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The Dynamics of Makondoro's Arabic-Islamic Pedagogy in Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Zumrat al-Mu'minīn *(the Believers' Group), also known as Makondoro, is a group of conservative Arabic-Islamic scholars in Yorubaland, a region in Western Nigeria. When studying, teaching, and professing their Arabic and Islamic knowledge, they utilize a pedagogical method of discipleship that links students with their teachers and shapes their learning. They have devised strategies to retain this method, such as creating epistemological networks that have earned them authority in Yorubaland since the middle of the twentieth century. Although modernization has held sway in Arabic-Islamic education of the region post-independence, the Makondoro maintain and preserve their ways. Drawing on ethnographic research, participant observation, and personal interactions with scholars and students of the Makondoro, this article seeks to understand their pedagogical dynamics in the last fifty years when they came into prominence in major cities of Western Nigeria.*

Keywords

Arabic, Islamic sciences, pedagogy, Makondoro, Nigeria, *Zumrat al-Mu'minīn*.

Introduction

Throughout West Africa, Arabic and Islamic learning continues to be of importance to Muslims. There is a strong tradition of learning that is unique in its method and practice across models, groups, families, and tribes, culminating in various ways of knowing Islam and Arabic. Muslim scholarly groups in West Africa, and Nigeria in particular, are normally identified through their way of knowing or socio-cultural agenda. Many of those who form the current Arabic-Islamic scholarly community of Nigeria are products of epistemological backgrounds that are somewhat different in structure, but not in purpose; all groups work to achieve a unified goal of promoting the religion of Islam in their unique ways

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despite variations in their ways of knowing. In other words, most contemporary Muslim groups, scholars, and organizations, which have distinct educational projects as part of their strategies of Islamization, do not in any way cause schism or chaos resulting from differing ideas or competing interests. One of those groups who are mostly identified with the features above is *Zumrat al-Mu'minīn* (the Believers' Group), popularly known as the "Makondoro."

The Makondoro accommodate divergencies in their immediate society and appropriate them to their living of Islam. Despite the transformations and changes in Arabo-Islamic culture, their way of learning Arabic and Islam remains conservative, preserving the age-long methods of their founders and mentors. Although some aspects of their activities have been studied,[1] no detailed study has been done on key aspects of their sociocultural and educational projects such as the scholarly networks, sociocultural activities, and pedagogical practices that earn them social prestige in Nigeria and beyond. This article seeks to understand the group's Arabic-Islamic pedagogy, generally construed as their practice of learning that has survived over time, as an important dynamic in Arabic-Islamic scholarly culture in contemporary Yorubaland, a region in Western Nigeria.

Origin of the Makondoro

The official name of the Makondoro is *Zumrat al-Mu'minīn*, which was apparently influenced by the parental name established by the grand teacher of their early propagators, Tāj al-Adab Muḥammad al-Jāmi' al-Labīb (d. 1924), whose *al-Zumrah al-Adabiyyah* has been variously described as a movement, educational institution, and organization.[2]

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[1] Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu, "Transmission of Learning in Modern Ilorin: A History of Islamic Education, 1897-2012" (PhD diss., Unversiteit Leiden, 2015); 'Uthmān Idrīs al-Kankāwī, "al-Intājāt al-'Arabiyyah ladā Zumrat al-Mu'minīn fī Nayjīriyā: Dirāsah Taḥlīliyyah" (PhD diss., University of Ilorin, 2012); Rasheed Ajani Raji, "The Makondoro Muslims of Nigeria: Continuity through Learning Strategies," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 11, no. 1 (1990): 153–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/02666959008716157.

[2] Muḥammad al-Jāmi' al-Labīb was a scholar of repute and the founder of one of the two flocks of modern *'ulamā'* in Yorubaland called *Adabiyyah*, the second being *Markaziyyah*. For details on him, see John O. Hunwick, ed., *Arabic Literature of Africa, Volume 2: The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 466–68; Razaq D. Abubakre and Stefan Reichmuth, "Arabic Writing between Global and Local Culture: Scholars and Poets in Yorubaland (Southwestern Nigeria)," in "Arabic Writing in Africa," ed. Farida Abu-Haidar, special issue, *Research in African Literatures* 28, no. 3, (1997): 193; A. G. A. S Oladosu, "Shaykh Muhammad Al-Jāmi' al-Labīb (Tājul-Adab): A Legendary Ilorin

Most of Tāj al-Adab's students have adopted the nomenclature of Tāj al-Adab's establishment for their own groups. This is the case of *Zumrat al-Mu'minīn,* which is named after Zakariyyā b. al-Buṣīrī (d. 1935),[3] known as Alfa Omoda and titled Tāj al-Mu'minīn by his teacher, Tāj al-Adab. Tāj al-Mu'minīn was the teacher of Yusuf Agbaji (d. 1979), the putative founder of the *Zumrat al-Mu'minīn*. The nomenclature thus not only reflects the early members of the group but also immortalizes their ancestral teacher and grand-teacher.

The group also identifies with other names, such as *makondoro*, *onilawani*, *ijo bamidele* etc.[4] These names are usually borne out of their social and intellectual history. Their popular name in most of Western Nigeria is "Makondoro," coined from two Yoruba words *mọ kodoro* (crystal clear or pure clean). The name is based on the group's practice of shaving their heads clean as part of their educational and social tradition.[5] The implication of this name transcends body identity; it has a pedagogical dimension. It is now adopted by the group and interpreted in the Yoruba language as *imọ kodoro* (pure knowledge). This interpretation harks to their belief in the type of knowledge they profess

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Muslim Scholar," in *Ilorin as a Beacon of Learning and Culture in West Africa*, ed. Zakariyau Idree-Oboh Oseni, A. G. A. S. Oladosu, B.O. Yusuf, and M. A. Adedimeji (Ilorin: Centre for Ilorin Studies, 2015), 24–34.; Mashood Mahmood Muhammad Jimba and Ismail Salihu Otukoko, *'Ulamā' al-Imārah* (Malete: Center for Ilorin Manuscripts and Culture, Kwara State University, 2015), 1:162–76; Ādam 'Abd Allāh al-Ilūrī, *Lamaḥāt al-Balūr fī Mashāhīr 'Ulamā' Ilorin (min 1200 ilā 1400h al-muwāfiq 1800 ilā 1980m)* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Namūdhajiyyah, 1982), 65-71. For the *Markaziyyah* movement as against the *Adabiyyah*, see Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu, "The Modernisation of Islamic Education in Ilorin: A Study of the *Adabiyya* and *Markaziyya* Educational Systems," *Islamic Africa* 10, no. 1–2 (2019): 75–97; Stefan Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung und soziale Integration in Ilorin (Nigeria) seit ca. 1800* (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 1998), 228–49.

