

CONTRIBUTIONS OF SELECTED MUSLIM ORGANIZATION TO THE LEARNING OF ISLAM IN IGALA LAND: A PANACEA TO NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

Islam lightened the world with its unique knowledge and civilization as it encourages its adherents to traverse and search for knowledge. Knowledge has been the bedrock of any society, especially Islamic knowledge which is the shield against falling into Allah's prohibitions and social vices. This is done through many means of dissemination among which is the Muslim organization in various societies including Igala land. However, the contribution of these organizations such as council of Imams and Ulama, Jama'at Nasir Islam and Jama'at Ahbah sheikh Abubakar Sidiq Okpo, Abuja among others have not been properly examined for documentation. Therefore, this paper aimed at studying the historical background, aim and objective as well as achievement of these in Igala land. The study adopted historical and descriptive methods of research which have assisted in investigating the method of Da'wah of each organization and their objectives in promoting the learning of Islamic knowledge in Igala Land. The research found that the learning of Islamic knowledge was not majorly patronized in Igala Land. And then selected organizations delved into actions to promote the learning of Islam in the study area. This paper, however made recommendations and concluding that the effort of promoting Islamic learning should not be left to the Muslim organizations alone and that the da'wah activities of these

organizations in Igala Land need further research either for documentation purpose or improvement of these activities by the organizations.

Key words: Contribution, Selected Muslim Organization Learning Igalaland Panacea Nation-building

Introduction

The dissemination of Islamic Knowledge in the societies is majorly carried out and spread by Muslim's organization of different location in North-Central Nigeria. This started from the Masjid where religious educations were taught to the Muslims. This shows that Islam came along with its education to develop and improve not only the religious life of the Muslims but also their socio-economic lives. To have better and an improved society, some Muslims came up with different means of improving their learning of Islam in their communities. Thus, coming together became necessary in observing the religious rights in the communities as Islam frowns at disunity and condemns divisions among the Muslim Ummah, as in the Quran, the Almighty Allah enjoins the believers thus:

'And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah (i.e this Qur'an), and be not divided among yourselves,' (Q.3:103)

On the above, Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) said: 'a group is beneficial and loneliness attracts punishment' Based on the significance of congregation, the Islamic law emphasizes that Sallah is to be observed congregationally; Ramadan, which is one of the pillars of Islam, is observed globally together and Hajj is to be performed at the same time worldwide. It is on this basis too that the Muslims came together in different times and places to establish organization with the specific aim of propagating and spreading the Islamic messages.

It is important to note that the propagation of Islam, which is the main objective of these Muslim organizations, could be done by correcting the mistakes of the Muslims and inviting the non Muslims into the religion of Islam.

Since early times, Islam has been promoted through education with the prominent roles played by the companions of the Prophet and scholars of Islam respectively. This owes in part to the centrality of scripture and its study in the Islamic world. By this, Islam places a high value on knowledge, hence, it commands its adherents to traverse for the purpose of seeking knowledge, which will in turn modify and create a universal, cohesive social order and do curb social vices among Muslims.

More interestingly, learning of Islam which entails study its compartmentalization such as Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic History, Jurisprudence

etc. has the capability of correcting the societal vices. Nevertheless, learning of Islam could lay sound foundation for individual, family, and social life to promote true believers of Islam and good citizens for a peaceful and harmonious society. Particularly, it promotes peace and harmony in the society in the society. More importantly, Islamic learning teaches the obedience of Allah and His Prophet. Thus, the impact of Islamic learning cannot be over emphasized because of its great impact on learner's life and making them useful individuals for their society to enhance nation building. These benefits had brought up many Muslim organization in the contemporary societies, particularly, in Igala land.

It is important to note that Muslims in different localities perceive the commandment in Q3:103 as a challenge to invite people to the way Allah by promoting Islamic learning in one way or the other. As such, some personalities joined hands to establish a group (Jama'ah) with the aim of inviting people to Islam. While doing this, they found aids; as it is believed that Islam cannot be practiced except with its knowledge.

