

The Impact of Ilorin Scholars to the Development of Islam In Igbomina Land

Yusuf Adebola Bamigboye

Department of Islamic, Christian and Comparative Religious Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria

Abstract: Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State, Nigeria, has played a significant role in the history of the spread and growth of Islam in Yoruba land in general and in Igbomina land in particular. Little wonder why renowned authors of history have described the city as “an Islamic light house, a local Mecca to which Yoruba Muslims turned for study and guidance”. This ancient Islamic sanctuary has also been described by historical experts as “the springboard from where Islamic missionary activities began to be launched into the heart of Yorubaland”. Igbominaland is a notable dialectical area among the Yoruba in Nigeria. Available works on Islam in Igbominaland did not specifically discuss the roles of Ilorin Scholars in the growth and development of Islam in Igbominaland. Also missing is none documentation of how Ilorin Scholars based in Lagos impacted on the Igbomina people in Lagos. Apart from digging deep into the roles played by highly revered Ilorin Muslim scholars in the growth and development of Islam in Igbominaland, the missing links are to be discussed in this paper. To achieve this objective, historical and phenomenological research methods were adopted, coupled with interviews and references to the works of some past authors. It concluded by re-establishing the truth in the belief that Ilorin Muslims, by and large, cannot go without mention in discussing the spread and development of Islam to and in Igbomina land as Igbomina people are known to have been impacted upon by Ilorin at home and outside their places of origin.

Key words: Impact • Ilorin Scholars • Igbominna • Development • Islam

INTRODUCTION

Among the factors that facilitate one community or group of the human race impacting upon others, proximity is of spectacular note. It can be established from the onset, that the style of life, religion and social-cultural orientation of Igbomina people, in Yoruba land of Nigeria have been tremendously influenced by Ilorin, the renowned citadel of Islam.

It is a well-established fact that itinerant Muslim scholars from Sokoto and Borno empires were involved in the spread of Islam in Yoruba land. This was however contrary to the submission of Al-Aluri [1] that Islam had been introduced to Yoruba land as far back as the 14th and 15th centuries during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa of Mali Empire. To him, such towns and cities as Oyo, Iwo, Iseyin, Saki, Lagos and Osogbo had established mosques between 1550 and 1889 CE [2].

However, the syncretic practice of Muslims who adulterated, diluted or polluted Islamic practices with old pagan practices, especially, in Kanem-Borno and Hausa

land made ‘Uthman Dan Fodio (1754.1817) an erudite Fulani Scholar and *Mujaddid*, (reformer) to stage a Jihad to reform the practice of Islam and its ideals and re-establish ideal Islamic teachings in 1804. This *Jihad* actually aided the spread of Islam, not only in the Northern part of Nigeria, but also in Yoruba land. The occupation of Ilorin by the *Jihadists* made the town to become a confluence of Muslim scholars and Centre of Islamic learning from where Muslim scholars carried the message of Islam to other Yoruba towns and to where Muslims from Yorubaland rushed, for Islamic learning [3].

Despite the deep-rooted nature of Africa traditional worships among the Igbomina of the Yoruba race in pre-colonial Nigeria, their proximity to Ilorin people, with whom they had close contact and interaction, paved way for the gradual and systematic entrance of Islam into this area by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was revealed that Ilorin and several towns and villages in Igbomina land were conquered and Islamized during the Jihad of ‘Uthman Dan Fodio. Muslim scholars who came mainly from Ilorin and Bida such as Alfa Dikko Abiodun

who returned to Oke-Ode in 1863; Alfa Balogun Dare who returned from Bida to Share in 1835 and Alfa Raimi Pupa who returned from Ilorin to Omu-Aran in 1869 took over the spread of Islam in Igbominaland and other parts of the South-West after the Jihad [4].

As a result of the fame and sanctity of one of its founding fathers, Aafa Alimi; in addition to the different formulae for explaining the derivation of the name Ilorin, such epithets for which the city has come to be widely known include: "Ilorin, Garin-Alimi and Ilorin, Ilu Aafa". Based on the latter, the Ilorins have come to be generally regarded as Aafas (scholars), while their city has come to be popularly known as "Ilu Aafa", meaning: 'a city of scholars' or 'a Land of the Learned' [5]. Ilorin scholars include saints, ascetics, preachers, teachers and propagators of Islam. This is in acknowledgement of the city's status as a 'scholarly community 'a religious Centre of Islamic learning and Arabic manuscripts' production in Nigeria'. It is also in recognition of the immense contributions of its indigenes, particularly in the field of Arabic and Islamic scholarship over a period of more than two hundred years both in Yoruba land (Igbomina inclusive) and in other parts of West Africa.