[3] Zakariyyā b. al-Buṣīrī b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm (1885-1935) is one of the prominent students of Tāj al-Adab and perhaps the eldest of them. He was known for being an itinerant scholar of importance in the early twentieth century whose travel cut across all regions of Yorubaland. For more on him and his activities, see Jimba and Otukoko, *'Ulamā' al-Imārah*, 216–24. Also see al-Ilūrī, *Lamaḥāt al-Balūr*, 74-75.

[4] 'Uthmān Idrīs al-Kankāwī, "Nash'at Zumrat al-Mu'minīn wa Malāmiḥ Ḥay'ātihim al-ʿIlimiyyah fī Nayjīriyā," in *Dynamics of Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences*, ed. Yahya Oyewole Imam, Rafiu Ibrahim Adebayo, and Abubakr Imam Ali-Agan (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2016), 526–31; Raji, "Makondoro Muslims," 154–55.

[5] Rüdiger Seesemann, "'*Ilm* and *Adab* Revisited: Knowledge Transmission and Character Formation in Islamic Africa," in *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. Micheal Kemper and Ralf Elger (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 21–22.

which, to them, is pure, undiluted, and therefore should be upheld by every Muslim.[6] The name becomes a thing of pride, appropriated to suit their educational project, despite that it was initially given to them by people due to their physical appearance. Similarly, *onilawani* (those who wear a turban) is based on their practice of wearing big turbans which form an important aspect of their socio-educational tradition. They are also known by other names, based on personalities important to their activities and their locations, e.g., *Bamidele* in Ibadan (Oyo State, Nigeria) after Abd al-Salam Bamidele (1911-1969)[7] and *Dandawi* in Ekiti and Ondo States of Nigeria after Jamiu Dandawi.[8]

In the beginning, the *Zumrah* was not intended as a systematized group but naturally developed over time as the networks and chains of students and disciples extended. To this day, they are still not formally organized but are identifiable by their centres of learning and student networks. This explains why there are different accounts of putative

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[6] Most Makondoro scholars uphold the fact that their version of Islamic and Arabic learning is the best to achieve pristine Islam. This philosophy culminates in a Yoruba *waka* commonly chanted among them, it runs as follows:

Kewu awọn baba ni kewu gidi
Ti'wọn yatọ si kewu gbarọgudu
Kewu nahu kọ, a ke daamu ẹnu
The knowledge of our fathers (teachers) is the real knowledge.
It is different from the counterfeit one.
It is not the knowledge of *naḥw* (grammar) that troubles the mouth.

This *waka* reflects the changing reality of Makondoro's organization and the operation of their lessons. Initially, they did not take the knowledge of Arabic grammar seriously and counted it as unnecessary for the understanding of Arabic. Nowadays, however, most of them have taken up the responsibility of studying *naḥw* (Arabic grammar) either personally or collectively in their schools. For more on the *waka*s that are commonly used among them, see Aḥmad Labīb Yūnus al-Abhajī al-Ilūrī, *Mukhtārāt min al-Shi'r al-Sha'bī li Zumrat al-Mu'minīn fī Nayjīriyā* (n.p.: Maṭba'at al-Khayrī, 2022).

[7] Abd al-Salam Bamidele was an Ibadan-based scholar who popularized the movement of the group in the mid-twentieth century. He later became the acknowledged leader of the group after the return of his master Yusuf Agbaji to Ilorin in 1955. Some have even attributed the foundation of the group to him. For details on him, see Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, 510–15.

[8] For his life and work, see Kamal-deen Olawale Sulaiman, "A Critical Assessment of *Da'wah* Activities of Shaykh Jamiu Dandawi in Ekitiland," *Jalingo Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 145–71.

founders for the group.[9] The *Zumrah* movement became popular among Agbaji's students all over Yorubaland and beyond. Prominent among the propagators was Shaykh Abd al-Salam Bamidele of Ibadan, to whom the founding of the group was later attributed and whose efforts indeed went a long way in entrenching and popularizing the group in Ibadan and most of southern Nigeria and beyond.[10]

Their educational project particularly attracted followers from the grassroots and spread all over Yorubaland from its inception in the early twentieth century. Due to their informal way of organization, it is not easy to determine the size of the group. As of the last quarter of the twentieth century, their population was estimated at half a million, mostly in Western Nigeria.[11] Today, they cover up to ten per cent of the Muslim scholarly community of Western Nigeria, crossing boundaries of cities, towns, and villages to far northern Nigerian states of Kaduna and Kano and other West African countries such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast.[12]

The group focuses on Arabic-Islamic education that takes conservatism in high esteem. Although the group is not a tribal one, they are often identified via their attachment to a tradition that reflects Yoruba cultural values, both in dealings within themselves and with others in society. They are known to be upholders of local culture, especially in those areas that have nothing to do with religious creeds.

Pedagogy of the Makondoro

The activities of the Makondoro cannot be understood in isolation from their Islamic educational venture.[13] Everything they profess in public is educationally appropriated, from their physical appearance to their scholarly and social engagement. Exploring Makondoro's understanding of what constitutes knowledge based on the strategies and pedagogies they adopt will therefore be useful in knowing what makes their Arabic-Islamic education unique. They appropriate Arabic-Islamic knowledge for socio-cultural functions. Traditional, rather than religious, values in their educational philosophy are equally important. The Makondoro are

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[9] For the argument concerning the foundation of the group and the putative founders, see al-Kankāwī, "al-Intājāt al-'Arabiyyah," 69–70.