Teaching both the Muslims and non Muslims (who have converted to Islam) the true knowledge of Islam through Arabic and Islamic schools, Da'wah programmers,

Etc; is the priority of these foundation of those organization. In the light of the foregoing, this paper examines the contribution of selected Muslim Organizations to the learning of Islam in Igala land.

To achieve this set objective, the paper is divided into sections. Abstract, the introduction, brief history of Igala land, emergence of Islam in Igala Land, development of Islamic knowledge in Igala land, contributions of selected Muslim organization in Igala land the conclusion.

HISTOTRICAL BACKGROUND OF IGALA LAND

- A. Geographical location of Igala land
- B. Population
- C. Climate and vegetation
- D. Economy

A Geographical Location of Igala land

Igala land is situated on the bank of the rivers Niger and Benue boards on the Benue to the north and on Nsukka and Onitsha (in Anambara states) to the south, while the river Niger and Igala land bound it to the west and east respectively.

The land (Igalaland) covers an area of approximately 33, 589 square kilometers. Igalaland is situated between $6^{\circ} - 10^{\circ}$ latitude north and $6^{\circ} - 11^{\circ}$ longitude ease. (Philip 58)

The present boundaries of Igala land do not coincide exactly with the traditional limits of the Igala kingdom. The greater part of Idomaland in (Benue state), Nsukka area (north of Onitsha) were parts of the Igala kingdom and have Igala language as their major spoken language. The Attah Igala exercised suzerainty over them before the later boundary adjumant. The strategic position of Igala land has brought it into contact with many ethnic groups (Okwoli 1)

A conspicuous feature of the northern part of Igala is Udi plateau. Udi is a town in the east central state of Nigeria which gave its name to plateau on which it lies. This plateau extends to the heart of Igala land. Thousand of the Igala people live on this plateau. The districts of OGUGU, OLAMABORO, IMANE, ENJEME, ANKPA, OKURA, and DEKINA are situated on this plateau. In Igala land, this plateau serves as a watersheds to villages and towns with insufficient water. The rivers flowing westwards to the Niger are the OFU, OKURA, IMABOLO, ANAMBARA, AND UBELE and the others flowing north wards to the Benue are ONUKPO, OMALA AND BAGANA.

In the southern part of Igala land along eastern bank of the Niger is a low. Land-the Niger ANAMBARA low-land. IBAJI district is found in this area. This area is flooded annually. (OKWOLI 2)

The people of Igala land are undivided by major dialectic different, though some minor dialects are evident. The IDAH dialect, central dialect, the DEKINA dialect with BASSA-IGBIRA influence, these Ankpa dialect with IDOMA influence and trans-Niger ANAMBARA dialect, (in IBAJI) WITH Ibo influence are noted. Hausa language was used frequently and I still being used especially for trade. The advent of the British administration and the activities of the missionaries spread the English language to every part Igala land. (Okwoli 4) but there are also other ethnic groups living with the Igala in the land. These are the Bassa Komo and Bassa Nge people.

The building today have taken a different pattern form the traditional types. Round, mud walls with thatched roofs have given way to modern concrete walls with corrugated Due to the government administrative reforms in Decemeber, 1968, the former Igala division (comparing all Igala land) was split into three administrative divisions namely: Idah Ankpa and Dekina, Idah and Ankpa comprised of seven Districts each, while Dekina comprised of six districts, under a sole administrator. (Jacob 40)

Idah

One of the oldest Nigerian town and was founded about the 12th century. It has a population of 79815, according to 2007 national census. Idah combines ancient and modern characteristics. These include the Attah's palace, titles like achedu and the IGALAMELA, the Royal traditional councilors

work, dyeing and leather work. Modern hotels schools and colleges appear side with old mud houses with thatched roofs. (Okwoli 34)

Ankpa

Historically, Ankpa has been an important town in Igala land. It is the traditional seat of the Attah's is powerful provincial (district) governor-the Onu Ankpa , based at OFEKE.

