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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### OBA KUSAMOTU OYEWOLE AND THE FORMATION OF ISLAMIC SOCIETIES IN IKIRUN

Tosin Akinjobi

Ikirun is one of the earliest famous towns where Islam gained prominence in Yorubaland. The popular saying among some Yoruba groups that *Aiye laba ifa; aiye laba Imole; osan gangan ni Igbagbo wole* (Ifa predated humans, so also was Islam; Christianity came in our presence) is an eloquent testimony to the antiquity of Islam in Yorubaland. It shows that Islam had been in practice long before the advent of Christianity in Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Available records however show that Islam had been known in Oyo Empire as far back as the period of Alafin Ajiboyede, the thirteenth Alaafin and the last at Igboho. Given the pervasiveness of Oyo in virtually every part of Yorubaland, it is logical to infer that many towns in Yorubaland would have featured pockets of Muslim communities as far back as in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Although the formal introduction of Islam to Ikirun dates back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Oba Aliyu Oyewole as the Akirun, as one of the prominent Yoruba cities, there seemed to have been some elements of Islamic influence in Ikirun long before it was formally introduced. A tradition attributes the infiltration of Islam into Ikirun to the activities of Hausa kola nut traders in the town prior the ascension to the throne of Oba Oyewole. Having examined the contributions of Oyewole dynasty to the growth of Islam in Ikirun in one of the previous chapters, this chapter discusses the significant role of Oba Kusamotu Oyewole to the propagation of Islam through the formation of Islamic societies in Ikirun.

As the formal introduction of Islam is credited to Oba Aliyu Oyewole and Oba Akadiri to the re-introduction of Sharia practices in Ikirun, the reign of Oba Kusamotu Oyewole is remarkable for the formation of Islamic organisations in Ikirun. Oba Kusamotu was notable for his generosity towards the establishment of Islamic societies and Arabic schools. Consequent to the expansion and consolidation of Islam in Ikirun and the proselytizing activities of the itinerant scholars, prominent among whom were Shaykh Ya'qub and Sālih b. Muhammad b. Junta, was the formation of Islamic societies to promote social contacts, cooperation and interaction among the Muslims of Ikirun. The formation of these societies dignified the efforts of the Islamic scholars as being fruitful as evidenced in the development of Muslim communities, which complemented the efforts of the scholars in fostering Islamic propagation in Ikirun.

Significant factor which attracted the local people to the Islamic societies was the songs composed in Arabic and drum beating which was used to accompany the rendition of the songs. The attractiveness of the societies made the indigenous people attend the Qur'ānic centres for deeper familiarity with the Arabic songs and programmes of the societies. Prominent among these societies were: Egbe Ilesanmi founded in 1931, Egbe Anabi lo nigba in 1933, Egbe Alasalatu in 1938, Egbe Ajenifuja in 1948 and also Egbe Kila founded in 1952.

### **Nawair-ud-deen Muslim Society, Ikirun**

One notable Muslim society in Ikirun was Nawair-ud-deen Society founded in 1940 by Shaykh Ya'qūb 'al-Mukhtār.

Shaykh Ya'qūb was one of the Islamic and Arabic scholars who left an imprint on the history of Arabic scholarship in Yorubaland, from the middle of the 1930s until his death in 1965. Nawair-ud-deen Society founded the first Muslim Primary School in Ikirun in 1948. The school was named Nawa'ir al-Din and the standard subjects of the public school system were taught along with Arabic and Islamic studies. It is pertinent to note that the establishment of Muslim schools within the mainstream of public school system was part of the Muslim's defence mechanism to protect their children from the risk of indoctrination and conversion to Christianity. It is reported that between 1948 and 1955, seventeen Nawair-ud-deen primary schools were established in Ikirun and its surrounding towns with Shaykh Ya'qūb as local proprietor under the umbrella of the national organisation. He paved the way for Ikirun Muslims to gain Western formal education in order to participate in the political and economic life of Nigeria in the race toward political independence in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Nawair-ud-deen society as well as Egbe Ajenifuja and Egbe Kila were embraced by Oba Kusamotu Oyewole. Due to the good will of Oba Kosamotu and his patronage towards these societies as well as other commendable efforts on Islamic propagation, a twenty-nine-line *Qasidah* (poetic encomia), entitled *Qasidah fī madh Akinrun* by 'Ahmad b. Tamīm b. 'Alī b. 'Īsā, a peripatetic scholar from Ilorin, was composed in his praise in 1943.

