

PROFESSOR M.O.A. ABDUL (1926-1997): AN INDISPENSABLE PERSONALITY IN THE FIELD OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES IN NIGERIA



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Abstract

The twin fields of Arabic and Islamic Studies play a critical role in advancing the understanding and practice of Islam among Muslims. Informal learning of these subjects had taken place in Nigeria for centuries before their incorporation into the country's curriculum. Despite the daunting challenges, some indigenous individuals dedicated themselves to bringing these courses to a prestigious level, pioneering their study, and teaching them across schools in the country. However, these quintessential personalities still need due recognition through adequate dissemination of information about their lives and works. One of these pioneers was Professor Musa Oladipupo Ajilogba Abdul, Nigeria's first indigenous Professor of Islamic Studies, who taught and authored many works to simplify the teaching and understanding of Islam for Nigerians. The objective of this paper is to evaluate his activities and to shed light on his enduring legacy, mainly through his former students, mentees, and those scholars who pass through his former students. Using a historical method, the research gathered information through interviews and available library materials. The findings revealed that Prof. M.O.A. Abdul was an iconic academic with an everlasting legacy that is difficult to match. His former students are leading Islamic Studies scholars in Nigeria and beyond, exhibiting his teachings and principles. The paper concluded by recommending a revivalist approach to make Prof. M.O.A. Abdul more relevant in learning Islamic Studies in Nigeria by reproducing his works and domesticating his philosophy by his students and grand – students.

Bidang integrasi antara Studi Islam dan Bahasa Arab memainkan peran penting dalam memajukan pemahaman dan praktik Islam di kalangan umat Islam. Pembelajaran informal terhadap mata pelajaran ini telah berlangsung di Nigeria selama berabad-abad sebelum dimasukkan ke dalam kurikulum negara tersebut. Terlepas dari tantangan yang berat, beberapa masyarakat adat mendedikasikan diri mereka untuk membawa kursus-kursus ini ke tingkat yang bergengsi, merintis studi mereka, dan mengajarkannya di seluruh sekolah di negara ini. Namun, tokoh-tokoh penting ini masih memerlukan pengakuan melalui penyebaran informasi yang memadai tentang kehidupan dan pekerjaan mereka. Salah satu pionirnya adalah Profesor Musa Oladipupo Ajilogba Abdul, Profesor Studi Islam pribumi pertama di Nigeria, yang mengajar dan menulis banyak karya untuk menyederhanakan pengajaran dan pemahaman Islam bagi orang Nigeria. Artikel ini bertujuan mengevaluasi aktivitasnya dan menjelaskan warisan abadinya, terutama melalui mantan muridnya, para mentee, dan para ulama yang melewati mantan muridnya. Dengan menggunakan metode sejarah, penelitian ini mengumpulkan informasi melalui wawancara dan bahan pustaka yang tersedia. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa Prof. M.O.A. Abdul adalah seorang akademisi ikonik dengan warisan abadi yang sulit ditandingi. Mantan muridnya adalah cendekiawan Studi Islam terkemuka di Nigeria dan sekitarnya, yang menunjukkan ajaran dan prinsipnya. Makalah ini diakhiri dengan merekomendasikan pendekatan revivalis untuk menjadikan Prof. M.O.A. Abdul semakin relevan mempelajari Studi Islam di Nigeria dengan memperbanyak karya-karyanya dan menjinakkan filosofinya oleh para murid dan cucunya.

Background

The study of the twin fields of Arabic and Islamic Studies, especially at the higher institutions of learning in Nigeria, and the seamless learning of the two courses in the country could be credited to the determination, relentless efforts, foresightedness, and sacrifices of some individuals who, in the face of daunting challenges, stayed focus to find a path through which the coming generations will pass through without hiccups. It was a choice between prosperity by studying attractive and lucrative courses in sciences, commercials, or arts and hopelessness in settling for non-attractive courses like Arabic and Islamic studies, especially when colonial imperialists and Christian missionaries were holding the ace. The former were religiously liberal but highly sensitive to promoting anything that could aid their cause and ease the attainment of their objectives in the country; hence, people rushed up to the scanty opportunities that could earn them proximity to the white men because that was where lies the prosperity as at that time. The latter were for proselytization, and Islam was the dominant religion. It was natural for them to crush the religion that stood their way. It was for these combined reasons that many Muslims forfeited their faith to foreign religions out of fear of persecution or for prosperity from those who were at the helm of affairs. It was also a time when the traditional *Mallam* and *Ulama* in the country resisted Western education for fear of conversion to another religion or religious liberalism.¹ Having been tackled at the lower levels by some Muslim individuals, some extended the same strength to higher learning institutions. Hence, they chose to study Arabic and Islamic studies to give hope to the upcoming generations of Muslims, to ease the fear of *Mallams*, and to unveil the hidden opportunities that await future scholars of Islam. This is where Prof. M.O. A Abdul belonged. Therefore, this paper is an effort to evaluate his legacies, as could be traced from his students and grand-students, to further sustain his memory among the scholars of Arabic and Islamic studies in the country today and for the coming scholars to appreciate his commitment to making Arabic and Islamic studies a household course in the higher institutions and Nigeria as a whole. The historical method of research is adopted through which information are gathered from library and interviews before they were analyzed.