[10] Al-Kankāwī, "Nash'at Zumrat al-Mu'minīn," 531–32.

[11] See al-Ilūrī, *Lamaḥāt al-Balūr*, 65.

[12] Al-Kankāwī, "Nash'at Zumrat al-Mu'minīn," 523.

[13] Cf. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:71–99.

considered aficionados of traditional values and education across Yorubaland, who take their teaching and learning practice to a level of sociability. Three things are central to how the Makondoro organize their Arabic-Islamic education: 1) near traditional method of Islamic education, 2) rote learning and 3) the use of native language or what I call "localized linguicism."

Traditionalism and Contemporaneity

Traditionalism in Islamic education is a major attribute of Makondoro's pedagogy, similar to other Arabic schools across West Africa.[14] Traditionalism as I adopt here deals with the specific idea of education that derived its background from the intellectual history of the past as it comes down over generations. Tradition in the case of the Makondoro is upheld by maintaining the ancestral way of organizing Arabic and Islamic learning. Although it is viewed today by Nigerian Arabic modernists as old and archaic,[15] the Makondoro consider the traditional style of Arabic education the best way to acquire pristine Islamic knowledge. As exemplified by their nomenclature explained before, *imọ kodoro* (pure knowledge) should be free from all alien things, which to them characterize the modernization of Arabic and Islamic learning from the middle of the twentieth century in Western Nigeria. In response to various challenges posed by new political ideals in colonial and postcolonial times, scholars introduced and adopted various modern ways of teaching and learning Arabic and Islam, and this posed a threat to the traditional scholarly practice in operation for centuries. Some of the so-called alien things introduced are the adoption of a standardized curriculum, class partitioning, school uniforms, periodization of

[14] Helen N. Boyle, "Memorization and Learning in Islamic Schools," in "Islam and Education–Myths and Truths," ed. Wadad Kadi and Victor Billeh, special issue, *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 478–95; Louis Brenner, "Two Paradigms of Islamic Schooling in West Africa," in *Modes de Transmission de La Culture Religieuse En Islam*, ed. Hassan Elboudrari (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1993), 159–80; Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[15] Andrea Brigaglia, "Learning, Gnosis and Exegesis: Public Tafsir and Sufi Revival in the City of Kano (Northern Nigeria)," *Die Welt Des Islam* 49, no. 2 (2009): 334–66; Yedullah Kazmi, "Islamic Education: Traditional Education or Education of Tradition?" *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003): 259–88.

subjects, etc.[16] All these do not go well with the Makondoro and so are considered things that can adulterate pure Islamic knowledge. This led to disagreement between the traditional and modern scholars, especially the Makondoro; the modernists attack the traditional way intellectually and describe it as archaic and detrimental to development.[17]

The Makondoro uphold the "tradition" in line with their philosophy of education. They do not view tradition as a "series of events that having occurred have exhausted their potentials . . . but rather as a process, unending and continuous."[18] They uphold that without their specific tradition of learning, no serious or proper knowledge of Islam can be achieved and that the way of their ancestral teachers is still very useful for the present. This orientation informs their system, method, and practice of Arabic and Islamic education. In the Makondoro schools, the way of their early teachers still operates with little or no change. They try as much as possible to maintain their ancestral heritage and pass it down to future generations.

The Makondoro adopt some aspects of the traditional method of Islamic education that is known throughout the West African region, where learning starts with Qur'ānic and Arabic education. Little or no emphasis is placed on memorization of Qur'ānic chapters at this level, except for portions commonly used in daily religious activities and rituals.[19] It is not clear how the Qur'ānic reading was processed during the early time of the Makondoro activities and whether slates were used, which was a common method in most of the places in precolonial and colonial West Africa.[20] Since the 1970s, however, instructional

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[16] Stefan Reichmuth, "Arabic Writing and Islamic Identity in Colonial Yorubaland: Ilorin and Western Nigeria, ca. 1900–1950," in *Adab and Modernity*, ed. Cathérine Mayeur-Jaouen (Leiden : Boston: Brill, 2020), 552–85; Aliyu, "The Modernisation of Islamic Education in Ilorin"; Aliyu, "Transmission of Learning"; Abubakre and Reichmuth, "Arabic Writing between Global and Local Culture," 183–209.

[17] Brigaglia, "Learning, Gnosis and Exegesis."

[18] Kazmi, "Islamic Education," 269.

[19] In most parts of Nigeria today, a majority of Arabic schools now give importance to memorization of the Qur'ān at different levels, especially for beginners, see Abdulrazaq Abdulmajeed Alaro and Al-Hafiz Uthman Abdul-Hameed, "Post-Colonial Qur'ānic Education in Southern Nigeria," *al-Nahḍah: A Journal of Islamic Heritage* 9, no. 1 (2015): 82-93.

[20] Corinne Fortier, "Orality and the Transmission of Qur'anic Knowledge in Mauritania," in *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards*, ed. and trans. Robert Launay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 61–78.

elementary books for Qur'ānic reading have been in use throughout Yorubaland and the Makondoro also adopted them. Prominent among the books is the printed copy of *Qā'idah Baghdādiyyah*, an Arabic Qur'ānic reading primer written in eastern Arabic *naskhī* script and usually printed with the last *juz'* (thirtieth part) of the Qur'ān.[21]

Qā'idah Baghdādiyyah is until today a common reading primer among not only the Makondoro but also the traditional and mainstream Qur'ānic schools. With it, they take students through identifying, pronouncing, spelling, and reading Arabic letters and words up to the level of being able to read portions of the Qur'ān by themselves. Unlike in the twenty-first century reformed Qur'ānic schools where hymns, poems, short *ḥadīth*s, Arabic quotes, and mnemotechnics are read to beginners to complement their Qur'ān reading learning, only portions of the Qur'ān, such as the later shorter chapters, and Yoruba-Islamic songs are chanted in Makondoro schools. Even if memorization and rote learning have been major parts of Makondoro's pedagogy at a higher level, beginners and those who are yet to be reading the Qur'ān are not trained to memorize. The songs are only used as entertainment for children. This dynamic makes them depart from the Qur'ānic schools common to Yorubaland where poems in the native language are not fully adopted.

