe holds the distinction of producing the first woman to own and drive a car in Ilorin, Alhaja Onikepe (d. 1984). Her accomplishments and prowess in the textile business were unmatched. Several other prominent personalities from the Kannike tribe also attained wealth through diverse business ventures. Alhaji Saidu Kannike Eleja (d. 2001) amassed his wealth through the fish business in 1938. He became wealthy that he solely built Ode-aba mosque and channeled electricity into Isale-Kannike with installation of electric poles and connection of same to source of the power. Similarly, Alhaji Uthman Ayilara Kannike (1930-2005) was successful from the business of dried fish and animal skin that he

became the chairman of *Egbe Arowosaye Eleja* (Association of Wealthy Fish-seller). Lastly, Alhaji Haruna Bello Kannike (b. 1925) is a multifaceted business man. He started with business of cattle skin before moving to wholesale dealer of yam and cassava flour (gari). He also ventured into transportation with a number of vehicles and trucks.^{liii} These are among the Kannike business tycoons; further cementing the tribe's legacy of entrepreneurship and economic influence in Ilorin Emirate.

The educational sector within the conventional system has also been significantly impacted by the contributions of the Kannike family in Ilorin and Kwara State. Prof. Abiodun Amuda-Kannike (SAN) was the Pioneer Dean, Faculty of Law, Kwara State University (KWASU), Malete.^{liv} His counterpart, Prof. AbdulRazaq Kannike Musa, is a Senate member from the Faculty of Agriculture, in the University of Ilorin.^{lv} Dr. Abdulkarim Amuda-Kannike is the Registrar at the Kwara State College of Education, Oro, while the Director of Works and the Head of Department of Integrated Science in the same institution are Engr. Abdulraheem Tunde Kannike and Dr Ahmed Kola Amuda-Kannike, respectively. In the Department of Arabic, University of Ilorin, Associate Professor Uthman Idrees Kankawi plays a prominent role. Similarly, in the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Abuja, Dr. Uthman Mohammed Mustapha Kannike contributes actively. Dr. Suleiman Amuda-Kannike is a Gynecologist with University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. Dr. AbdulRasheed Maisolati Kannike is a lecturer at the Faculty of Law while Ustaz Faruq Yusuf Abubakar lectures at the Faculty of Education; both in the University of Ilorin. Ustaz Sulaiman Salman Abubakar lectures at the Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin. Ustaz Faruq Luqman Abubakar serves as a staff member at Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. Ustaz Shuaib Aliy Tantanma Al-Kankawi is a well educated and Arabic author.^{lvi}

Members of the Kannike family are also part of the administrative staff at the University of Ilorin. These include Ustaz Shittu AbdulRahman Abubakar and Ustaz Sulaiman Abdulqadir Abubakar. At Kwara State University, notable Kannike administrative staff include Ustaz Ma'mun AbdulRafi' Abubakar, Ustaz Saeed Ya'qub Abubakar, Ustaz Ma'mun Mas'ud Abubakar and Ustaz Saeed Hamza Abubakar. Comrade AbdulSalam Jimoh Kannike is the KWASU branch Chairman, Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU).^{lvii} Hajia Isma'il Rashidah Kannike serves as an administrative officer at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. Kannike scholars are equally represented in leadership roles across various primary and secondary schools in Ilorin. Dr Khalilullah Muhammad Bashir is the Coordinator of Diploma programme at Omo-Hiya Group of Schools, Ilorin. Dr. Muhammad Kannike Hassan Olodomej is the Headmaster of Pake Primary School, Ilorin. Mr. Hussein Ahmed Kannike is the Principal of Ojagboro Senior Secondary School, while Mallam Mahmud Kale Maisolati is the Vice Principal of Burhanud-Deen Junior Secondary School, Ojagboro, Ilorin.