Profiling M.O.A. Abdul

M.O.A. Abdul was from the Ijebu extraction of Yoruba in Nigeria. He was born on the 6th of February, 1926, in Ijebu-Ode, his mother's hometown, while his father was from Ijebu-Ife, both Ogun State.² From a tender age, he was deeply inclined towards religious scholarship and a zeal to master Islamic sciences. However, these were traits from his father, who was a devoted Muslim scholar. He was, therefore, raised in a devoted family thoroughly instilled with the values of faith, humility, and an insatiable thirst for spiritual knowledge.³ As a teenager, M.O.A. Abdul experienced transformative religious learning and demonstrated a high sense of Islamic scholarship, which made him different from his peers. He was taught the rudiments of Islamic sciences by his father, who died in 1935 when he was a boy of nine (9) years old, and there is no record

¹A.B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, (New York, Taylor and Francis Group, 1974)

² L.F. Oladimeji, "Life and Contributions of Musa Abdul to the Growth and Development of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria", *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies (JARS)*, 15, no.1, (2001)¹

³ L.F. Oladimeji, "Life and Works of Musa Oladipupo Ajibola Abdul", (A Long Essay, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, 1987)²

of him learning under any Mallam of his time.⁴ Still, his rare intellectual acumen reveals the uncommon gift Allah has bestowed on him right from that time, which earned him various scholarships at different levels of his education. The burden of taking care of the family fell on the shoulder of his mother after the demise of his father, so after his primary education at the Muslim School, Ijebu – Ode, in 1940, he was sponsored by Ijebu Muslim Mission to Government Teachers' College, Ibadan, in 1945 where he obtained Grade III Certificate, 1946.⁵ This was after he worked as an attendant in a filling station to gather money for his Junior Cambridge Examination in 1944, in which he had flying grades. And 1947 and 1948 witnessed his outstanding performance in the Senior Cambridge Examination and Teachers' Elementary Certificate Examination, both as an external candidate respectively.⁶ He was admitted into the prestigious University of London in 1959 to study for a Diploma in Arabic and Islamic Studies under the auspices of the defunct Western Region of Nigeria scholarship scheme. He followed it up with a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the same University, leveraging a year left from the three – year scholarship for a diploma. However, he spent two years and the extension from the government, having observed his rare commitment and scholarship excellence displayed in the first award. He finished and returned to Nigeria in 1964. After three years, he secured a Rocky – Feller Foundation scholarship and proceeded to McGill University, Canada, for Master's and Doctoral degrees in Islamic Studies, between 1967 and 1969, respectively. He finally returned home to start working.⁷

The State of Islamic Scholarship in Nigeria in His Days

Nigeria is broadly divided into the North and the South as it existed then and now. Muslims predominantly populate the former with an unequivocal Islamic pronouncement. The entire North before the colonial administration operated Shariah, the Islamic Law, in its whole application.⁸ The *Jihad* of Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi (d.1817), which culminated in the formation of the Islamic Caliphate, made Islam a household religion among the northerners.⁹ Such is, however, not the case in the south, which was dominated by non – Muslims, though there are solid Islamic historical facts that revealed how Shariah was practiced in places like Ede, Epe, and Iwo, among others. The demand for it in areas like Ibadan, Ikorodu, Kishi, Ikirun, and Saki was noted with strong aversion¹⁰ before the colonial incursion truncated everything. The North and the South felt the adverse effects of colonialism, but it has more significant results on the South than the North due to some factors. Namely, the North had contact with Islam before the South. The Christian missionaries' activities had grounds in the south rather than the north. Southerners were more divided than the North, and there was no central government, as happened in the North, where every authority was derived from Sokoto,

⁴ L.F. Oladimeji, "Life and Contributions of Musa Abdul to the Growth and Development of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria"

⁵ L.F. Oladimeji,

⁶ L.F. Oladimeji, "Life and Works of Musa Oladipupo Ajibola Abdul". 5

⁷ L.F. Oladimeji, 6

⁸ A.Olayiwola, *Islam in Nigeria: One Crescent many Focuses*, (Lagos, Sakirabe Publisher, 2007) 9

⁹ A.R.I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*, (Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation Limited, 1984) 108

¹⁰ T.G.O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841 – 1908*, (London, Longman Group Limited, 1978) 5

the seat of the Caliphate.¹¹ The south is broadly divided into three different zones. Namely, southeast, southwest, and south–south. Each of these has central ethnic dominance different from one another, and it is only the Southwest that has an overwhelmingly Muslim population; others are predominantly Christians. Muslims dominate four out of the six states that make up the southwest. These are Oyo, Osun, Ogun, and Lagos. Ondo and Ekiti have fewer Muslims compared to other states.

The 1926 that M.O.A. Abdul was born was at the peak of colonial administration in the country. It was the period when colonial masters were subjugating the influence of Islam, especially the North. The effects of their efforts birthed the introduction of a penal system that was a byproduct of the Shariah legal system, which was hitherto in operation, to sail smoothly in their endeavors.¹² Religion was identified as a significant clog in the wheel of their activities, and they deployed every tool to displace it through their liberalism ideology. They equally needed locals to get better acquainted with the society and ease their penetration. Hence, partial education was introduced to enable most Nigerians read, write, and communicate in English in order to interact with the colonial masters, who needed them for different assignments.¹³ Many saw these as an opportunity and rushed to get educated to earn them proximity with the Whiteman. A few brilliant ones were given scholarships abroad to study different courses that can quickly sign them up for prosperity. So, it was odd for someone to make the study of Arabic and Islamic studies a core objective during that time.

It was also a period when Christian evangelism was spreading and expanding like wildfire. As colonial imperialists were maneuvering education to suit their objectives, it was not long before the Christian missionaries came on board to challenge the existing educational system, though not to liberate Nigerians but to have the capacity to read and understand the bible and to facilitate their evangelic mission. Hence, the first set of schools in Nigeria were missionary schools.¹⁴ Western education was therefore offered as a tool for liberation from the colonial masters but with Christianity as the vehicle. Adebayo rightly observes that education in the hands of the missionary was 4R. Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Religion: the curriculum focuses on Bible Knowledge, Christian Ethics, Christian Literature, Arithmetic, Language, and Craft.¹⁵ What was given was purely to proselytize and to produce Christians or Biblical – persons.¹⁶ Schools were, therefore, used to convert people to Christianity. It was against this backdrop that some Muslims took up the challenge to liberate the Muslims from the oppressions of the moment. The first efforts gave birth to the formation of Muslim societies like Ansarudeen (AUD, 1922), Anasru Islam, 1946, Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in 1952, and the establishment of Muslim schools, Ahmadiyyah, Anwarul –Islam, especially in Yorubaland.¹⁷ The second effort was the resolution of