Ankpa is the meeting point of land routes, as the roads from Otukpo, Nsukka and Enugu, Abejukolo and shintaaku converge at Ankpa. It is a commercial centre serving the surrounding district and across the Igala land. The Ankapa market and Afor gamgam (5 miles away) are the largest in Ankpa division. Ankpa has been political hot spot' in Igala land. The Ankpa revolts of 1903 which led to its military occupation for thirty (30) years (1903-33), the 1956 Ankpa separatist movement which demanded separate local Govt authority for Idah. This demand was satisfied in 1968 when former Igala native authority area was split into three divisions Ankpa, Dekina, Idah. Ankpa became the capital of Ankpa division since the creation of the division. (Okwoli 6)

Dekina

Dekina was the capital former BASSA province when the protectorates of northern and southern Nigeria was proclaimed in 1900. This importance of Dekina lies in the fact that it has been the seat of Onu Ajobi or Achema Ajobi, one of the important chiefs of the Attah Igala.

In 1933, the former Igala native authority built primary school there (in Dekina), thus making it ne of the earliest seats of western education in Igalaland. (Okwoli 6)

B. Population

Igalaland is made up of nine (9) local government areas which include: Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Idah, Ibaji, Igalamela/Odolu, Ofu, Olamaboro and Omala local government areas. All the people in these local government speak Igala

As their indigenous language. The only minorities In the land are the Bassa who constitutes the Bassa Nge and Bassa Komo respectively and that Ibaji who due to their location at the boarder with Ibos have Ibo influence In their spoken Igala.

According to the result of the 2007 national population census conducted by the National Population commission, Igalaland based on the mine local government areas in the land stood at 1,484,345. (P.B 190)

Igalaland (Udo 27). The soil is quite fertile for the cultivation of various crops according to the vegetation. Igalaland is however, generally level land.

EMERGENCE OF ISLAM IGALA LAND

One of the most effective vehicles of diffusing ideas including those of religion is trade. The fact that markets developed within the confluence zone including Igalaland which used to attract Muslim traders from as far as Kano, Gobir, Borno and elsewhere before the 1804 jihad of Sheykh Uthman bn fodio indicates that the indigenous population (of Igala people) must have become familiar with its adherents (Muslim traders). (Odiba 8) According to Ade Ajayi, Igala people though mostly farmers and hunters, participated in the trading networks which brought together Hausa, Borno, Arabs, Yoruba, Nupe, Idoma and Igala traders in the markets around the confluence. Igala kingdom, in addition, dominated the trade as the Niger water ways in the middleman position towards the north of the confluence and as far as Agboh. (Ajayi 23) Since some of the traders coming down from Hausa land, Borno and Nupe to the confluence including the Igala people who participated actively in the trade were in contact with Islam before the 19th century jihads.

Apart from the commercial links through which Islam entered into Igalaland, there were also the political activities of the Jukun. The Jukun were politically very influential around the confluence region including the Igalaland. They were said to have reduced the Igala kingdom to vassalage up to about the end of the 17th century when Attah Ayegba Om'Idoko reportedly wrestled Igala's independence from them (Young 35) (M.W. Young) the Ochala Angwa Ayegba, Idah, the head of the Original house community settles, whose ancestors were reportedly invited from Bebeji in Kano during the Igala war of independence, claimed that before the invitation of his ancestors, Muslims used to come to Idah (the then headquarter of Igala kingdom) and go back. They came to Igala land for trading. Afro-gamgam in Ankpa and Ejule market in Idah were of the most popular international markets in Igalaland, where horses from the south. (OKOLI 7)

The firmly established tradition of Islamic penetration into Igala land came with the Jukun-Igala war of independence under Attah Ayegba Om'Idoko towards the close of the 17th century. One version of the tradition as related by the Ochala Angwa is that Attah Ayegba in his bid to fight for independence for his subjects from the Apa (Jukuns) invited some Mallams (Almajirats) from Bebeji in Kano to prepare Asiri (charm) which could assist him in the wars against the apparently militarily superior Jukun forces. The Mallams led by Abu Adatche (war title leader) Mallam Umaru and Mallam Zakari prepared various charms of the Attah. These were believed to have helped the

Attah's Ayegba after the war request the Mallam s to settle at Idah and gave them some Igala women to marry.