Brief History of Igbominaland: Geographically, their settlement lies within longitude 0 and 90 North and Latitude 40 and 60 West. Indeed, they are bounded by Ilorin in the West and North-East, by Yagba in Kogi State, Ekiti State in the South-East. The Northern part shares boundary with Nupe. The largest concentration of Igbomina is found in Kwara State while considerable proportions are in Osun State due to colonial administration of the 19th century when Ila-Orangun was situated at the edge of the forest while the Northern part of the Igbomina occupies the Savannah below the boundary of Niger River [6]. It is not easy to say which of the towns and villages settled first; but Akintoye submitted thus:

Among the Igbomina, the Orangun of Ila is regarded as sovereignty of 'a father' and the original inheritor from Ife of the land on which all the Igbomina later settled [7].

The geographical units of the Igbomina consist of: Ipo, Irese, Esa, Esisa Ire, Aran, Isin and Oro. The economic system of the people is farming and later trading in yam flour (*elubo*), yam tubers, guinea corn and general farm produce. Today, Igbomina people are in every sphere of business in Nigeria. Sons and daughters of the area

abound in Lagos trading in one form of goods or another and are in different towns, while some are found today in Osun and Ondo States engaging in cocoa and colanut farming [8].

Historically, the origin of Igbomina towns and villages seems to be similar, as all the people in this area traced their origin either to Ile-Ife or Oyo-Ile, except the people of Oro-Ago area (Esisa) who trace their own origin to Ketu in the present Republic of Benin [9]. Among the stories related to the origin of Igbomina people, the one which appears most reliable and authentic holds that each town and village was founded by different people or group of people who came from Ile-Ife or Oyo-Ile at different times, under various circumstances. Different reasons are given for their frequent migration among which are: chieftaincy title disputes, hunting expedition, famine, shortage of land for territorial expansion and constant wars most especially with Ibadan, Nupe, Ilorin and Ekiti [10].

There is no accurate record of date to show when the area was founded, but it is claimed to be between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries according to the following records:

Omu-Aran was said to have been founded by Prince Olomu Aperan who came from Ile-Ife at about the sixteenth century. It was Prince Olofin who migrated from Oyo as a result of succession dispute in the first quarter of the sixteenth century that founded the nine towns and villages which constitute Eku Mesan Oro. At the material time and for the same purpose, Omupo town was established by Alumole who came from Oyo and Isanlu-Isin by a herbalist called Ajayi who came from Iseyin. Also, the founder of Odo-Eku, Alufa Ogunlade, left Oyo to settle in the present area in the later part of the seventeenth century [11].

The first people to settle in Oke-Onigbin came around the eighteenth century, from Oyo under the leadership of Babakun as a result of political chaos. The people of Esie were led by Agbonbiifa who left Ejigbo near Oyo at about the middle of the seventeenth century as a result of threats to their lives and properties caused by a notorious warrior called Gaa. The founder of Aran-Orin Alaran Oduundun [12], the son of Ologbojo left Ile-Ife as a result of political disintegration caused by chieftaincy title disputes. Both Share and Babanloma are said to have been originated by a famous hunter called Osoja who left Oyo on a hunting expedition in the early part of the

seventeenth century. Oke-Ode was founded by two groups of people who migrated from Ile-Ife and Oyo; the Ile-Ife group came first followed by the Oyo group. It was at this particular time that the founder of Ajase-Ipo, OluAyinku, left his place of origin, Ile-Ife on a hunting expedition to settle at the present day Ajase-Ipo. There are also some towns and villages that settled around the twentieth century. Those included: Arandun, founded in 1930 and Idera in 1948 [13].

Religion of the Igbomina before Islam: Prior to the introduction of Islam to the area, most towns and villages constituting Igbominaland, traditional religion therefore was the only religious practice of the people. African traditional religions popularly worshipped then include: Ogun (god of iron); Sango (god of thunder); Eyinle (the goddess of river); Egungun (masquerade) etc; lakes, streams, rivers, hills, which the people believed that their 'lords dwelt were also worshipped. In addition, each town identified her own specific god or goddess which her people worshipped. Notable among them, for instance were: Enidesin worshipped in Oke-Ode; Okirikishi in Ajase-Ipo; Agan in Aran-Orin; Epa in Omu-Aran; Agbalu in Okeya; Oke-Ora in Ora; and the stone images in Esie. Egungun, Sango and Ogun were common in almost all the villages. According to Raji, the secret cult known as *Ogboni* or *Imule*, was introduced to Igbominaland around the nineteenth century [14]: Robert Smith corroborates this submission when he says:

Moreover, the worship of Ogun is prominent among the Igbomina as among the Oyo (as is also membership of the Ogboni fraternity, but this was probably not introduced to Oyo or Igbominaland until the 19th century) [15].