¹¹ A.Olayiwola, .40

¹²N.I. Ebbe, *World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems*, (New York, State University of New York, Retrieved from <https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&p=f583475bfa34831aJmltdHM9MTcwMDY5NzYwMCZpZ3VpZD0yNmYwYzI1Yi00NzhLTjZTYtMzE3Zi1kMWMxNDYxZTZkZDkmaW5zaWQ9NTQzNQ&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=26f0c25b-478a-6ce6-317f-d1c1461e6dd9&psq=how+penal+system+was+introduced+in+Nigeria&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9ianMub2pwLmdvdi9jb250ZW50L3B1Yi9wZGYvd2ZiY2pzbmlnLnBkZg&ntb=1>) 3

¹³ A.B. Fafunwa, .114

¹⁴ A.B. Fafunwa,

¹⁵ R.I. Adebayo, *Muslim Educational Reforms in Southwestern Nigeria, in Muslim Educational Reform Activities in Nigeria*, (Kano, Bayero University Kano, 2005) 131

¹⁶ R.I. Adebayo, 71

¹⁷ R.I. Adebayo, 69

some intellectuals who believed that the success recorded in the first phase could be replicated again at the higher levels to clear the path for the upcoming Muslims. As this was going on, scholars like M.O.A. Abdul picked interest in studying Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University, having won different scholarships that put them on the same pedestal as those who pursued careers in sciences, commercial, and arts courses.

It was also the period when local Mallams and conscious Muslims prevented their children from pursuing Western education, which was a prominent tool for proselytization. Many Muslim scholars considered Western education alien and toxic to local traditions and customs. The likes of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al – Ilori (d.1992) thought Western education was dangerous to Islam; hence, he did not only publicly spoke against it but also forbade it in his *Madrash*. He rejected the move to incorporate Western education into Islamic education, stating that whoever wishes to be educated, westernly, should go to school properly. Yusuf and Yusuph observed that:

It is necessary to comment on Shaykh Adam's attitudes to Western education. Initially, he was vehement in his opposition to Western education. His reason was that such institutions were being used for proselytization by the Christians and to halt the spread of Islamic education, especially in Yorubaland. He cited examples of the Muslims who were converted to Christianity through their schools. They include T.O.S Benson of Ikorodu, Lagos state. He was formerly called Badmos, and when he converted in 1914, he changed his other Muslim name to Theophilus. This was why, in 1972, during the twentieth-anniversary celebration of his school, he rejected a suggestion that the English language be included in the school's curriculum. His other reason was that the students would be divided in their studies to the detriment of Arabic and Islamic education.¹⁸ A reminiscence of how Christian missionaries during colonial administration in Nigeria, especially in the south, used Western education as a tool for proselytization justified his (Shaykh Adam) reasons. Muslim students were converted to Christianity, and their Islamic names changed. Thus, Lawal is to Lawson, Dauda is to Davidson, Yusuf is to Joseph, and Musa is to Moses, among others.¹⁹

Shaykh Adam was not alone on this, but the same could be said of the Bamidele Movement of the Zumuratu group of Muslims in Yorubaland. It is a religious movement founded by Alhaji Abdul – Salami Bamidele Dada in southwestern Nigeria. Rejection and condemnation of Western education was a cardinal principle in their schemes.²⁰ Their resistance to Western education was borne out of the conviction that it corrupts young minds with the instrumentality of Western civilization, which turns them to be liberal if they do not convert from Islam.²¹ This notion has existed among the Bamidele members until now that some Bamideles defied the rule and chose to be educated in Western – oriented schools. There is Dr Ali Abdulwaheed Adebisi in the Arabic Department of the University of Ilorin who is a staunch Bamidele. M.O.A. Abdul was, therefore, one of those few who saw the future and opportunity in education and believed that it could be incorporated into the Western school system where young

¹⁸ Yusuf, 15

¹⁹ B.O. Yusuf and D.G. Yusuph, "Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al – Ilori(1917 – 1992): A Muslim Reformer of 20th Century in Yorubaland, Nigeria" Al – Wifaq Research Journal of Islamic Science, 6(1), 2023 (<https://doi.org/10.55603/alwifaq.v6i1.e1>) 14

²⁰ A.R.I.Doi, 285

²¹ A.R.I Doi, 285 – 6, 288

Muslim scholars would have the privilege of aligning Islamic scholarship with the Western education system to make a balanced individual. These were his convictions when he chose to make the study of Arabic and Islamic studies his future career at a time when he could make better choices with the same opportunity. It was this mission he was able to expand when he traveled abroad to pursue higher certificates.

His Academic Career and Legacies

Upon his return in 1964 from the United Kingdom, he joined the services of the University of Ibadan as an academic staff and was the first Nigerian to join the department of Arabic and Islamic Studies. He started as an Assistant Lecturer and rose through the ranks to bag the professorial cadre in 1982, the same year he became the Head of his Department.²² He was the first indigenous H.O.D. in the Department and the first Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria.²³ He was known for the attributes of meticulousness and diligence to duty.²⁴ He also wrote several books, articles, and journals and fulfilled all academic requirements for career progression. Oladimeji listed about fourteen (14) books to his credit and thirty-five articles published in reputable journals covering local, national, and international outlets.²⁵ The titles of the books covered different aspects of Islamic discourses, especially the Qur'an, Hadith, and their sciences. It also includes exegetical and textual studies of both primary sources of Islam. Others are comparative studies between Islam and Christianity, Islam and customary practices, especially among the Yoruba, his tribe and environment where he grew up, the history of Islam and the Prophets of Allah, caliphate, and creedal matters. He equally wrote for the preliminary levels. The contents are geared toward entrenching Islam and propelling Islamic scholarship in the country and among the Yoruba communities. They were also meant to provide a basic understanding of Islam to the teeming population of Muslims conversing in English with little or no knowledge of Arabic. It should be noted that some of these works are translation works, while some are written in the Yoruba language to drive a local understanding. Apart from two published in India, Lahore, and Ankara, Turkey, others were published by the Islamic Publication Bureau in Lagos, Nigeria. The books are useful across various levels of learning, primary, secondary, and higher institutions. His textbooks are used for many external examinations in Nigeria and the West Africa sub-region, like the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), and National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS), among others.