Following the Qur'ānic reading is what is often referred to as *ilmi* education (advanced Arabic learning) in the context of general Arabic learning where various texts are studied.[22] Here, texts are studied one after the other starting with those believed to be easier to understand. The *ilmi* level at the Makondoro schools involves learning texts by translation to the native language to build their understanding in a way that will make students independent of the teachers in the long run. When the students can read the Qur'ān, Makondoro teachers prescribe texts to them for further learning. Texts are usually prescribed without consideration of their subject matter but only as the teacher sees appropriate. For this, there is no uniformity in the sequence in which texts are studied across Makondoro centres. A majority of the Makondoro scholars estimate the total number of texts to be studied

[21] Reichmuth, *Islamische Bildung*, 237; Aliyu, "Transmission of Learning," 83.

[22] Brenner, "Two Paradigms of Islamic Schooling in West Africa"; Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Muhib O. Opeloye, "An Assessment of the Contributions of *'Ilmiyyah* Schools to Arabic and Islamic Learning in the Southern Nigerian Universities," *Muslim Education Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1994): 29–45.

after the Qur'ān at about one hundred and fifty. The unorganized virtual curriculum that operates in their schools makes this number difficult to ascertain. Sequence and arrangement vary from scholar to scholar and can be based on the intellectual capacity of students. The "core curriculum" that was known in the precolonial West African region operates the most, with significant additions and subtractions.[23] Arabic texts known to early Makondoro scholars take precedence and the virtual list inherited is maintained too. Furthermore, locally written Arabic works, especially the ones by Makondoro scholars themselves, are included in their daily teaching list, which might also not be the same across their schools.

Many things common to other traditional Arabic and Islamic schools are not usually observed at the *ilmi* level. For instance, age is not a determinant factor for who studies what. Rather, it is the intellectual prowess and assimilation capacity of the student. Also, unlike many other traditional learning situations, the teaching system in Makondoro *ilmi* learning is based on group study. Since many students might be studying the same texts at the same time, it saves time and energy to take them all at once. Part of the reason for this might be due to the method of annotations that operates in the school in which every student is required to write the Yoruba meaning of each Arabic word in their personal texts. The transition from one level to another is determined by texts studied and not driven by age, time spent, or peers. Despite the lack of uniformity in the sequence and transition, one thing is common to the Makondoro *ilmi*; *tafsīr* (explanation of the Qur'ān) is always the topmost on their list and it must be learned after virtually all other texts have been finished. Learning *tafsīr* in the Makondoro school is particularly interesting. It begins and ends with a feast and takes longer; time spent learning *tafsīr* alone can extend to years.

The feast that is always organized as part of the graduation ceremony deserves more attention. Although not peculiar to the Makondoro schools, what is unique to them is that every completion of a part of the studies is usually associated with a feast, either in an elaborate or enclosed gathering. Finishing the Qur'ānic reading, beginning to study the *tafsīr,* which literary means the completion of most texts at the *ilmi* level, and the completion of *tafsīr* as the

[23] Bruce S. Hall and Charles C. Stewart, "The Historic 'Core Curriculum' and the Book Market in Islamic West Africa," in *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*, ed. Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 3:109–74.

culmination of study are three of the most prominent and publicized feasts. They are normally held as public functions with dignitaries and parents of the students taking central roles. Feasts have also served as one of the avenues to gather funds for the Makondoro schools and the welfare of the scholars; since most of the Makondoro schools are self-financed by the scholars-proprietors and donations from outside persons, usually from proceeds of spiritual consultation and assistance rendered by the scholars.[24]

From the above, there is no difference between what students study in the Makondoro schools of today and the traditional Arabic-Islamic learning centres that operated not only in Nigeria but also throughout pre-colonial West Africa.[25] Unlike the situation of the traditional system where an *ilmi* student may frequent as many teachers as possible to study specific texts or disciplines, one Makondoro teacher takes students through all the texts. Although there may be the designation of duty, where senior students can teach their juniors at some points, the general Makondoro system gives utmost authority to the teacher alone.[26]

The organization of lessons in the Makondoro school is not uniform but based on the availability and creativity of the teacher. The sequence of texts to be studied is somewhat personalized and therefore not general to all scholars. It is usually inherited and built upon by cliques and subgroups. Their daily routine also reflects the general conviction among many Makondoro scholars that learning should not be restricted with time as done in most of the modernized Arabic schools by periodizing lessons. Although this allows for freedom in the organization of the schools or centres of learning and innovation in the development of their virtual curriculum, it makes organization cumbersome and

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[24] Clientele and spiritual consultancy for Arabic-Islamic scholars is also an age-long phenomenon not only in Yorubaland but also in West African scholars. For more details, see Afiz Oladimeji Musa and Hassan Ahmad Ibrahim, "Islamization and the Representation of Islam in Yoruabland of Southwestern Nigeria: An Exploratory Study with Special Reference to Jalabi Phenomenon," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 12, no. 2 (2015): 219–40. For the West African dimension, see David Owusu-Ansah, "Prayers, Amulets, and Healing," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000), 477–88.

[25] Tal Tamari, "Styles of Islamic Education: Perpectives from Mali, Guinea, and The Gambia," in *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards*, ed. Robert Launay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 29–60.

[26] Designation is common to Qur'ānic and elementary level and not usually at the advanced level, for similar situation in Northern Cameroon see Leslie C. Moore, "Learning by Heart in Qur'anic and Public Schools in Northern Cameroon," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 50, no. 3 (2006): 109–26.

difficult to generalize. For instance, in the kind of texts that are studied across the Makondoro schools, discrepancies abound not only in the study sessions and methods but also in the books included. Aside from the traditionally acknowledged texts that are popular among scholars, new ones that are usually based on the exposure of the teachers can be found in some of their schools.