Other version of the tradition allege that the Mallam s that the Attah brought recommended to live burial of the Attah's most beautiful and beloved daughter Inikpi, if he hoped to gain the upper hand in war against the Apa people (Jukuns) thus salon's version ads quote in Boston which refers to the Mallam s as Nupe reads:

In Ayegba's reign, the Jukun under Apa attacked Idah, and was Unable to make any head way against them. He asked certain learned Nupe Mallam what he could to change the fortune of

War He replied: if you do not wish to lose both your title and your land you msut sacrifice the daughter you love so much to the spirits of this land (inipki was buried alive at the market place) . after her death the Mallam supplied the Attah with some charms which were throw into the river Inachalo. The Jukuns who were camped on the far bank, at the fish taken from river and many of them died. The remainder was scatted by Attah Ayegba and his followers. (Boston 62)

There is an important issue emerge from his tradition

The alleged Mallam's recommendation of human sacrifice for posterity the nature of their charms and how those could provide insight into their type of Islam is of course abnormal; one will argue for a Muslim especially a Mallam to recommend human sacrifice which is completely condemned in Islam NO wonder then, this tradition from the source in the areas of belief, worship, marriage and even in cultural integration.

Regardless of their magic play In Igaland, Islam entered the area through the Hausas who, some through trade and others on Attah's invitation of the area on rescue mission spiritually, they brought Islam and so some people in Igala land

Embraced in practiced it as they saw them practicing this indeed has a spillover effect on islamic practice in igala land till today. As some believe in certain tradition as part of Islam such as Ogani festival in Angwa idah and Ankpa respectively.

A. COUNCIL OF IMAMS AND ULAMAU ITS ESTABLISHMENT

Council of imams and Ulamau of Nigeria was calved out of the supreme Council for Islamic affairs to cater for the welfare of the imams and Ulamau in Nigeria Kogi state chapter of the Council was founded in 1992 with the state Secretariat at Lokoja, the state capital where the Executive secretary is the administrative head with the chairman as the ceremonial head. The

kogi East branch was established immediately after the constitution of the state executive council with the late Alh.

5. Organize worships, seminar and symposium for Imams and Ulama for common stand

ITS ACHIEVEMENTS

The aim of the organization in promoting Islam and well_ being of Muslims generally has prompted the organization to embark on different establishments that will aid the standard of leaving of Muslims and leaning of Islam in Igala land.

Hence among its achievements are the::

1. Establishment of Arabic and Islamic schools including colleges
2. Establishment of Islamic and health centers
3. Establishment of Islamic and vocational studies Center
4. Establishment of institute of Islamic studies
5. Organized and maintaining regular dawah across Igala land

Its contribution of Islamic leaning in Igala land

As it was said above, the contributions of the selected organization is not limited to the establishment of schools only but Islamic Leaning Aids are also given much attention. The council as one of the organization in Igala land has, in ramifications, contributed immensely to the learning of Islam in Igala land by establishing Arabic and Islamic school in 2011, the organization started to train its

Member on spiritual intellectual, moral and social way to have the qualifies required of Muslim this includes majorly the youths Imams and Muslim leaders. This training goes on everyday which include religious learning such as jurisprudence Qur'an, Hadith and other related subjects. It was started in the organization's achievement, many Islamic schools crop up including colleges. Moreover it creates e_ radio and television for the student; this will help them to be able to listen and watch Islamic news such as Islamic history and others on social media.

B. JAMA'ATUL NASRIL ISLAM, IGALA LAND ITS ESTABLISHMENT

The idea of the formation of JNI came up in 1962 after the return of the them premier of Northern Nigeria Alhaji (sir) Ahmadu Bello (Sardanna of Sokoto from pilgrimage in Makkah.)