The articles are purely academic works with tones and styles that depict high scholarly discourses. The contents are similar to those of the books and encompass other areas of relevance to scholarship at every level. Three of them focused on Islam in

²² L.F. Oladimeji, "Life and Contributions of Musa Abdul to the Growth and Development of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria", 2

²³A. John, First Nigerian Professors: Pioneering Achievements In Different Academic Fields, <https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&p=5f5e8ffbe44f8cd5JmltdHM9MTcwMDY5NzYwMCMZpZ3VpZD0yNmYwYzI1Yi00NzhLTZjZTYtMzE3Zi1kMWMxNDYxZTZkZDkmaW5zaWQ9NTE4Ng&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=26f0c25b-478a-6ce6-317f-d1c1461e6dd9&psq=Prof.+m.o.a.abdul%40University+of+Ibadan&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9wb3N0Z3JhZHVhdGVuaWdlcmhlLmNvbS8yMDIzLzA3L2ZpcnN0LW5pZ2VyaWFuLXByb2Zlc3NvcnMtcGlvbmluZy1hY2hpZXZlbWVudHMtaW4tZGlmZmVyZW50LWFjYWVjYWRlbWljLWZpZWxkcy8&ntb=1>

²⁴ L.F.Oladimeji, .3

²⁵L.F. Oladimeji, 4

Yorubaland, depicting the common practices among the Yoruba Muslims, like art of divination and syncretic approach. The interferences between Yoruba and Arabic Language to the extent of loaning some words by Yoruba were also discussed. The themes of another three of his articles revolved around Islam and Christianity, with Abraham (Ibrahim) as the father of faith and religious harmony in a given society. Four different articles discussed Islam as a religion in Nigeria. They focus on how Islam got to the country, religious tolerance, political involvement by Nigerian Muslims, and the study of the Arabic language in the country. About four of his articles are translations from Arabic into English with commentary. These include *Kitabu Usulud-Din* by Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi, *Khutubatul-Jum'at bi Ghayri Lughatil-Arabiyyah*, *Kitab as-Sahaba* by Ibn Muqaffa, *Majma' Bayan* by Tabrisi. Some discussed the being of Allah. Such include the concept of justice concerning God, the Existence of evil and God's Omnipotence, and a comparative discussion about God from Greek, Jewish, and Islamic philosophers. M.O.A. Abdul dedicated three of his articles to the science of the Qur'an to propel a better understanding of it. These include the concordance of the Qur'an and the historical development of *Tafsir*; other discussions targeted at local and international discussions like the need for Muslims to be literate, Secondary education in Islam, and teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies textbooks in secondary school were discussed. The main focus of these articles was the relevance of Islamic law in contemporary times, *Tanzimat*, the emergence of *Khalifah*, and the concept of development, among others.

M.O.A. Abdul equally belonged to many professional bodies and received different awards from organizations and societies in Nigeria and the diaspora. He served vital government assignments. He was one of the implementers of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1978. He was also a consultant to the International Muslim Society for the Study of Religions, Ottawa, and an external examiner to universities in Nigeria and abroad, especially the University of Ghana. He was the pioneer Vice-President of the Nigerian Association of the Study of Religions (NASR) and the pioneer President of the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS).²⁶

A Roll Call of His Students

Prof. M.O.A. Abdul had several students he mentored, to his credit, across levels of learning. As stated earlier, he had taught at both primary and post-primary levels; needless to say, he influenced many of those he taught at those levels. Specifically, at the University, he supervised numerous long essays and dissertations. Oladimeji listed seven (7) dissertations he successfully supervised, while nine (9) theses were also completed under his supervision. The Master students include Adebawale Shittu Agbetola, Shuayb Abdul-Rahman, Muslih Tayo Yahya, Muhammad Al-Hassan Nasarawa, Kamaldeen Abdul-Azeez Balogun, Muratda Aremu Muhibbudin and Rushdat Olushola Solaja-Alagago (Mrs). The supervision was between 1978 and 1984. The PhD students whose supervision covered the period between 1977 and 1986 were Wahab Oladejo Adigun Nasiru, Yasir Anjola Quadri, Dawud Olatokunbo Shittu Noibi, Kamil Koyejo Oloso and Asif Folarin Ahmed and Adebawale Shittu Agbetola.²⁷ Others are Alani Seriki, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode and M.O. Adeleye. We do not have information on last three personalities.

²⁶ L.F. Oladimeji 7

²⁷ L.F. Oladimeji, "Life and Works of Musa Oladipupo Ajibola Abdul", 24–25

There are few others who could complete their thesis under him while he was in active service. The list here is contained only those who have been to the higher stage of their work before they were transferred to another supervisor when he became incapacitated. They include Mr (now Prof.) Abdul – Azeez Kamaldeen Balogun.²⁸ Late Dr. Najmudeen Ishola Raji, and Mr Muhibudeen Balogun.²⁹ These students are starling scholars making waves in Islamic studies across Nigerian Universities today and abroad with outstanding scholarship and mighty Islamic erudition; the list of his Ph.D. students with exceptional qualities shall be discussed in this paper. It should also be stated that apart from the Adeleye and Agbetola, others were Professors of Islamic Studies in Nigeria. Quadri, Agbetola, Seriki, Adeleye and Balogun did not teach at the University of Ibadan like others who worked there in the department. It should also be noted that the students are erudite scholars and members of academia with repute across the world. All the qualities of excellence in them are reflections of Prof. M.O.A. Abdul's influence on them. Here is the list of few of them.