However, the area of agreement among them in terms of educational philosophy and operation is that teaching and learning are central to all their activities. The daily routine of Makondoro scholars consequently revolves around this pedagogical philosophy and does not give a specific time limit for lessons.[27] In one of the prominent Makondoro schools (Olore Arabic School) in Ibadan, the daily lessons usually start immediately after the morning prayer (*fajr*) with batches of students being attended to by the head scholar and founder of the school himself according to their level of advancement. Before noon, all students must have had their share of the lesson and gone for other personal activities till evening (after the *'aṣr* prayer) when they will all converge again for the evening lessons, which can take up to midnight. This of course is based on the availability of the teacher. In some cases, the whole daily lessons can run from night till early morning when the morning prayer will be observed and everybody departs to make up for their missed sleep.[28] This exemplifies the flexibility of the routine across the Makondoro schools.

After learning all the texts, students are expected to go and establish their own schools, become teacher-scholars, and carry on the Makondoro tradition. Based on this, one can see why there is no specific limit to the years students are likely to spend in a Makondoro school. In a typical traditional Arabic-Islamic learning setting, an advanced student may reach a point when he can enjoy academic freedom to study further by himself. In the Makondoro setting, however, students remain with their teacher until they finish their education. This can be advantageous to students' integration and immersion into socio-cultural values attached to Makondoro learning, which are mostly showcased during

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[27] This is also expressed in a Yoruba *waka* popularly chanted among them, which runs as follows:

Kewu la'tawuro titi dalẹ nisẹ tiwa

Learning from morning till evening is our job.

[28] Waliyullah Ayoola Ayekotito-Olore, "A Short Life-History of Shaykh Abdulrasheed Akangbe Olore" (Lecture Presentation and Interactive session at Ibadan Islamic Scholars Forum, Ibadan, November 26, 2022).

public functions and preachings.[29] Student establishments after their graduation are the beginning of an additional stronghold of the Makondoro group. The strength of the Makondoro lies in their large networks of scholars and students traceable to one ancestral teacher built on a long chain of discipleship.

The *ijāzah* system in operation among the Makondoro is therefore dynamic and does not follow a specific pattern. Usually, after finishing learning a text, the student is partially and indirectly vested with the authority to teach others the same text; and this applies to all the texts taught at the Makondoro schools. For instance, when the teacher is busy or exhausted, advanced students can be delegated to take their junior ones through any texts they have learned themselves with or without later cross-examination. This kind of unspecified *ijāzah* applies to all the texts that have been successfully learned by a student. Although somehow restricted, it is at the discretion of the students to teach any text to others if the need arises. However, the overall *ijāzah* to teach all the texts and the utmost authority to become a recognized Makondoro scholar-teacher is given at the graduation from the school.

In sum, although they reject all forms of modernization in their pedagogy, the Makondoro also have their unique way of navigating teaching and learning that makes it attractive to their subjects. Many strategies are devised to make their pedagogy work out in the best way that suits their philosophy of knowledge and moves them closer to the modern way. The duo of what I call "mindful rote" and the use of local language referred to as "localized linguicism," are fundamental in this regard.

Mindful Rote: Learning between Understanding and Application

Knowledge according to the Makondoro can be understood in the framework of a popular Sufi saying that gives preference to learning by heart over writing with hand. The frequent Sufi quote: "*al-'ilm fī 'l-ṣudūr lā fī 'l-suṭūr*" (Knowledge lies in the chests (of men) and not in the lines of paper)[30] forms an important basis for the Makondoro pedagogy. This does not imply that the Makondoro are Sufis. However, their emphasis

[29] Al-Kankāwī, "Nash'at Zumrat al-Mu'minīn," 534–47.

[30] For the importance of this quote in the Sufi way of knowing, especially in West Africa, see Oludamini Ogunnaike, *Deep Knowledge: Ways of Knowing in Sufism and Ifa, Two West African Intellectual Traditions* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020), 3; Zachary V. Wright, *Living Knowledge in West African Islam: The Sufi Community of Ibrāhīm Niasse* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1–4.

on memorization at the expense of "text" in their sociology of education makes their pedagogical method closer to that of the Sufis. What is unique in the Makondoro learning practice is how they operate their memorization exercise. What is to be memorized, the purpose and impact of memorization on knowledge production, and its socialization are central to this point.

Memorization, a clear feature of rote learning, plays an important role in Makondoro schools. Although rote learning is considered not the best method to learn by some,[31] it continues to be an important aspect of Makondoro pedagogy and is appropriated to navigate the private space of their tutelage and the public engagement of their knowing. Their way of rote is built on the sphere of preserving the traditional heritage of their predecessors by understanding core parts of the lesson and its application in socio-religious activities. Memorization in the Makondoro school has some features that make the rote meaningful and mindful and not as "mindless" as it has been described in other contexts.[32]

Memorization as an important aspect of Islamic education is not peculiar to Makondoro learners, and virtually all Muslim learners engage in memorization in one way or another. Muslims memorize portions of Arabic and Islamic texts either for religious rituals, such as five daily prayers which require one to memorize portions of the Qur'ān and devotional incantations or for personal religio-educational development. But the way the Makondoro adopt rote learning is different. Most of the characteristics of rote learning in its pedagogical sense are not observed; rote learning is only adopted at its face value, as a method of memorizing portions of knowledge with unclear understanding. On the one hand, texts as sources of knowledge become irrelevant to how their knowledge is professed and how their memorization is processed. On the other hand, the Makondoro give an extraordinary role to texts as custodians of "original knowledge" being transmitted from scholar to scholar. In this respect, knowledge cannot be conveyed without consulting the texts. In other words, the Makondoro students learn by heart the same way they learn by hand.

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[31] Daniel A. Wagner, "Rediscovering 'Rote': Some Cognitive and Pedagogical Preliminaries," in *Human Assessment and Cultural Factors*, ed. S. H. Irvine and J. W. Berry (New York: Plenum, 1983), 180.

[32] Richard E. Mayer, "Rote versus Meaningful Learning," *Theory into Practice* 41, no. 4 (2002): 226–32, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4104_4.