### **Ansar-ud-Deen Muslim Society**

Ansar-ud-Deen Society is not an indigenous Islamic movement to Nigeria. It has network in most countries of the world. The movement derived its name from Prophet Isa, whom his followers called themselves Ansar, meaning the helper. Invariably, Ansar means the helpers to the work of

Allah. Due to the belief that those regarded as Ansar are helpers to the work of Allah, the movement started to gain Muslims' confidence as they joined and extended the movement to other parts of the world. In Nigeria, the establishment of the society is credited to a band of Muslim young men who conducted for some years open lectures on Islamic knowledge at Balogun Square, Lagos.

In fact, the major objective for the formation of the society was to generate financial potency to carry out open lectures within and outside Lagos and to advance the Muslim community. As a result, these young Muslim men called for a meeting with other Muslim young men. The resolution of the meeting, which was held at the residence of Alhaji Alawiye on 9 November 1923, culminated into the inauguration of the society with the brand, Young Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria on 21 December 1923. In the course of the meeting, Mr B. Gbajabiamila, who later became the first general secretary, emphasised in his address to the gathering that Western Education should be considered an instrument through which Islam can be better studied and understood. He however attributed to the lack of proper knowledge of the significance of Islam and the inability to grasp its true spirit. He consequently suggested the formation of a society whose objectives should include primarily, the establishment of schools for the education of Muslim children. The view was unanimously endorsed by the house and the society was named Young Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria, which was later changed to the Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria. The objectives of Ansar-ud-deen as an Islamic organisation are embedded in education, reformation, propagation and defence of Islam.

In December 1923 when the Young Ansar-ud-Deen society was inaugurated, there were only 42 members. As years went by, the membership of the society expanded and extended to Muslims in different parts of Nigeria that in

recent times, the society is recorded to have about three hundred (300) branches in the country. These branches are under the management of various states councils, which include the Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo/Ekiti and Northern States Councils. Beneath the state councils are zonal branches and branches at local levels. The branch of the Ansar-ud-Deen Society in Osun State was inaugurated in an open address delivered at the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference of the society by the National President, Alhaji R. S. Ola Oki in Osogbo on 1 May 1992.

The Osun State Council of Ansar-ud-deen is divided into seven zones, including Osogbo, Ejigbo/Iwo, Irewole/Ayedade, Ede, Ife, Ilesa and Ipetu-Ijesa zones. The Osun State Council of Ansar-ud-deen Society has about 45 branches in her area of jurisdiction and almost all the branches have Ansar-ud-deen Primary Schools. Ikirun is under Osogbo zone because of its proximity to Osogbo, which is the state capital. Each zonal council has supervisory role over the branches in its area of jurisdiction. Branches in places with huge population are divided into divisions as expansion may demand. Correspondences from branch secretaries pass through the zonal secretaries to the State Secretary and to the National Secretary.

As one of the objectives of the Ansar-ud-deen Society, education is seen as significance to Islamic scholarship. As a result, the society seeks to establish and maintain educational institutions, encourage literary and intellectual pursuits among the Muslims, keep and maintain library for the use of members and undertake generally activities that may tend to promote education of Muslims. In its quest for Islamic reformation, the society seeks to adopt measures to promote the religious, moral and social advancement of the Muslim community, eradicate forms of iniquity that have crept into the Islamic religion, and foster feelings of brotherhood among Muslims.