Professor Wahab Oladejo Adigun Nasiru

He was the first to be supervised by Prof. M.O.A. Abdul as doctoral student and his thesis was titled: *Islamic Learning among the Yoruba 1896-1963*. He was born on the 1st of June, 1936, to the family of PA Nasiru Iyanda Fagbo, a carpenter, and Madam Ibilola, a petty trader.³⁰ This suggests that he was brought up not from a wealthy family, but he was able to live an enviable life worthy of emulation. His parents are, however, devoted Muslims who care about the religious life of their children. Professor Nasiru was an erudite Arabic and Islamic scholar who devoted his life to studying and teaching the two across levels, especially at the University of Ibadan, his *alma mater*. He showed a keen interest in Islamic sciences from a young age, as he was noted to have been a committed pupil at the local *Madrash* he attended. He first pursued his education at the prestigious Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, between 1962 and 1963 for introductory courses in Arabic and Islamic Studies before returning to the University of Ibadan between 1964 and 1977, where he obtained his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in Islamic studies.³¹

His brilliancy has won him many prizes and awards, which include Saudi Arabia Scholarship at the University of Madinah, 1962 – 1963, Islamic Missionary Society, University of Ibadan, Al – Rasafi Prize for Arabic Literature, University of Ibadan Postgraduate Bursary for Higher Degree and the likes. He was equally honored by different learned societies, including Justice of Peace (JP) by Oyo State Government, Editor – in – Chief, NATAIS, and External Examiner for many Universities across Nigeria and beyond, especially Ghana. He was a member of the following bodies: Ibadan Zone Juvenile Court, Iyaganku, Oyo State Pilgrims Welfare Board, Oyo State Advisory Committee on Prerogative of Mercy, Oyo State Teaching Service Commission and Chief Examiner, Islamic Studies in West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), 1972 – 2006. He was also a founding Professor at Islamic University College, Ghana, in 2001 and 2004.³²

²⁸ He personally narrated this to us when contacted while we were gathering information for this paper.

²⁹ L.F. Oladimeji, .25

³⁰ Z.I. Oseni, Fluorescence of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria, A Fetsctricft in honour of Professor Wahab O.A. Nasiru, (Ibadan, Heb Publishers Plc, 2008) X

³¹ Z.I. Oseni, 428

³² Z.I. Oseni

On the University front, he lectured at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He served as Faculty Board Postgraduate Rep, University of Ibadan, HOD, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies 1990 – 1992. He has successfully supervised eleven (11) PhD Thesis. He also had about forty (40) publications, of which eighteen (18) are listed as chapters in different books, while others are journal articles in national and international outlets. He also attended many international conferences both within and outside the country. He is widely respected for his scholarly achievements, moderate views, and humble personality.³³

Professor Yasir Anjola Quadri

Yasir Anjola Quadri is one of the prominent students of Prof M.O.A. Abdul. He is himself an Ijebu man from Ijebu – Ode. He was a foundation lecturer in the Department of Religions at the University of Ilorin, and he retired in the year 2018, having clocked seventy years of age. Baba Quadri, as he was fondly called, was supervised, and he finished his Ph.D. thesis in 1981 under the supervision of Prof. M.O.A. Abdul.³⁴ The title of his thesis is: *The Tijaniyyah in Nigeria: A Case study*. Baba Quadri has won many academic awards from his undergraduate to postgraduate studies, such as the Ibn Sa'ud Prize in 1974 and the University of Ibadan Postgraduate Scholarship in 1975 – 76.³⁵ As a member of academia, Baba Quadri's experience spanned both teaching and administrative settings of the University system. He taught, advised, and supervised students at various levels.³⁶ He supervised about ten (10) Theses, apart from countless dissertations and long essays. His doctoral students include Prof. Lakin Is – haq Akintola, a retired Professor of Islamic Studies, Lagos State University (LASU) and the director of Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Nigeria. Prof. Badmus Olarewaju Yusuf, University of Ilorin. Prof. L.O. Jimoh, Federal College of Education, Ijanikin. Prof. Oladimeji, Al – Hikmah University, Ilorin. Dr. Y.K. Jimoh (rtd), University of Ilorin and Al – Hikmah University. Dr. A.M.B. Solagberu, a principal lecturer, Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (CAILS), Ilorin. Dr A.B. Taofiq (late), a lecturer, University of Ilorin. Dr. Umar A., a lecturer, A.D. Rufa'i College for Legal and Islamic Studies, Misau, Bauchi State, Jimoh, L.A. a lecturer, Osun State College of Education, Ila – Orangun and Dr. D.G. Yusuph, University of Ilorin. He wrote several books and articles published in reputable journals within and outside the country. He also attended many learned conferences. Prof. Quadri was a solid pillar for the University of Ilorin and played an active role in the academic stability of the institution. He headed and Chairmanned many sensitive committees and panels of the University, such as the Library and Publication Committee, Dress Code Committee, Staff Certificate Screening Committee, Admissions Misconduct Committee, and Appointment and Promotion Committee; apart from being the Head of the Department, Dean of Arts, University of Ilorin Governing Council member, and Editor – in – Chief Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies (IJOREL) and Centre Point Journals.³⁷

Prof. Is – haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, a former Vice – Chancellor of the University of Ilorin and the current registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and a former student of Professor Quadri once remarked about him. He wrote:

³³ Z.I. Oseni

³⁴ Yasir Anjola Quadri: A Professor of Prestigious Rarity – Ridwaanullah Abimbola Mahfouz Adedimeji

³⁵ Professor Y.A. Quadri's Curriculum Vitae

³⁶ Professor Y.A. Quadri

³⁷ Professor Y.A. Quadri

During my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, from 2007 to 2012, I Found in Prof. Quadri a dependable ally, a workaholic personality, and a frank adviser who would not hesitate to call the VC to order whenever needed.³⁸

Adedimeji describes Prof Quadri as the backbone of the University of Ilorin, primarily responsible for its glory and enviable status among the comity of Universities, not only in Nigeria or Africa but worldwide. He writes:

Apart from being one of UNILORIN's most senior academics, Prof. Quadri is undoubtedly one of the personalities that give the University its grit and distinctive character, having been part of its story from the beginning. His choice for that critical assignment, apart from others he handles, further attests to his distinction as a don, his vast experience as an administrator, and the selflessness that has defined his career.³⁹