After learning how to read the Qur'ān in Arabic, all other Arabic books are learned by what can be described as "oral translation,"[33] where Yoruba meanings are written on top of each Arabic word using any script convenient for the students.[34] This implies that texts are personalized by students and may not be useful for others later. It also means that students must consult their personal texts anytime they want to revise or transmit the knowledge to another person. This interlinear translation of the text as a result of the pedagogical method is not uncommon in the African context where it has also functioned as *aide memoir*.

Makondoro scholars consider this system of writing meanings as the transmission of original knowledge from the first teacher to the next generation of students and scholars. According to them, this must be observed to the letter to ensure originality that goes back to the founder of the group. One of the scholars informed me that it is offensive to interpret texts to students differently from what one has got from his/her teacher since if one makes a mistake, it will be attributed to the original teacher.[35] To back up their claim, Makondoro scholars often refer to a saying in Burhān al-Islām al-Zarnūjī's (d. 620/1223) teaching manual, which is one of the important texts being taught at their schools. The quote reads, "He who simply tries to memorize [what he has heard, the lesson] flees; but he who writes it down, [it] stands firm."[36] Also, they often refer to another quote from al-Zarnūjī's manual which surmises that real knowledge is what is taken from the mouths of men.[37] All pedagogical advice by al-Zarnūjī in the manual is *de facto* taken into cognizance in the Makondoro schools. This is not strange, as al-Zarnūjī's instructional book is known throughout West Africa as an important

[33] Tamari, "Styles of Islamic Education," 30.

[34] At the onset of Arabic-Islamic learning in Yorubaland, Yoruba and Hausa were used to teach and were written in Arabic scripts. Today, using Arabic scripts for Yoruba is no longer common, and Latin script is used to write the meanings of each Arabic word. For more on Yoruba orthography, see Isaac Adejoju Ogunbiyi, "The Search for a Yoruba Orthography since the 1840s: Obstacles to the Choice of the Arabic Script," *Sudanic Africa: A Journal of Historical Sources* 14 (2003): 77–102; Sayed H. A. Malik, "Arabic, The Muslim Prayers and Beyond" (Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan, 1999).

[35] Adam Kolawole Alagunfon (a Makondoro scholar), in personal communication with the author, March 2020.

[36] Imām al-Zarnūjī, *Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning*, trans. Gustave E. von Grunebaum and Theodora Mead Abel, rev. ed (Chicago, Ill.: Starlatch Press, 2003), 41.

[37] Ibid., 41. Cf. the Sufi quote explained above.

manual for scholars and students and continues to influence knowledge practice, pedagogical methods, and scholarly engagement in Nigerian Arabic-Islamic education, like in many other places across the world.[38]

The aim of the Makondoro is not only the writing of meanings but to carry knowledge with them everywhere they go and to preserve it for coming generations. Therefore, rote learning is paramount and writing only complements it and makes it into what I call a mindful rote, that is, rote learning that is backed up by an understanding of the text. Since understanding has been identified as a major problem of rote,[39] the Makondoro take to al-Zarnūjī's advice and make writing a precursor for their rote. Every week after many lessons have been taken by students, an event is usually organized where students will revisit what they had learned. This is called *náásù,* from the Arabic word *naṣṣ* (lit. text). During *náásù,* each student is expected to produce offhand the portions of lessons he/she has learned over the week with their meanings as dictated by their teacher and written in their personal texts.

Náásù serves two purposes. Firstly, it prepares students for public speaking, especially in social functions. Secondly, *náásù* can be understood as a form of evaluation for lessons already taught. Since no formal evaluation is observed in the Makondoro school, *náásù* fills the gap and provides an avenue for the teacher to correct any mistake in the understanding of the text, rendering of the meanings and omission or commission in the memorization. Punishment may be appropriately applied by the teacher if any pupil fails to accurately produce the knowledge. In sum, the memorization in operation here is not usually a guided one as found in the Qur'ānic memorization schools.[40] It is just a personal exercise of students followed up by the evaluative effort of the teachers.

This pedagogical system does not come without its shortcomings, one of which is how to maintain what has been memorized over years for future (re)use. Since *náásù* is weekly (or fortnightly in some cases) and no follow-up strategy is devised to check on previous lessons, the knowledge may slip with time. Students also may not revise carefully as

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[38] Cf. Maslani et al., "Al-Zarnuji's Thought of Education and Its Implementation at *Pesantren*," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (2017): 179–90.

[39] Mayer, "Rote versus Meaningful Learning," 226.

[40] Alaro and Abdul-Hameed, "Post-Colonial Qur'ānic Education in Southern Nigeria"; Bill Gent and Abdullah Muhammad, "Memorising and Reciting a Text without Understanding Its Meaning: A Multi-Faceted Consideration of This Practice with Particular Reference to the Qur'an," *Religions* 10, no. 425 (2019): 1–14.

many of them rely on their texts. Therefore, what they ultimately know offhand may not be up to the level envisaged. Although the collective and congregational nature of *náásù* may be beneficial to brighter students when they listen to their peers presenting what they are already familiar with, it will be an unconscious revision that may or may not preserve the knowledge.

Additionally, students are over-reliant on texts, while their teachers merely cross-check knowledge. As a result, Makondoro teachers transmit their knowledge the same way they received it and Arabic texts only serve as reservoirs of meanings. The Makondoro teachers and learners create new texts within the original Arabic texts, mainly through writing a footnote or gloss. The philosophy behind this method is vague, but the belief is that it is the duty of students to protect the original knowledge of their teachers in order not to be wrongly accused of ignorance. When they become teachers too in the future, their students would in turn be expected to do the same. As the chain of learning and transmission extends, the good image of teachers must be maintained. This can explain how the Makondoro students pay homage to their teachers; it is generally acknowledged that members of the Makondoro group are the most attached to their teachers in Yoruba society. Whether this is also influenced by the Sufi concept of *fanā' fī 'l-shaykh* (annihilation in one's master) is not clear.[41] Rather, it is more a reflection of traditional master-disciple practice that was in operation throughout the West African region which is also not unconnected with the Sufi background.[42] Nevertheless, the student-master attachment in the Makondoro scholarly culture transcends educational and pedagogical orientation to include socio-cultural issues such as feeding, shelter, clothing, and marriage through which a strong discipleship culture develops over the ages.