In addition, towns, villages, even compounds had different cultural, customary and traditional practices or acts of worship traceable to their ancestral history or orientation. Examples of such, some of which are still in practice in many Igbomina villages are Alaata in Omu-Aran, IbeegunJagun (fighting war with masquerade) in Rore, Esushrine in Ipetu-Igbomina and a host of others [16].

The Penetration of Islam into Igbominaland: The advent of Islam in Igbominaland can be traced to Uthman Dan Fodio's highly celebrated Jihad of 1804. Raji submitted thus:

Perhaps Ilorin (Fulani) imperial exploits in Igbomina and indeed in the Yoruba country at large, should be seen as an extension of the Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio which broke out in earnest and spread over Hausaland from 1804 onward. The Jihad, with time, soon spread to the South, thus incorporating Nupe and part of Yorubaland into the Sokoto caliphate [17].

It must however be noted that impression given by Raji could not be seen as exploiters because Islamization was on a gradual process free from duress. The Jihad which took the dimension of Fulanis attacking Igbomina and Yoruba settlements made traditionalists to repel the message of Islam which the Jihadists carried along their raid of Yorubaland. As the Yoruba were gripped with fear and rage, especially, that the entire Yoruba community might be integrated into the Fulani Empire, traditional opposition against Islam and its adherents heightened and this brought an increase to the number of people embracing Islam during the period [18].

During the period before the 1804s, Islam was certainly a religion that commanded little or no recognition among the Igbomina. Its existence or practice was only restricted to the migrant traders and Hausa/NupeMallams who settled in the area for the conduct of their commercial activities. The migrant settlers in Igbomina during this period had not really made any conscious or sustained efforts aimed at enhancing the conversion of the Igbomina into Islam.

It is important for us to note particularly that after 1804, Muslim Mallams from these important Yoruba towns embarked on gradual and peaceful extensive missionary works which in fact took some of them to the Igbomina region especially from the 1850s. For instance, on the inspiration of a NupeMallam, Saadu, various settlements in Oro had the wind of Islam by the 1850s and it is remarkable that the Oloro of Oro himself Oba Ayingusi during the 1860s, converted into Islam [19].

The Aran sub-group of Igbomina had Muslim migrants from the Yoruba and Nupe countries who settled in the area by the early 1860s [20]. The period also witnessed the establishment of Islam and the conversion of some members of the indigenous population to the faith through the efforts of Odewale, an itinerant Muslim preacher from Ibadan who was reputed for bringing Islam to the area. The beginning of Islam in Esie is dated to the 1870s through the efforts of one Baba Onigba, a migrant trader from the Western Yoruba region [21]. Also, during the 1870s, a NupeMallam called Alfa Tapa undertook the

Islamisation of the districts of Agunjin and Ora, while a notable Ilorin cleric, Alfa Dindi is reported to have engaged in missionary activities among the Igbomina of Ilala, Idofian and Basanyin during the 1870s and 1880s [22]. This period also witnessed the insurgence of Islam in Ajase-Ipo, Omupo, Oro Ago and Shaare as more itinerant scholars from Yorubaland and the Nupe country engaged in extensive proselytisation in the region. The activities of wandering *Mallams* and the Sufi brotherhoods became more noticeable in Igbominaland as from the 1880s when they became fully integrated into the society. Although the process of Islamization in Igbominaland during the period 1870-1900 was not very rapid, the region gained a measure of progress as it gradually won more adherents from amongst the members of the traditional society.

The considerable influence that the Muslim clerics and traders established in their host communities in Yorubaland during the pre-colonial period could only be fully appreciated if we look at the way and manner in which the traditional Yoruba people patronised these *Mallams* to the extent that all aspects of their life became guided by such *Mallams*. In fact, once a cleric succeeded in distinguishing himself in any Yoruba community, he became more or less the guardian of the society and played a central role in the political, social and economic, as well as spiritual affairs of the people. Johnson, in his *History of the Yoruba* confirmed this with regard to Ilorin during the early nineteenth century:

Alimiwas much respected in Ilorin ... and indeed when Afonja and his *Jama'a* commenced their excesses, he was prepared to return to his own country from disgust, but the elders of the Yoruba prayed him to stay and act as a check on Afonja for there was no one else to whom he would defer [23].