Prof. Quadri remains an outstanding scholar of Islamic studies with influence across Nigeria. Outside the Unilorin assignments highlighted above, Prof Quadri had equally taken up different responsibilities in university campuses across the country, as external examiner, professorial assessor, University accreditation panels, Chairman National Universities Commission (NUC) verification of satellites Campuses, editorial consultant and adviser to many academic journals and the last was his appointment as the Chairman Federal Government Visitation Panels to Federal Polytechnic, Bayelsa. Prof. Quadri is, therefore, known both within and outside academic circles as a man of quality, trustworthiness, and reliability.⁴⁰

Professor Dawud Olatokunbo Shittu Noibi (OBE)

The highly revered Professor Noibi hails from Sapele, Delta state, where his parents resided. But, he is widely recognized as an Ijebu – Imusin, Ogun State native.⁴¹ He has a distinguished academic career that spanned twenty – three (23) years at the prestigious University of Ibadan in Ibadan, Nigeria, where he taught, researched, wrote, and supervised research in Islamic Studies.⁴² Additionally, he held the esteemed position of Imam for the university's Muslim Community for many years before his retirement in 1996. He is a reputable research professor and consultant with IQRA Trust, London, where he shares his knowledge of Islam, focusing on promoting responsible ecological practices. He has also played an active role in various international multi – faith initiatives. He had his first and second degrees from Cairo University, Egypt, and American University in Cairo in 1969 and 1972, respectively. While he was in Egypt, he worked as a broadcaster in the Egyptian Broadcasting Service as a Yoruba translator between 1966 and 1972. He returned home to further his studies at the University of Ibadan for his PhD, where Prof. M.O.A. Abdul was assigned to supervise him. His thesis was titled: *Zaki Mubarak and A Critical Study of His Works on Sufism*. He completed the thesis in 1984.⁴³

³⁸ I.O. Oloyede, Religion and Human Capital Development: Essay in Honour of Professor Yasir Anjola Quadri, (Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, 2017) ix

³⁹ Quintessential Quadri | Mahfouz Adedimeji

⁴⁰ Prof. Y.A. Quadri's CV.

⁴¹ M.O. Opeloye (et al), An Icon in the Eyes of the People, (Ibadan, Crafted and Bound Wordworks, 2022)1

⁴² NOIBI, Dr. Dawud Olatokunbo Shittu – Biographical Legacy and Research Foundation (blerf.org)

⁴³ Noibi. Dr Dawud

His Islamic Studies teaching career started from being a primary school teacher to University. He taught at the University of Ibadan and Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University). Outside Nigeria, he taught at the Muslim College London. He was appointed external examiner across Universities in Nigeria, Ghana, and Norway.⁴⁴ He was appointed as an external assessor for the Professorial cadre across Nigerian Universities, among other academic responsibilities, which he discharged diligently. He has so many publications to his credit. He was also a regular commentator on British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) and Irish Radio stations on Islamic matters relating to Nigeria.⁴⁵

Professor Noibi is the pioneer executive secretary of the Muslim Ummah of Southwest Nigeria (MUSWEN), an Islamic umbrella body for all Muslims of southwestern Nigeria. He also held different offices, ranging from being the chief Imam of the University of Ibadan for ten years, Deputy Secretary General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Council of Ulama of Nigeria. Vice President (Islamic Studies), National Association for the Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS). Member, National Committee of Islamic Studies Curriculum Developers (Nigeria). Member, Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council. Member, National Committee on the Implementation of AlMajiri Education in Nigeria. Member, Board of Trustee, Sultan Foundation for Peace and Development, Nigeria. Member, Nigeria Inter – Religious Council (NIREC). Chairman, Takaful (Islamic Insurance) Advisory Council, of National Insurance Commission, Nigeria. Member, Board of Trustee, Muslim Community of Ijebu Imusin, Nigeria.⁴⁶

In the diaspora, Prof. Noibi is a Chairman and member of different organizations worldwide. Some include Member, General Assembly, International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO), and Kuwait. Adviser, Muslim Association of Nigeria in the United Kingdom. Founder and Amir of the Council of Muslim Organizations (CNMO). London, Member, Central Working Committee and Senior Councilor, Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Chairman, Council for Welfare of Muslim Prisoners, UK. Faith Representative on Southwark Alliance, UK. Founder, Southwark Muslim Forum (SMF). Member, Muslim Scholars' Congress, Jakarta, Indonesia and Pakistani International Advisory Council, Council, Muslim World Congress, Karachi, Pakistan. Member, International Council, World Conference on Religion and Peace.⁴⁷

Also, Prof. Noibi is a recipient of many honorary awards both at home and abroad. These include the Fellowship of Islamic Studies, Nigeria (FISN) and the Fellowship of Islamic Academy, Cambridge (FIAC). Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE), DSc (Honoris Causa), Crescent University, Abeokuta, Nigeria and Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu, Osun State, Nigeria. Award of Excellence, Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Oyo State Chapter. The Muslim Association of Nigeria, UK, Honorary Membership Award. The Prestigious Editor's Lifetime Achievement Award by Muslim News, London, and many more.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ M.O. Opeloye, 2

⁴⁵ NOIBI, Dr. Dawud Olatokunbo Shittu – Biographical Legacy and Research Foundation (blerf.org)

⁴⁶ M.O. Opeloye, 2 – 4

⁴⁷ M.O. Opeloye,

⁴⁸ M.O. Opeloye,

Professor Kamil Koyejo Oloso

Hails from Lagun, a predominantly Muslim—dominated area of Ibadan, Lagos Local Government, Professor K.K. Oloso graduated from the prestigious Premier University in Nigeria (University of Ibadan), in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies in 1979 and 1981 for his Master's. He obtained his Ph.D. in 1984 from the same university, where Prof. M.O.A. Abdul supervised him.⁴⁹ His thesis focused on the History of Hajj operations in Nigeria from 1954 to 1980. Hence, he remains a significant point of reference among Islamic scholars in Nigeria in this regard. He was offered an appointment by his *alma mater* in 1984 after his Ph.D., and he rose to become a Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Prof. Oloso was appointed as the Head of the Department twice. First, between 2005 and 2006, as acting head, and between 2015 and 2020, as substantive head.⁵⁰