The organization was formed as a society for the support of Islam as an umbrella group for the Nigerian Muslim community. Its national headquarters is In Kaduna and its president is the sultan of Sokoto the organization conduct Islamic education and missionary work in Nigeria

In Igala land, the organization was formally launched in the year 2015 with Alh. Muhammad Nasirudeen as the Kogi East (Igala land) Coordinator

well wisher parents who intend to enroll their wards in Islamic schools. The organization held that western education can be acquired without losing one's Islamic religious knowledge and faith. It also built mosque for some Muslim communities in Igala land

C. JAMA'ATUL AHBAB SHEIKH ABUBAKAR SEDIQ OKPO ITS ESTABLISHMENT

The association named "Jama'atu Ahabab sheikh Abubakar Sediq Okpo Abuja is a prominent Muslim organization in Igala land which was founded in the years 2008 in Honor of Fadeelatu sheikh Abubakar Sediq Okpo a prominent scholar of Islam in Igala land, a Philanthropist and a lover of prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) the organization was founded in honor of his name following his track record of significant efforts and contribution to the development of Islam generally especially in the areas of Islamic knowledge, western education of the muslims across all the local government areas in Igala land building and supporting in the building of masjid (Mosque), Prying for muslims to perform Hajj and lesser Hajj (Umrah) giving scholarship to students across Igala land and beyond among others.

The association was founded by Alh. Muhammed Mustapha bn sheikh Abubakar Generally Alh. Mustapha Abubakar Imam (Sheikh Abubakar Generally Ankpa) Is the Khalifah sheikh Abubakar general was a student of sheikh Ibrahim inyass Kholakh. He studied under the sheikh Ibrahim Inyass (RTA) and was freed by his master to go back to Igala land and propagate Islam with his blessings. After propagating Islam for many years, he died on the 7th of august, 2004 and was burned in Anpka.

After the death of Sheikh Abubakar general Muhammed Mustapha assumed the position of Khalifah of his late father. The kalifah who is a learned scholar too and have been with his late father closely has been able to carry out the assignment in continuaton of the works his father (sheikh General) was doing before his death. It was the process of this great assignment that he came across Sheikh General. Propagating Islam together and seeing the marvelous contributions of Sheikh Abubakar Sediq Okpo, Alh Mustapha Khalifah General let the group with the companion of some of the scholars founded the organization "jama'atu Ahabab sheikh Abubakar Sediq Okpo in the year 2008. Up till today, the organization has remarkably contributed to development of Islam in Igala land and beyond. Among the principal officials of the organization include Alh. Mustapha Khalifah sheikh General, Alh Yahaya Alfa (sarduna faila), ustaz Yunusa Ahmed Odiba, mal.Yahaya Kasim, Mal. Muammad tijani Ustaz Idrees Jibril Imam and Hajia Fatima Suleiman representing the woman folk.

ITS AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Behind the establishment of this organization lies its aim and objectives. Therefore, the aim of the Jama'ah is to expose Igala muslims to both Islamic knowledge and western education. While its objectives are to:

1. Contribution and enhance the learning of Islam and acquisition of western education simultaneously.
2. Promote learning of Islam through tijaniyyah tariqah
3. Teach Islamic learning
4. Create a comfort, well being and good health environment of its immediate members
5. Embrace on regular da'wah out fit to enlighten he members and Muslim in Igala land on Islamic knowledge.

Its achievements have motivated the organization to embark on different establishment that aid the started of living of the Muslims and learning of Islam In Igala land. The organization contributed to youth development in term of Islamic learning and western education.

Among their achievement and contributions are:

1. Conversion of Christian to Islam with beautiful da'wah and conviction

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An oral interview conducted with Alh. Mustapha Abubakar Khalifah General and national coordinator, jama'tu Ahabab sheikh Abubakar sediq okpo

Alh. Usman Haruna, zonal secretary, council of imam and Ulmau, kogi East, an oral interview

Hajia Fatima Suleiman, Iye oja, jama'atu Ahabab sheikh Abubakar Sediq Okpo and oral interview it is on the note that paper therefore recommends that the da'wah activities of these organization should be documented for future generations to have access to the impact and contribution of other organization to the learning of Islam as well as the welfare of the muslim Ummah in Igala land need to be researched on for the organization to be aware of the areas that need to be improved upon.