This clear indication of the Yoruba's readiness to accommodate the Muslim clerics and offer them a place in the politics of the society, especially during the pre-colonial period [24] also obtained in several Igbomina settlements. In his paper, *The enduring impact of the 1804 Fulani Jihad on Igbomina Society*, Ibiloye submitted thus:

While it was true that Islamic evangelism was left to private initiatives in the emirate administration, there is no doubt that a number of steps were taken in official quarters, which not only made Islamic religion

attractive to the general populace, but also facilitated its rapid spread. Preference was given to Islamic faith over other religions in matters of appointment into public offices in the emirate. All state institutions were operated according to the Sharia under the supervision of the Emir of Gwandu. Islamization also went down even to the basic social aspect of the people's life. Igbomina Obas were forced to wear the turbans instead of their usual caps and crowns. Although this change in the people's office investiture, from crown to turban, has been casually treated by some scholars as merely symbolizing a means of testing acceptance of Ilorin authority by subject territories, it has no doubt gone a long way in elevating the status of the religion it represented by making it more attractive [25].

Ibiloye's submission above is not a true reflection of the position of Islam and that of the Ilorin scholars and rulers, Islam has not been used to coerce or force anyone for its embrace. Thus, no Oba in Igbominaland has ever embraced Islam under duress. Unlike the peace procedure adopted by Islam in Yorubaland in general and Igbominaland in particular, the missionaries during pre and post-colonial era used series of methods which made Christianity attractive to the general populace and thus facilitated the conversion of traditional worshippers and Muslims into Christianity. Adeoye writes:

The arrival of Christian missionaries with their fascinating programs was another source of setback for the early Muslims in Igbominaland. The missionaries at that time embarked on humanitarian services like establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, motherless baby homes and other welfare centres. These were used successfully to entice the Muslims, many of who converted to Christianity upon the preaching of prosperity in Christendom [26].

Other fascinating methods and strategies used by the missionaries are film shows, distribution of attractive and well decorated season greeting cards and free education for selected children of widows to entice Muslim children. However, the Ilorin clerics and even rulers did not pretend to use force to convert any Igbomina Oba/People, but they only used friendship, wisdom and persuasion to convince people to embrace Islam.

Ibiloye reported further that there were concrete evidences of efforts through official channels to convert people to Islam, although these efforts were confined to the courts of Igbomina Obas and done through friendship or diplomacy and sometimes through psychological pressure on the ruling class whose elevation and continuance in office was made dependent in absolute loyalty. Such loyalty included acceptance of the religion of the ruler. For instance, the conversion of Abidolu, the Elése of Igbaja was said to be as a result of his friendship with Alimi, leader of Ilorin Jihad [27]. Abidolu's children were sent to *Qur'anic* schools in Ilorin. He opined further that, in order to bring more people into Islam, the rulers in the emirate gave positions of responsibility and trust to Muslim rulers than any other. It is noteworthy that it was in accordance with such policy that Olupo was elevated above other Igbomina Obas because of his early acceptance of the Islamic faith and friendship with the Emir [28].

The above comment by Ibiloye on elevation and continuance of Oba in office could be said to be an exaggeration because; there was no record of any elevation of any Oba in Igbominaland until during the post-colonial era and it has always been the prerogative power of government in power and not any religious ruler nor clerics.

Islam rapidly gained footing in Ila-Orangun through the efforts of a native traveler Muhammad, who traveled to Ilorin where he accepted and acquired Islamic education [29]. But Adebayo opined that the actual date of the Introduction of Islam to Ila-Orangun remain uncertain to historians, but was introduced during the reign of Orangun Aniyeloye through an itinerant cleric known as Alfa Muhammad Mustapha Ibn Ibrahim, who was said to have come from Ilorin [30].