Localized Linguicism

A common debate in Arabic-Islamic learning and religious practice in West Africa is the infiltration of local languages or belief systems.[43] By

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[41] Jean-Louis Michon, "The Spiritual Practices of Sufism," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge, 2013), 491–93.

[42] Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 12–14.

[43] David Owusu-Ansah, "Prayers, Amulets, and Healing," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000), 477–88; Muhsin Adekunle Balogun, "Syncretic Beliefs and Practices amongst Muslims in

local, I mean what is often referred to as the indigenous belief system that gives the syncretic impression of an "African Islam."[44] The Makondoro are one of the targets of this debate. They have been more identified with indigenous cultural values than any of their counterparts. For example, they are known for vigorously adopting the Yoruba language in their learning and social activities, and native culture occupies an important position in their religio-educational practices.

In the Makondoro schools, the Yoruba language is used for learning at every level. As the language of instruction, it conveys knowledge to students, except when the texts can only be understood via the Arabic language. Even at that, it is still Yoruba that will be used for more explanation. Although the use of the native language in teaching Arabic is not peculiar to them,[45] they remain the only group of Arabic scholars in the region who assign Yoruba an academic status, used even more than Arabic. Understanding core Islamic knowledge is their aim and they use the native language to achieve and prepare the ground for such understanding. This allows them to transmit the knowledge at the grass-roots level, removing the language barrier. This also helped the movement spread across the region of Yorubaland and Nigeria at large. Sustained by their social use of Arabic and Islamic knowledge, especially for spiritual purposes and religious consultations, their way of professing Islam and learning Arabic attracts many people and improves their recruitment of younger Makondoro students for generations.

However, Makondoro's adoption of the Yoruba language and their attachment to traditionalism affect their use of Arabic. For instance, most of their students and scholars are deficient in Arabic language skills. This is not however unexpected; they do not usually communicate in Arabic among themselves, either casually or academically and their curriculum and way of teaching do not give room for more use of Arabic. Teaching is text-based and not subject or topic-based, so there is no adequate room for the applied study of subjects, such as syntax (*naḥw*) and morphology (*ṣarf*), that may improve language skills and communication in Arabic. Although this makes their pedagogy unique, it equally gives the public image of them as a group of scholars who do not

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Lagos State Nigeria: With Special Reference to the Yoruba Speaking People of Epe" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2011).

[44] Ware, *Walking Qur'an*, 19–23.

[45] Fortier, "Orality and the Transmission of Qur'anic Knowledge in Mauritania"; Tamari, "Styles of Islamic Education."

have sound knowledge of Arabic. One of them shared his experience of how those who attend modernized Arabic schools used to make fun of the Makondoro students by telling them that they are going to an Arabic school as if the Makondoro school is not an Arabic school. He would then ask them, is ours a *tapa* school?[46] This points to the fact that in the Yoruba society, the Makondoro and those who follow the traditional way of Arabic-Islamic education are not generally acknowledged as Arabists, especially in the area of using Arabic for communication and academic purposes.[47]

Contrarily, there are good results from the vigorous use of the local language; it gives them access to the grass roots and makes scholars closer to the people as Makondoro students are mostly from among the lower social class. This can also explain why they don't accommodate anything foreign (or modern). They have for a long time been at loggerheads with Western education, the formal type of education in Nigeria, and everything that is affiliated with it, even though this is changing.[48] Makondoro students do not attend formal schools and are even discouraged from doing so.[49] Another effect of this use of local language and immersion into the native culture can be seen in their use of the Arabic language itself. Pronunciation of Arabic words is always localized. Arabic phonological, phonetic, or grammatical rules are mostly not followed.[50] This also affects their engagement with scriptural, traditional, and instructional materials in Arabic. Two examples of the use of local language manifest how their approach to Arabic can be

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[46] *Tapa* is a Yoruba word for those of Nupe origin and the scholar, by saying this, was trying to affirm that theirs are also Arabic schools. Alagunfon, personal communication.

[47] Cf. Brigaglia, "Learning, Gnosis and Exegesis."

[48] Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu, "Voices after the Maxim Gun: Intellectual and Literary Opposition to Colonial Rule in Northern Nigeria," in *Resurgent Nigeria: Issues in Nigerian Intellectual History*, ed. Sa'idu Babura Ahmad and Ibrahim Khaleel Abdussalam (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2011), 124–46; Aliyu, "Transmission of Learning"; Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu, "Unrelenting Scholars: Ulama Engagement with Western Education in Ilorin," in *Magnifying Perspectives: Contributions to History, A Festschrift for Robert Ross*, ed. Iva Peša and Jan-Bart Gewald (Leiden: ASC Occasional Publication, 2017), 203–19.

[49] Raji, "The Makondoro Muslims of Nigeria"; Seesemann, "'*Ilm* and *Adab* Revisited."

[50] Razaq Deremi Abubakre, *The Interplay of Arabic and Yoruba Cultures in South Western Nigeria* (Iwo: Darul-Ilm, 2004), 47–128; Sayyid H. A. Mālik, "Mushkilāt Tadrīs li 'l-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah fī 'l-Janūb al-Gharbī min Nayjīriyā," *al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah* 22, no. 4 (1988): 32–39.

useful. First, Arabic pharyngeal alphabets, *khā'*, *ḥā'*, *'ayn* and *hā'*, are pronounced as /a/ when they are vocalized with a *fatḥaḥ* vowel, as in the English word, bad. Second, *ḍād*, the sixteenth Arabic letter, is pronounced as *lād*, thereby making the pronunciation of *ḍāllīn*, for instance, to be *lāllīn*. This linguistic dimension passes from generation to generation, and it remains today. The reason for the twist of *ḍād* to *lād* is not clear, it can only be traced to their overemphasis on the use of local language as well as to the traditional background of their epistemology. Students, however, take it from their teachers like that and pass it on.[51]