In propagating and defending Islam, Ansar-ud-deen Society aims at undertaking the translation of the holy Qur'ān and other Islamic books into different languages, and to publish and circulate these books among Muslims as well as non-Muslims; to establish periodical magazines and newspaper devoted to the interest and cause of Islam, and to construct mosques at strategic locations. Ansar-ud-deen Society engages in other activities aside the aforementioned. These include the promotion of co-operation, unity and welfare of the Muslim community and taking up the guardianship responsibilities of the less privileged young Muslims who are the future architects of Muslim progress and developments in Nigeria

At each local levels, Ikirun inclusive, Ansar-ud-deen society embark on religious activities in order to promote the growth of Islam in the localities. These activities range from *Nikkah* (Marriage), *Aqiqah* (Naming), *Janazah* (Burial), House warming to many others as may be approved by the zonal council through the state executive council of the society. Coupled with these are other activities such as are organized occasionally. They include Jumat services, observance of Muslim festivals, Ramadan special lecture and special Prayers. Occasionally, rotational Jumat services are organized among the Imams of branches in the zone and in the state in order to foster unity and Islamic brotherhood among members and to give room for diversity in sermons. As a result, the Imams of the branches are interchanged from one branch to another.

The society also holds public functions in celebration of Islamic festivals such as Hijrah celebration (Muslim New Year), *Mawlud Nabiyy* (The birthday of the Prophet), *Eid ul Fitri* (End of Ramadan fasting) and *Eid ul Kabir* (Ileya). From time to time at the State Council's Headquarters, Ansar-ud-deen Central Mosque, Sabo, Osogbo, delegates from Ikirun and from other branches under the management of Osogbo zone and from other zones in the state council assemble for

special prayers for peace, tranquillity and other strategic purposes for the country.

The Ikirun branch of Ansar-ud-deen join the other branch missionaries throughout the zone and the state during the month of Ramadan to engage in daily conduct of *Tafsir al Qur'ān* (Exegesis or Commentary of the Qur'ān); and the National Chief Imam is usually hosted in the state for special *Tafsir*, for the members and entire Muslims who wish to participate.

### **The Faaya Group of Ikirun**

The Faaya group of Ikirun is a branch of *Zumratul-Mu mini n* Society also known as Bamidele Movement, a reform movement based in Ibadan, the foundation of which is credited to Alfa Abdus-Salami Bamidele Bada. The movement has networks in many parts of Yorubaland as well as throughout Nigeria and to Togo, Dahomey, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Cameroon. The establishment of a branch of Bamidele movement in Ikirun town is credited to Alhaji Abdul-Aziz Afolabi, one of the distinguished students of Alfa Bamidele Bada.

Born in 1910 at Ikirun, Alhaji Afolabi attended the Arabic School of Alfa Bamidele Bada in Amunigun, Ibadan where he was a student for eight years. Due to his interest in Islamic scholarship, having completed Arabic and Islamic education, Alhaji Afolabi stayed with his mentor to gain more knowledge and experience in Arabic and Islamic education. In no time, Alhaji Afolabi graduated into a renowned Islamic scholar who travelled as far as Port Novo to preach Islam before he retired home to Ikirun, where he established his own Islamic group and embarked on public preachings. Alhaji Afolabi is reported to be critical and bold in his preaching against idol worship. This personal attribute of his earned him the forename *Alfa Faaya* of



which all students who graduated from his Arabic school are known as *Faaya* till date. He believed in the idea of exposing the evil doers, the idol worshippers and those who pluralise God. Thus, it could be inferred that Alhaji Afolabi waged war of tongue on idol worshippers.