It was gathered that Islam was 'planted' in Oke-Ode by one Alfa UthmanDikkoAbiodun who came from Ilorin in 1863 [31]. It was through the efforts of Nana Aisha Ariludokun who came from Oyo in 1846 that Islam came to be established in Omupo now in Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State. In Ajase-Ipo, Islam was accorded a warm reception by the then Olupo, Oba Ariyibi who returned from Ilorin 1890. The light of Islam first came to Share through Alfa BalogunDare who came from Bida in 1835. The Igbomina/Ekiti Branch of Kwara Muslim Council's Journal revealed further that Igbaja tasted the religion of Islam in 1840 through the activities of Oba EléseAbidolu, while Ora received Islamic message through one Alfa AbdulQadir who also came from Ilorin

in 1879. In 1869, Islam became firmly established in Omu-Aran through the effort of Alfa AbdurRaheem (Alfa Pupa). Oro-Ago people smelled Islam through Alfa SuleAlakekewho came from Oro in 1873. It was Imam Shuaibu who came from Ilorin that brought the people of IsaleImole in Oro in contact with Islam in 1899. Roregot wind of the message of Islam in 1864 from Alfa BakareOgunnide, who came from Epe. With this trend, Raji concluded that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Islam had been deeply rooted in Igbominaland and today, one can see a large number of people who have accepted Islam as a religion in many Igbomina towns and villages such as: Ilala, Iwo-Isin, Owu-Isin, Idofian, Aran-Orin, Okeya-Ipo, Omu-Aran, Share, Igbaja, Arandun, Esie, Oro, Omupo, Ajase-Ipo, Rore, Ipetu-Igbominaand a host of others [32].

Contributions of Ilorin Scholars to the Development of Islam in Igbominaland: The tremendous role played by Ilorin scholars, traders and preachers in the spread of Islam in Igbominaland can be appreciated only when empirical references are made to the work of renowned past authors. As rightly remarked by Babs A. Fafunwa [33], "wherever Islam spread, the rudimentary knowledge of the Qur'an, the *Hadith* and the *Shari'ah* also began to be taught to the followers of the religion". This was the case in Igbominaland where Islam was not firmly noted until the people received appreciable Islamic education. Once Islam penetrated a town, the first thing the pioneer did was to begin to teach the new Muslim converts the rudimentary knowledge of Islam. This took place in mosques, or in front of the scholars' houses [34].

Adeoye, in his write-up titled: Influence of *Shari'ah* on Igbomina people of Kwara State identified factors that contributed to the spread of Islam in Igbominaland, where he highlighted some highly placed personalities who were converted to Islam by renowned Ilorin scholars such as: Oba Oyadeyi, Olupako of Share who was converted by Alfa Kokewukobere of Ilorin; Oba Ibrahim BabalolaEgunjobi I, Elesie of Esie, converted by Alfa UthmanDikko; Oba Oyegusi, Oloro of Oro, converted by Shaykh Zubair, the then Emir of Ilorin and late Olomu of Omu-Aran, Oba AlhajiSulaimanDurotoyeAbegunde, who was converted by the ninth Emir of Ilorin, AlhajiZul-KaranainGambariMunammad [35]. The role of Ilorin in the spread of Islam in Igbominaland can hardly be over-emphasized. Their great role can be discussed broadly under the following sub-headings:

Role of Ilorin Scholars in the Early Islamic Learning:

Most, if not all, of the early scholars of Islam in Igbominaland came from Ilorin. Presently, majority of students, teachers and Qur'anic interpreters (*Mufasssirul-Qur'an*) in Igbominaland are indigenes of Ilorin. Also, a former Head of Islamic Studies Department at College Education, Oro and the former Dean, College of Education are both from Ilorin [36].

Raji opined that the activities of Ilorin Muslim scholars in spreading and teaching Islam in Igbominaland is worthy of appreciation. Not only did they preach and teach Islam but also performed other religious duties like leading congregational prayers and conducting naming, burial and marriage rites. A cornerstone achievement of Ilorin Muslim scholars is that, Igbomina indigenes trained by them returned home on completing their studies from Ilorin to contribute to knowledge. Among such trained scholars were, Alfa AmoduIdiose in Ilalawho was a student of Alfa Bello Alaluruquran; and later of Alfa Akewusola in Lagos [37]. He later returned home after graduation to establish his own school where he imparted knowledge onto the people. Through his academic efforts, he produced many other scholars among who were late Alfa SalawuBelgore and AlhajiJimohTafsir.

At Aran-Orin, Alfa Salahudeen, who believed that the Islamic faith cannot be deeply rooted without a Qur'anic school went to Ilorin to equip himself with sound Islamic knowledge under the pupilage of Alfa Sa'adu of Koro GurumohcompoundIlorin. After graduation, he returned home to establish a Quranic school from where notable scholars graduated. Alfa Ibrahim of Share embarked on the spread of Islamic education by travelling to far away Bida to learn, then returned home to establish his own school where he taught such subjects like Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Tafsir and Arabic grammar in which he trained many distinguished scholars. In Oro, apart from moving from place to place to preach Islam, Alfa Kuranga found time to impart knowledge to his students, who after graduation, returned to their various towns and villages to participate in intellectual *Jihad*. In Idofian, the spread of Islam and its education was undertaken by Alfa Idris, who was a student of Alfa Bello Agbeyangi. Alfa UthmanDikko and Alfa ZubairAtobiloye contributed immensely to the spread of Islam and Islamic education in Oke-Ode as they established Qura'nic schools from where many people from within and outside the town came to acquire knowledge.