Professor Oloso's thirst for knowledge led him to pursue a higher education, where he gained a reputation for his insatiable appetite for learning. With a witty sense of humor that lightened even the most challenging subjects, he became a beloved figure among his peers and professors alike. He is a highly esteemed academic who contributed significantly to Arabic and Islamic Studies. With a passion for knowledge and a commitment to excellence, he has established himself as a prominent figure in academia. After completing his doctoral degree, Professor Oloso embarked on a journey that would shape his career path. He joined several research bodies and institutions to immerse himself in various academic projects, honing his skills and expanding his intellectual horizons. His dedication and commitment to research further caught the attention of renowned scholars, like Professor M.O.A. Abdul, his PhD Supervisor, and Prof. Noibi, who mentored him and guided him toward fulfilling his academic potential. Throughout his career, Professor Oloso demonstrated a unique ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice, making complex concepts accessible to students and fellow researchers alike. His charismatic teaching style and innovative approach to academia have garnered widespread recognition, catapulting him to the forefront of his field.

Professor Kamil Koyejo Oloso is a prolific author whose work has expanded the boundaries of knowledge in his fields. He has authored several influential books and contributed chapters to numerous scholarly publications. His works are widely respected in the academic community, evidenced by his extensive publications in peer-reviewed journals. He has actively participated in national and international conferences, where he presented his research findings and insights. He has more than fifty (50) academic publications to his credit.⁵¹ Also, Prof. Oloso's active membership in professional organizations and active contributions to the leadership and development of the academic community are unequal. He has served in leadership roles, such as committee chair and board member, where he has made pivotal decisions and shaped the direction of the field. His commitment to fostering collaboration and supporting emerging scholars has earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues.

Outside academics, Professor Oloso was appointed to head offices such as the Oyo State Muslim Pilgrim Board twice by both Civilian and Military administrations. Chairman, Oyo State Teaching Service Commission. He also served as a Federal Government Conference on Review of the Constitution member during the Obasanjo

⁴⁹ Professor K.K. Oloso's CV

⁵⁰ Professor K.K. Oloso

⁵¹ Professor K.K. Oloso

democratic regime. He was also Amirul –Hajj for Oyo State in 2014. He also served as a member of the National Hajj Commission, representing the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) 2014 –2020. Prof. Oloso is the *Wakilul-Muslimin* (Chief of Staff), Oyo State Muslim *Ummah*.⁵²

Professor Asif Folarin Ahmed

Professor Asif Folarin Ahmed is a highly acclaimed scholar and academician with extensive Arabic and Islamic Studies expertise. He was a retired National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) professor in 2016. He held different positions and offices there as the Dean of the School of Arts and Social Sciences, NOUN.⁵³ Prof. Ahmed has a diverse educational background; having completed his bachelor's degree at the University of Ghār Yūnus, Beida Campus, Libya, in 1974, he proceeded to the University of Ibadan for his Master and PhD Degree, which spanned almost a decade, between 1977 and 1986. His thesis was titled: *The Qadiriyyah and Its Impacts in Nigeria*. He also went to King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1997 – 1998 for a Higher Diploma in Teaching Arabic Language to Non –Arabs. He also had a Certificate in Education from Libya in 1974.⁵⁴

Prof. Ahmed's research interest focuses on Sufism but with bias in the Qadiriyyah Order. He has collaborated extensively with various researchers and institutions nationally and internationally. He was a significant contributor to the Encyclopedia of the Arts,⁵⁵ and he developed, wrote, edited, and revised course materials for NOUN, covering both Arabic and Islamic studies. His research output includes over forty –two (42) publications in high –impact international journals and conference proceedings spread across local, national, and international outlets. He taught and supervised projects at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He produced six (6) doctoral students.⁵⁶

In recognition of his scholarship in his student days and his contributions to the Arabic and Islamic Studies field in Nigeria, Prof. Ahmed has received numerous awards and honors throughout his career. Those he received in his student days are the University of Ghār Yūnus Scholarship for Foreign Students, 1970 – 1974, the Bronze Medal for the Third Best Ghār Yūnus University Graduating Student, 1974, and the King Saud University Scholarship for Higher Diploma Students.⁵⁷ He also served different learned communities in various capacities as chairman and executive member, which spanned the length and breadth of the country. He was a NATAIS Member, Editorial Board, *Al-Fikr*, Journal of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Departmental Coordinator, Students' Admission, Registration and Examination. Faculty Representative on the Faculty of Arts Publication Committee. 1996. Moderator, examination question papers and answer scripts of several Arabic Language Courses for the Colleges of Education, Okene, Abeokuta, TAI Solarin, and Oyo, 1989 – 2003.⁵⁸

⁵² Professor K.K. Oloso

⁵³ Professor A.F. Ahmed's CV

⁵⁴ Professor A.F. Ahmed

⁵⁵ Professor A.F. Ahmed

⁵⁶ Professor A.F. Ahmed

⁵⁷ Professor A.F. Ahmed

⁵⁸ Professor A.F. Ahmed

Moderator of Examination question papers and answer scripts of several Islamic Studies Courses for Institutions of Arabic And Islamic Studies affiliated with the University of Ibadan, Isolo (Lagos), Ososa (Ijebu – Ode), and Zulia.Abiola College of Arabic and Islamic Studies (Z.A.C.A.I.S.), Abeokuta, 1992 – 2003. Member, Oyo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board (1986 – 1989). Member, Oyo State Post Primary Schools Board, (1991).Faculty of Arts representative on Faculty Board of Law 1998/1999. Moderator of Examination question papers and answer scripts on several Islamic Courses for the University of Jos (2000 – 2003). External Examiner (Islamic Studies), University of Ghana (2001 – 2005).Visiting Associate Professor of Islamic Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo – Lagos, 2005 – 2006.Visiting Reader of Islamic Studies, National Open University of Nigeria, Victoria Island, Lagos, November 2006 to May 2008).External Examiner (Islamic Studies), Kogi State University, (2007 to date). External Examiner (Islamic Studies) Lagos State University, Ojo – Lagos, February 2007 Professor of Islamic Studies, National Open University of Nigeria, 2008 – 2016⁵⁹