Alfa Faaya went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964 and on his return established an Arabic school in his house at Okeba, Ikirun in 1966. He was a credible scholar under whom prominent students who later championed the propagation of Islam and reformation of ideas within the Muslim community in Ikirun were groomed. These students later became his followers and members of his group. As a branch of Bamidele Movement, the doctrinal teachings of the movement, which include the application of *Shari'ah*, the belief that male Muslims should wear the turban whenever they go outside their house while female Muslims should put on veil and remain under purdah, are also found with the *Faaya* group. The dressing therefore easily identifies members of *Faaya* group. Their practices, including dressing are considered as part of what *Shari'ah* articulates, they also take *Shari'ah* as a legal system on matters and apply it among their members.

The most significant aspect of *Shari'ah* practice which *Faaya* group focuses is the area of *Talāq* – divorce. To Alfa Bamidele Bada, divorce is considered unislamic if a marriage consummated according to *Shari'ah* law is allowed to be dissolved according to the Customary law. Therefore, *Shari'ah* law is used to therefore address such cases to prevent unnecessary exposition of the matrimonial problems of its members to the customary courts whose judges are considered to know virtually nothing about Islamic laws as regards divorce. Such cases were therefore referred to the *Fayaa* court, which he established in his house, for adjudication in Islamic laws. He was the *Qādi* and was supported by prominent members of his group who were knowledgeable in Islamic jurisprudence.

Adjudication in divorce cases were usually preceded by reconciliation between the couples according to the *Shari'ah*. It was when reconciliatory attempts fail that dissolution of marriage was resorted to while the woman concerned would proceed on *Iddah-at-Talāq* (waiting period) at a special apartment provided for such purpose in Alfa *Faaya's* house. While the woman is observing *Iddah*, no man would be granted access to see the woman except her husband whom she intended to divorce. This is however an attempt for possible reconciliation. Prominent among the divorce cases adjudicated by Alfa *Faaya* were between Alfa Muhammed Isola and Mulikat Isola and Tiamiyu Adelabu Akomonikewu and Rabiya Akanke. In the former case, Alfa Muhammed was accused and found guilty of infidelity. He was not entitled to any refund of bride price (*Sadaq*). Mulikat re-married to Alfa Tiamiyu Owolabi, a staunch member of the group after she observed her *Iddah*. In the latter case, Rabiya proposed divorcing on the ground of the insanity of her husband. After failed attempts of reconciliation, the marriage was dissolved and Rabiya re-married a member of the group, Gbadamosi Akanni at the expiration of her *Iddah*.

Other cases aside from divorce cases adjudicated in *Faaya* group are *Zinā* – adultery and inheritance. It is reported that Alfa *Faaya* carried out the distribution of the properties of a deceased, Sulaiman of Amulese's compound according to *Shari'ah* law in 1984. A case of *Zina* where Alfa *Faaya* adjudicated involved one of his students, Alfa Ibrahim who was accused, investigated and found guilty of adultery. According to the *Shari'ah* law, he was supposed to be punished by giving him a hundred strokes of cane. However, he refused the punishment and renounced the group. Another related case was that of another *Faaya's* student, Jamiu Afon. He was found guilty and sentenced to a hundred strokes of cane. The punishment was given on 3 February 1992 while the members and students of *Faaya* School witnessed it.

Makinde observed that members of *Zumratul-Mūmini n* as well as its branches, of which Faaya group is one, are pleased with the judgment of cases adjudicated in Islamic laws. Members are noted to be sincere and committed to the course of the movement and its teachings as they take judgements of *Shari'ah* court in good faith considering it as the injunction of Allah, which must be followed. The application of *Shari'ah* law among the members of this movement therefore continues till date. In the course of carrying out *Shari'ah* judgement, all *Imams*, *Ulamas* and other knowledgeable Islamic scholars are usually involved.