The role of late Shaykh MuhammedKamaludeen Al-Adabiy, a distinguished scholar of fame in spreading Islam in Igbominnaland through the establishment of

schools, for training younger preachers and teachers; dispatch of sponsored teachers to various places within the area to preach and spread the message of Islam, paying personal visits to villages within and across to offer special prayers for the growth and development of the communities have made remarkable impact on the souls of Muslims. This giant of our time has led an exemplary, life to cement the faith of thousands among the Muslim *Ummah*. Among his closer associates was AlhajiJimoh Igbo-Owu, who indeed, was his right hand man.

Role of Muslim Organizations and Communities:

Borrowing a leaf from the action of the Babanloma branch of Jama'tNasirul Islam Society, many more branches sprang up and Ilorin became the headquarters with the pioneer Grand *Khadi* of Kwara State *Shari'ah* Court of Appeal, Hon. Justice AbdulkadirOrire as the State Chairman. Some other organizations started springing up and they include: An-sarudeen Society, *AnsarulIslam* Society, *Ahmadiyyah* Movement in Islam, Igbomina/Ekiti Muslim council, Young Muslims' Association of Nigeria (YMAN), Organization of Muslim Unity to mention, but a few of the above listed Muslim Organisations have established Primary and / or Secondary schools as highlighted below:

Jama'atNasirul Islam Society has established Primary Schools in the following six locations in Igbominaland: Share, Ora, Igbaja, Oke-Ode, Egudu and Owu-Isin, The society has also established secondary schools in the following five locations: Babaloma, Oke-Ola Oro, Egii Oyo-po, Owu-Isin and Oro-Ago. In addition to establishing primary and post-primary schools, the society has taken a step further to follow the "catch them young" slogan of the Christian crusaders in establishing Nursery/Primary Schools. Oro and Idofian branches of the society have laid good examples in this wise [38].

Ansarul-Islam Society with headquarters at Ilorin had earlier penetrated Igbominaland and established many primary and post-primary institutions. It has established primary schools in ten villages viz: Ijomu-Oro, Agbamu, Edidi-Alla, Share, Igbonla, Maloko, Owode-Ofaro, BalogunOja/Ajegunle, Iludun-Oro and Igbo-Owu. The six post-primary schools established by *Ansarul-Islam* are located at: Ijomu Oro, Igbonla, Maloko, Sanmara, Oke-Ode and Omu-Aran. The society has also embarked upon the establishment of Nursery /Primary Schools for young Muslim children. One has already been established in Ijomu-Oro since 1979 [39].

The Young Muslims' Association of Nigeria, with many branches in Igbominaland, in her determination to prevent Muslims youth from being converted into other faith on the pretence of education, established two Nursery/Primary schools at Aran-Orin and Omu-Aran in 1995 and 1997 respectively. Muslim communities in Igbominaland, influenced by Ilorin scholars and Muslims Association such as *Ansarul-Islam* Society under late Shaykh Muhammad Kamal-d-deen Al-Adabi also established secondary schools to cater for further education of pupils graduating from the primary and Arabic schools. Among the first of such to be established were: Oro Muslim High School, established in 1980, Muslim Secondary Commercial College (MUSECO), Igbaja and *Muhyideen* Arabic Secondary School, Kunmi, also in 1980. This author is aware that secular subjects in sciences, Arts and Commerce were taught in those schools along with Arabic and Islamic Studies [40].

The Ilorin Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies: The penetration, growth, indeed, spread of Islam in Igbominaland have largely been influenced by Ilorin factors, bothering on proximity, trading, preaching and teaching. Teachers of Ilorin origin who were sent out to enlighten the Muslims and their leaders to further show them how to perform certain Islamic rites such as *Janazah*, *Janabat*, *nikah* etc. Prominent among those who served in Aran-Orin were: Alfa WaliyyAlawaye and Late AlhajiSulaimanAlohunmata. As they were teaching the young ones about the rudiments of Islam and *Qura'n* reading, they held adult classes for old men and women. They were the brain behind the Muslim communities establishing their own primary schools as far back as 1957 [41].