Professor Kamaldeen AbdulAzeez Balogun

He is another prominent student of Prof. M.O.A Abdul; in fact, he supervised both his master's and Ph.D. thesis. However, because Prof M.O.A. Abdul was strong, he needed help to complete the last chapter of the thesis before being transferred to a colleague, who equally doubled as his student – professor. D.O.S. Noibi.⁶⁰ No doubt, Prof. Balogun only had a change of supervisor, not a change of style and method, because the latter supervisor also exhibited the traits acquired from his supervisor. As he was fondly called, Prof. Balogun is equally an Ogun – born scholar from Abeokuta, the state capital. He is also one of the academic stars in Nigerian Universities, with impacts that are difficult to match, not to mention being erased. He epitomizes academics' "town and gown" syndrome by combining academic scholarship with active community services. He is presently the grand – Mufti of Egbaland and the Chief Imam of Gbagura mosque in Abeokuta.⁶¹ He is a model, an elder statesman, a mentor, an administrator, an arbitrator, a prolific writer, an orator, and a down – to – heart scholar, among other qualities. He is a comprehensive personality with a high sense of responsibility to the entire Muslim Community of Ogun State. Prof. Balogun is one of the shining Islamic scholars in academics from southwestern Nigeria. He had his first degree from the prestigious Azhar University in Cairo, while his postgraduate studies, Master and PhD were obtained from the University of Ibadan.⁶²

Prof. Balogun started his academic career at the Olabisi Onabanjo, formerly Ogun State University, in 1983 and became a Professor in 2001.⁶³ During this period, his commitment and dedication to teaching, research, and community development activities were uncommon for such a man with many assignments to discharge. He

⁵⁹Professor A.F. Ahmed

⁶⁰ This was narrated when contacted while we were gathering materials for this paper on 12th/10/2023

⁶¹ This was gathered from Amisu Saeed Kayode, a former Amir of MSSN, Ogun State Area Unit on 25/11/2023

⁶² S.A. Owoyemi, An Appraisal of Professor Kamaldeen Abdul – Azeez Balogun's Strategies in Building Symbiotic Relationship Between the Town and Gown, K.E. Obasola et al, Islam's Response to the Quest for Peace, Orderliness and Well – Being in Nigeria, (A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Kamaldeen AbdulAzeez Balogun, Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago – Iwoye, 2020)2

⁶³S.A. Owoyemi,4 – 5

wrote over fifty (50) articles published in high–impact academic journals at local, national, and international levels.⁶⁴ His writing covers learning aspects, especially blending Islamic texts and contemporary society. He wrote two Arabic texts across southwestern Nigeria and Al–Hikamh University, Ilorin. Namely, *Ar-Rihlatul-Bahth* and *Arbaun Qissah*. He creates an understanding that depicts the texts' relevance and importance to society.⁶⁵ He was conferred the Fellowship of Islamic Studies in Nigeria (FISN) title by the National Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) 2018.⁶⁶ Prof. Balogun supervised several research works across the levels of learning. Owoyemi identifies about ten (10) postgraduate research completed under his watch before retirement.⁶⁷ Prof. Balogun was described by one of his student–mentees as having reminiscence for leadership. He is described as a modest, tranquil, moderate, and sincere leader in all ramifications who had imparted positively into the lives of many.⁶⁸ Oyesanya identified thirteen (13) PhD viva voce that Professor Balogun conducted across Nigerian Universities.⁶⁹ The unique contributions of Prof. Balogun to the development of learning and research in Islamic Studies are now becoming a universal practice. They are as follows. The first is Entrenchment of Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary in Doctoral Supervision. The objective is to shift the focus from singularity and promote a collaborative approach leveraging insights from various academic disciplines. The second is post–doctoral supervision follow–up, which retains and strengthens the bond between the supervisor and the supervisee after the supervision. And the third is the timely completion of a doctoral thesis. This keeps the students on their toes because it is the supervisor.⁷⁰

Conclusion

This paper has appraised the life and works of Professor M.O.A. Abdul as an academic sage in the twin fields of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria, focusing on his intellectual achievements, including personal values, passions, and contributions to society. He took a career in less attractive and non–lucrative courses when there were many opportunities for brilliant and vibrant students like him in other fields of study. Through teaching, research, and writing, he committed to making religious studies a household course in Nigerian higher institutions. He left indelible marks that are traceable to his postgraduate students, especially the Ph.D. Students who kept his flag flying till the present time. These students are scholars of repute across the globe and have made remarkable impacts on the lives of many, both within and outside the academic circle. Professor M.O.A Abdul remains the source of their inspiration, and they keep replicating different traits of him in their dealings. The paper concludes that Prof. M.O.A. Abdul was an iconic academic with an everlasting legacy that is difficult to match. His former students are leading Islamic Studies scholars in Nigeria and beyond, exhibiting his teachings and principles. Therefore, the paper recommends a revivalist

⁶⁴S.A. Owoyemi, 5

⁶⁵S.A. Owoyemi

⁶⁶S.A. Owoyemi

⁶⁷S.A. Owoyemi

⁶⁸ A.O. Azeez, Reminiscing on Professor Kamaldeen Balogun's Leadership Model: The Memoir of a PhD Candidate, in K.E. Obasola et al, 26

⁶⁹ S. Oyesanya, Prof. Kamaldeen A. Balogun and Rebirth of Islamic Studies in Nigeria, ((1) (PDF) Prof. Kamaldeen A. Balogun and Rebirth of Islamic Studies in Nigeria +234(0)8077849875 (researchgate.net) 3

⁷⁰ O.S. Oyesanya, 9

approach to make Prof. M.O.A. Abdul more visible and relevant in learning Arabic and Islamic Studies in Nigeria by reproducing his works and domesticating his philosophy by his students and grand – students.

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