Members of the Kannike family have also distinguished themselves in politics and public service, holding high-ranking positions in government across various levels. Hon. Dr. Abubakar Amuda-Kannike, *Kariya babu* represented the Ilorin East/Ilorin South constituency as a member of the House of Representatives, National Assembly, from 2015 to 2019. He also served, earlier, as a Commissioner for Works and Transport in Kwara State.^{lviii} Hon. AbdulRahman Muhammad Aduagba is the Zango Ward Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ilorin East. Hon. Adam Mustapha Kannike is a serving Councilor for Zango Ward and the Speaker of the Ilorin East Legislative Council. Hon. AbdulRahman Bolaji Kannike is a former Councilor representing Balogun Fulani Ward II in Ilorin South Local Government, while Alhaji Oba Kannike served as a Supervisory Councilor in Ilorin South. Likewise, Musa Aliyu Kannike, a doctorate student, is currently the Director of Project, North Central region of ABS Foundation and Mallam Yakub Haroon Kannike is currently the Secretary, Kwara Central Zone of Kwara State PDP Youth Council.^{lix}

In the civil service, Alhaji Musa Jibril Kannike retired as a Director in the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs. Alhaji Saka Amuda Kannike, a respected elder, once served as a Permanent Secretary in the same ministry and later retired as the Clerk of the Kwara State House of Assembly. Alhaji Saeed Ayo Kannike is a retired Director from the Kwara State Teaching Service Commission, while Mallam Kawu Jibril Kannike currently serves as Commissioner II in the same commission. Alhaji Jibril Surajudeen Kannike retired as a Desk Officer at the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).^{lx} These individuals represent the active involvement of the Kannike family in governance and public administration, demonstrating a strong legacy of leadership and service to the community.

Kannike families in Ilorin are well established and coordinated. Two indigenous associations have been founded with affiliation to this group. Kannike Dynasty Forum was established in September, 2016 as an umbrella association to bring together all Kannike descendants born or living in Ilorin. The Association, which has Imam Shuaib Olohundare Kannike as president, involved both the descendants who reside together in Isale Kannike, Gambari quarters and others who have moved to other parts of Ilorin. The association's objectives include progress of all the members and preservation of the Kanuri's culture, under the overall headship of the Sarkin-Zango of Ilorin.^{lxi} The second association, under the leadership of President Yaqub Bolaji Yusuph, was founded on 9th December, 2016 and named Isale Kannike Youth Development Association. This association involved all residents of Isale Kannike including those who are not Kannike by birth. It was founded purposely for Isale Kannike's growth and development as well as to maintain peace and orderliness among the youth of the community.^{lxii}

Conclusion and Recommendations

The *Hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah was not only a physical relocation but a divine and strategic act that laid the

foundation for Islamic civilization. The *Muhājirūn* were not merely refugees; they became pioneers of economic growth, intellectual vibrancy and spiritual leadership in Madinah. This transformative precedent resonates deeply with the historical migration of the Kanuri people, later known as the Kannike in Ilorin, from Kanem-Borno in pursuit of religious preservation, social redefinition and new opportunities under Islamic ideals.

This research has illuminated the significant and multi-dimensional impact of the Kannike in Ilorin Emirate. Like the *Muhājirūn*, many Kannike migrants and their descendants emerged from the status of displaced believers to become influential forces within their new society. They established themselves as respected scholars in both Islamic and conventional disciplines, successful entrepreneurs, prominent political leaders and senior public servants. These outcomes are not incidental; they exemplify the Qur'anic promise of divine reward and societal recognition for those who migrate in the path of Allah (*fī sabīlillāh*).

The analogy between Madinah and Ilorin is not simply thematic but structural. Both cities received communities of migrants who were driven by faith and purpose. Both cities became melting pots of diverse Muslim identities and centers of Islamic learning, governance and prosperity. The Kannike experience in Ilorin reinforces the timeless lesson that *Hijrah*, when undertaken for the sake of Allah, has the power to transform individuals, elevate communities, and build legacies that endure across generations.

In light of these findings, this study recommends that greater academic and communal attention be given to preserving the heritage and contributions of the Kannike in Ilorin. Oral histories, written records and scholarly works should be documented and integrated into curricula on Islamic civilization in Nigeria. Furthermore, Nigerian Muslim communities should be encouraged to view migration not only as a socio-economic reality but also as a spiritual and civilizational opportunity, as was the case with the Prophet's *Hijrah* and the Kanuri experience. Lastly, policy makers and religious institutions should draw lessons from this historical parallel to strengthen community integration, inter-ethnic harmony and the role of Islamic ethics in governance and development.

In essence, this study affirms that *Hijrah* is more than a historical event; it is a living principle in Islamic thought and history. From the sands of Makkah to the heart of Madinah and from the plains of Kanem-Borno to the scholarly city of Ilorin, the journey of the faithful continues to shape the religious, intellectual and political landscapes of Muslim societies. The Kannike of Ilorin stand as a contemporary embodiment of the enduring spirit of *Hijrah*, proving that with faith, migration can be not just survival but revival.

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