Prominent among such teachers of the early Muslims in Igbominaland was Late AlhajiAbdullahi, (father of the present Imam Imale of Ilorin) who served at Makaranta in Omu-Aran. Also, AlhajiSa'dudinAjara a popular preacher today in Ilorin was sent to Ijomu-Oro in the late 50s by Shaykh Kamal-d-deen. Many of his pupils then are forging ahead in different parts of the country today.

Role of Lagos-Based Ilorin Scholars: It is pertinent for this paper to examine the role of Lagos-based Ilorin scholars in teaching Igbomina people resident in Lagos, the rudiments of Islam and preaching to them to sustain their faith in the religion. According to Jimoh, the early Igbominaland people in Lagos were known for two major activities: trading and *malahuna* (digging sand along the sea shores and selling in tipper lorry loads); although few

of them engaged as sailors [42]. He informed further that many Ilorin scholars based in Lagos have been and are still in very good rapport with Lagos-based Igbomina who also assisted them financially. They have greatly influenced their spiritual lives, but only a few will be mentioned and discussed briefly, they include:

Alfa AminuBabaita (d. 1940): It was revealed that he was fondly called Alfa, rather than Shaykh or Alhaji, Noble Igbomina Muslims who studied under him were: AlhajiJimohTafsir (of Ilala), having studied earlier under Shaykh Ghazali of Ijebu origin. These prominent students of Alfa Babaita like AlhajiJimohTafsir decided to stick to Islamic education when others' common trade then was *Malaahu* (*Okoepe* along the sea shore) or OjaEjinrin. Other students of Babaita were: Alfa SalahudeenAkorede of Idofian who is today the head of all Alfes in Idofian at home and abroad (i.e in Lagos); Alfa Dauda of Igbaja, who was the leader of all Alfes in Igbaja, Alfa Akosile of Oro who played a remarkable role in establishing Oro Muslim primary school; Alfa Ali Okeya, who later studied under *Zumurat-ul-Muminin*, died in 1950 and Alhaji Pupa, a popular preacher from Ajase-Ipo.

He opined further that, the closest individual to Alfa Babaita among the Igbominas was Alhaji Mustapha Lambe Oro, whose outstanding achievement would be attributed to the inspiration he received from Alfa Babaita, it is believed that God's answering of the prayers offered for him by Alfa Babaita made him to become a reputed businessman and a *Jihadist*, though not a scholar.

Shaykh Ali Olukade (d. 1994): He was a direct disciple Shaykh MuhammedKamaldeen, he was one of the senior *Ajanasi* (who read Quran with melodious voice) to his teacher for many decades. Some of the disciples that associated with Shaykh Olukade were: Alhaji Yusuf Onaolapo of Ilala, Alhaji Yusuf Mukadam, Late AlhajiSalahudeenYakubOmupothelate Chief Missioner of Igbonima/Ekiti Muslim Council and proprietor of a popular standard Arabic Institute before his demise in 2012. He was the most outstanding of Shaykh Olukade's disciples in Igbominaland [43].

Late As-Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori: This great Muslim legend extended the tentacles of his *da'wah* and educational activities to the Igbomina Muslims based in Lagos as submitted by our informant through his famous *Markaz and da'wah* programmes [44]. Among his distinct Igbomina students who later returned to spread Islam in Igbominaland are: Dr, Y.K. Jimoh of Ilala, a Senior Lecturer

at AL-Hikmah University, Ilorin. Ustadh Abdul Waheed Ariyibi and his elder brother, both from Ajase-Ipo. Shaykh Saad Onile, preacher, Shaykh Amusa Agboola, Dr. Otuyo of Omupo and Lecturer at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Alhaji Jimoh Balogun of Ila-Orangun, Shaykh Algamawi, Chief Imam of Omu-Aran and Abdulkadir Salaudeen, Chief Imam of Olanrewaju Mosque, Ilorin [45].

Shaykh Umar Agbaji: Another influential scholar who was turbaned as Chief Imam of Agbaji in 1971. He was a disciple of Alfa Awelenje Saki, Dr. Jimoh revealed that Shaykh Awelenje taught and trained the Late *Sufi* legend Muhammad Awwal of Omupo. He had great impact in the spiritual and educational life of Igbomina people in Lagos and at home.