### **Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Ikirun**

The establishment of Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ikirun in 1969 is credited to Mr. Dauda Aborisade, a member of the mission at Odo-Ona, who was a staff of the Oyo State Ministry of Agriculture at Odo-Ona before he was transferred to Ikirun in a bid to open an agricultural extension service office at the Osun North-East Division formally an Old division of Oyo State. On his transfer to Ikirun, he solicited the service of a friend, Kazeem Eniola, a vendor to distribute Amadiyya literature and calendars.

He was versed in Islamic teaching and practice. He was regarded as a credible Muslim missionary and eloquent Islamic scholar as he was respected by the Islamic clerics and scholars of the town. To further his preaching and missionary activities, Aborisade requested from the then Amir Maulana F. I. Anweri for missionary assistance. In response to his request however, the Amir posted *Maullim* Abdul A J J Bada from Ado-Ekiti to Aborisade in Ikirun. *Maullim* Tola Kareem succeeded *Maullim* Bada in 1972. Among Abirisade's pioneer members and converts were Kazeem Eniola and Salami Adeyemi, who served as Chairman of the mission

Aborisade was involved in religious dialogues and debates, prominent of which involved Alhaji Yunusa Sanusi, one of the leaders of Nasril Islamic Society in Ikirun. In 1972, Aborisade acquired a land property on which was built a sizeable mosque. The foundation laying ceremony of the mosque was performed by the then Amir, Maulana M. A. Shahid. It took two years to complete the mosque. Aborisade had support from the Muslim within and outside of the community. For instance, a non-Ahmadi Muslim friend of the mission, Alhaji Raji Kolade of Ilobu donated six bundles of roofing sheets.

The activities of Jama'at mission have extended to neighbouring towns, notable of which is Iree town. The activities of the mission in Iree are under the supervision of *Muallim* M. J. Raji, who was posted to Iree as a missionary and other two brothers, Sanusi Ladosu and Dauda Aborisade. The construction of the mission's mosque in Iree was approved by the former Amir, Maulvi Abdul Rasheed Agboola with a support of one hundred bags of cements from the headquarters.

### **Islamic scholarship in Ikirun**

The rationale for the establishment of Muslim schools in predominantly Muslim communities was to guard against the conversion of Muslim children to Christianity in missionary schools. The Muslims showed apathy towards the Christian's monopoly of western education. As a result, Islamic societies set out to establish Islamic schools where Arabic and Islamic studies along with western education would be given to pupils. It is pertinent to note that it was not only Muslim societies that established schools, private individuals who were interested in Islamic scholarships also established Muslim schools. In recent times, most of these schools have been taken over by the government and children from both Islamic and Christian background

attend the schools. Below is a list of Muslim schools in Ifelodun Local Government Area Council, in Ikirun.

- a. Nawa'ir al-Deen Primary School 1, Ikirun
- b. Nawa'ir al-Deen Primary School 2, Ikirun
- c. Nawa'ir al-Deen Primary School 3, Ikirun
- d. Nawa'ir al-Deen Primary School, Obaagun
- e. Nawa'ir al-Deen Primary School, Iba
- f. Ona-Olapo Memorial Muslim School

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has undertaken an exploration of the formation of Islamic organizations in Ikirun. While Oba Aliyu Oyewole and Oba Akadiri Oyewole made significant impacts in the growth and consolidation of Islam in Ikirun, Oba Kusamotu Oyewole further propagated the cause of Islam through his attractive disposition towards the formation of Muslim organisations in the town. The springing up of Muslim communities and organizations was as a result of the momentous contributions of the itinerant Islamic and Arabic scholars who found in Ikirun an Islamic fertile land and grew Muslims who were groomed in Islamic practices and scholarship. The efforts of these scholars in the propagation of Islam were further complemented through the formation of Muslim communities to strengthen the spirit of brotherhood, promote social contacts, cooperation and interaction among the Muslims of Ikirun. Through the efforts of the notable Islamic scholars and consequently the establishment of Islamic

organisations, Ikirun grew to become a prominent centre of Islamic practice in the southwestern Nigeria.

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