Today, many Makondoro scholars upgrade their Arabic language skills on their own, buying new Arabic texts to retrace and revise what they have gathered in meanings while studying under their masters. Some may re-enrol in modernized *madrasah*s to learn the "modern knowledge" of Arabic. Those who base their upgrading on personal effort often fail to improve their pedagogy and continue to follow the steps narrated above in teaching their students. Although this poses challenges to their recognition and human capital development, it does not always affect their level of intellectual engagement with the Arabic language. There has been a considerable number of famous scholars and writers among them who, based on their personal effort, use Arabic for professional literary purposes and produce quality works in Arabic. Among many scholars of Makondoro training who write in literary Arabic is Ṣāḥib al-Qur'ān Muḥammad al-Awwal b. 'Abd al-Salām who is known for his erudition in using Arabic in Yorubaland today and is proud of his undiluted Makondoro background.[52] Aside from composing numerous poems in Arabic, he has produced works of creative and educational nature in Arabic that are in line with the contemporary trend in global Arabic literary writing. He is also recognized as one of the leading writers of *maqāmah* collections in Nigeria. His *Maqāmāt al-Ilūrī* draws inspiration from the works of famous *maqāmah* writers of the Arab world such as Abū 'l-Faḍl Badī' al-Zamān Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-

[51] Although at the initial time, these pronunciation problems were not peculiar to the Makondoro members, they are today mostly identified with it more than others. For details, see Mālik, "Mushkilāt Tadrīs al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya fī'l-Janūb al-Gharbī min Nayjīriyā," 32.

[52] Trained in Ilorin by the Makondoro scholars, Muḥammad al-Awwal is proud of his Makondoro background and expresses contentment with it. During an interview in March 2018, he claims that he never studied under any modernized Arabic scholar in his life.

Hamadhānī (358-398/968-1008), Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. ʻAlī al-Ḥarīrī (446-516/1054-1122), and Nāṣif al-Yāzijī (d. 1871).[53]

Honour and Knowledge in the Public Space

The public space in which the Makondoro operate is important to the dynamics of their pedagogy. It must be mentioned that their way of knowing is premised on being unique in a society where knowledge is on par with identity. Therefore, the socialization of knowledge is not only paramount to their way of knowing but is also their core objective.[54] The essence of their pedagogy is about "being Makondoro," something that has become their identity in society. Two examples will suffice to explain this socio-cultural dimension of their pedagogy: one is on their physical appearance and the other on the philosophy behind the already explained master-students attachment. Both exemplify how knowledge can be made sociable.[55]

In physical appearance, the body plays important role in the way of the Makondoro. To profess to know in the Makondoro sense, one must appear in a specific outfit; men must always be in native "Islamic" attire, tie a big turban to the head and wear a big beard, while women must be fully veiled by wearing a body length burqa that covers from forehead to the feet. By appearing like this, the Makondoro believe they are honouring the knowledge of Arabic and Islam.[56] In their view, public character and appearance are the best ways to showcase that one knows and practices the knowledge. Consequently, anybody who does not demonstrate this kind of body identity is not knowledgeable. Right from the onset, they imbibe this thought and practice in their students so that they are accustomed to it as they advance in their learning.

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[53] *Maqāmāt al-Ilūrī* is a collection of fifty episodes that started publishing with just ten in 2003. About six editions have been issued since then. Until 2017 when a final and complete edition of fifty episodes came out. It continues to be a subject of literary and academic engagement. For details, see Izzudeen Adetunji, "Maqāmāt Ṣāḥib al-Qur'ān al-Ilūrī al-Nayjīrī: Dirāsah Taḥlīliyyah" (PhD diss., World Islamic Science and Education University, Amman, 2014).

[54] See Moore, "Learning by Heart," 115.

[55] For details on the social role of knowledge and its sociability, see Brian Cowan, *Public Spaces, Knowledge, and Sociability*, ed. Frank Trentmann, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2012); Nico Stehr, "The Social Role of Knowledge," in *Advances in Sociological Knowledge*, ed. Nikolai Genov (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 83–105.

[56] Al-Kankāwī, "Nash'at Zumrat al-Mu'minīn," 541–42.

The issue of honour is also at the core of the student-master attachment. To the Makondoro, to honour the knowledge is to honour the knower, i.e., the teacher. Based on this, students are trained to not only follow the instructions of their teachers but also to see their teachers as models in virtually every aspect of life. Students must behave like their teachers, talk in the public like them, live like them, and celebrate them. This can be linked to the preservation of the teacher's knowledge explained above and relates not only to al-Zarnujī's philosophy of education but also to the philosophy of the utmost model, Tāj al-Adab, whose *al-Zumrah al-Adabiyyah* is recognized for frequently using the slogan: "*al-adab fawq al-'ilm*" (etiquette is more important than knowledge).[57] The role model influence of the teachers on their students in this regard transcends the normal behavioural and social issues to include mimicking the natural and physical attributes of their teachers. An example of this is that many Makondoro scholars pretend to stammer when they give a public talk, mimicking the physical disability of one of their ancestral teachers. Similarly, the physical gestures of their teachers become uniform to them in the public to the extent of being known and identified with it. The attitudes, gestures, and imitations can become idiosyncratic of them too in extreme instances.

Conclusion

Traditionalism in Arabic-Islamic learning is fading out gradually in Western Nigeria, but the Makondoro scholars still uphold some of its features in good faith, appropriating them to various contexts. As conservative as their method of learning and teaching might seem, it has witnessed tremendous change and transformation in recent times without jeopardizing their pedagogical training, chains of networks, and conservative values. This paper shows that local intricacies have been major factors in systematizing Makondoro's philosophy of education and socialization of Arabic-Islamic knowledge. The primary aim of Makondoro's educational activities is to achieve a knowledge base that will lead to pristine Islam; this reflects in their methods and strategies. They endeavour to preserve the knowledge brought down to them for generations and protect their values and heritage through various ways of which rote learning, the local language, and traditional method are precursors.

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[57] Jimba and Otukoko, *'Ulamā' al-Imārah*, 169.