Shaykh Muhammed Kamaldeen Al-Adabyy: This giant Islamic legend, founded Ansarul Islam Society in 1942. He influenced the Igbomina people spiritually and educationally [46]. While supporting the fortification of Igbomina Islamic faith in Lagos, he simultaneously called for them at home by sending Arabic and Islamic Studies teachers to their various villages, preaching and offering special prayers of peace and prayers. Under his command and influence, the first secondary school to be established in Nigeria by his society sprang up at Ijomu-Oro in 1971. Also, many primary schools and Arabic Schools were established in many towns and villages under the umbrella of Ansarul Islam Society.

Among Shaykh Kamaldeen's numerous disciples were: late Alh. Kamaldeen Buhari of Buhari town who combined trading with scholarship, Late Shaykh Yahaya Abolaji a popular preacher and *Mufassir* of Omu-Aran and Late Chairman of Igbomina/ Ekiti Muslim Council. These earlier disciples later influenced many Igbomina indigenes such as Late Shuayb Balogun of Ila, Late Ismail Olohungebe of Aran-Orin Chief Imam Ansaruldeen Kaduna, Late Rahman Igbaja, Late Abdur-Rahman Easaba of Owu-Isin, Ibrahim of Oke-Ode, (The *Rais Head Boy* of the popular Mahad in 1969), Salahudeen Jamiu Aran-Orin Chief Imam Ansaruldeen Kaduna, Jamiu Adewoye *Mufassir* of Ora- Igbomina, The present *Mufti* of Ila-Orangun Alhaji Muhammad Raji Balogun and so many others including the author of this paper.

Shaykh Muhammad Busayri Arikewuyo: Shaykh Muhammad Busayri Arikewuyo (d. 1999) hailed from Ilorin. He was born in 1916 to the family of Shaykh Muhammad al-Amin Arikewuyo at Abata Sunkere, A, Ilorin. He, however, grew and lived most of his life time in

Lagos, yet, without losing his native identity in any manner. He was a student and ardent disciple of Shaykh Ahmad Awelenje (Alfa Shaki, d. 1968). He was a profound Arabic and Islamic scholar and one of the prominent '*Ulama*' of his time in Lagos and its environs. He had a good number of students across the South-West Nigeria particularly from Lagos State, Oyo, Iseyin, Shaki, Ijebu Land, Egbaland, Osun, Ilorin and Igbomina Land to mention but a few. Prominent among his students from Igbomina Land include, but not limited to, Alhaji Jimoh Akolade (Idofian), Alfa Baba Raimi (Idofian), Alhaji Muhammad Jamiu Otuyo (Omupo), Alhaji Sule Akosile (Omupo), Shaykh Muhammad al-Awwal (Omupo), Alhaji Muhammad Isa (OmuAran), Alfa Ibrahim Ilala, Alhaji Abdul Salam (Iludun Oro) and lots of many others.

Shaykh Muhammad Busayri Arikewuyo was a renowned religious leader who impacted immensely on the life of his students and countless number of other people. He greatly influenced the thoughts and actions of his pupils as professed, for instance, by Alhaji Muhammad Jamiu Otuyo (Omupo) who, given his wealth, was persuaded by the Shaykh fruitfully to construct a Mosque in anticipation of eternal reward. The persuasion of the Shaykh fruitfully prompted the building of a big mosque at Olodi Apapa, Lagos and virtually made as a Central Mosque in the area. In appreciation of his guidance, requested his teacher and mentor, Shaykh Muhammad Busayri Arikewuyo, to be the pioneer Chief Imam of the Otuyo central mosque, Olodi Apapa, Lagos. The installation took place in 1978 and the position lasted till the death of the Shaykh in 1999. It is worthy of note that the Shaykh was also the pioneer *Imam Ratibi* of Ajidagba Mosque, Ago-Iro court, Lagos Island, Lagos from 1963-1999.

CONCLUSION

Ilorin Muslim scholars have impacted so greatly on the spread of Islam in Igbomina land to the extent that it will not be an overstatement to assert that they have been the indispensable link between Islamic in Igbomina land and Islamic Knowledge. This paper has dug deep into the various ways in which proximity and the urge to spread the good message of Islam coupled with the venerability of Igbomina businessmen in Lagos have all combined to make educated Muslims (Scholars) out of the hitherto ignorant Igbomina people. It can be safely concluded that the Ilorin scholars have been the foundation of the famous Knowledgeable giant Muslim scholars we have today to be Igbomina origin at home and abroad (i.e.

Lagos).The indelible mark left by Ilorin people on the sand of time in the struggle to take Islam to every nook and corner of Igbominaland will remain permanent in the minds of those of now and in the pages of history.

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