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Research Article

## The Historical Development And Challenges Of Islam In Shàré, Ifelodun Local Government, Kwara State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Shàré is an ancient Igbomina town in Kwara State, Nigeria. The town, which Muslims populate, features many Islamic practices. This makes it different from other communities in Igbominaland. Right from the second Olupako (king), the traditional heads of the town adorned themselves in turban instead of crowns as common to Yoruba Obas. This indicates their attachment to Islam. Some of the community's traditions are embedded in Islamic values and practices. For instance, the popular December and New Year celebrations, held in high esteem in different towns, cities, and villages, are nothing to write about in Shàré. What is celebrated in the town by all and sundry is *Ādu 'l-Adhā*. This paper considered it necessary to investigate the factors responsible for the wide acceptance of Islam in the town to determine what is needed to sustain the tempo in the future. The historical method is adopted to collate relevant materials critical to achieving this paper's objectives. The findings revealed that Islam got to Shàré during the reign of the second Olupako, who

accepted the religion. This prepared the ground for drastic Islamic developments in the town. It is also discovered that until now, Muslims are still proactive in sustaining the influence of Islam. However, several challenges need attention to secure Islam's future in the community. Attentions are therefore called to those challenges in this paper for necessary measures to address them.

**Keywords:** Shàré, Igbomina, Olupako, *Ādu 'l-Adhā*

## INTRODUCTION

Shàré, one of the ancient Igbomina towns, is the administrative headquarters of Ifelodun Local Government Area, Kwara State. The headquarters was created in 1976 by the Gowon military administration.<sup>1</sup> The town is located on the Northern side of the Local Government along Ilorin-Lafiagi road with a latitude of 08.50 and a longitude of 04.59.<sup>2</sup> The distance between Shàré and Ilorin, the State capital, is about 64 miles.<sup>3</sup> Agbonna Hill curves the town with a stream at its downside called *Soose*. Also, Alegongo Temidire neighbours Shàré on the right and Tsaragi, a Nupe-speaking community of Edu Local Government, Kwara State, on the left side (from Ilorin). At the local government level, Ifelodun shares boundaries with Ilorin East, Edu, Irepodun, and Moro Local Governments.<sup>4</sup>

According to Salami and Dada, Shàré town was founded around 1800 when some group of hunters from a village called Aun, a suburb of Oro-Ago, another town in Ifelodun Local Government, Kwara State, embarked on a hunting expedition eastward from their village. They first settled at a place called Sakama, near Potofu Tayenchi.<sup>5</sup> After a while, they discovered a stream at a closed spot to Oke-Agbonna and decided to relocate there, where it is known as Shàré today. The name of the leader of these farmers and hunters from Aun was Osoja. He is known as the founder of the Shàré community, and his compound still exists today. It was later that another batch of settlers from Oyo, after the Baruba invaded the empire, under the leadership of Awodo, came and settled with Osoja. Awodo was the progenitor of Akinyode, who was the first to be installed as Olupako, the title of the king of the town till the present time.<sup>6</sup>

## Advent of Islam in Shàré

Yusuph states that like many other towns and cities in Yorubaland, which pagans and idol worshippers dominate, Shàré shares the same with them. Each

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<sup>1</sup> Yusuph, D. Gambari, "Contributions of the Muslim Organizations in Shàré" (Long Essay, University of Ilorin, 2005)5

<sup>2</sup> Basorun, M. Yunusa, *The prominent "Uthman Mustapha* (Ilorin: Ibrahim Kewulere Islamic press, 2000) 1

<sup>3</sup> Ibrahim O. Kamaldeen, *National Encyclopedia of Local Government Areas*, (Kaduna: Kandy Printing Press, Vol.2, 1993) 30.

<sup>4</sup> Elphinstone, K. Victoria, *Ilorin Province Gazette*, (London, n.p. 1912) 26 See also, Bogunjoko, G. Florence., "History of Shàré" *Journal of Kwara State Council of Arts and Culture*, 1, no.1, (1980): 55

<sup>5</sup> Salam, M. Olanrewaju. *Shàré: My Fatherland* (Ilorin et al., 2018) 6 See also Dada, P. O. Adewumi, *A Brief History of Igbominna (Igbonna)*, (Ilorin et al. printing & publishing Co. L.t.d. 1985) 18

<sup>6</sup> Tijani, A., "On Ethnic Identity: A Study of Shàré/Tsaragi Settlement in Nigeria (1830-1967)" *Journal of Social Science* 17, no1, (2008): 53

compound and family of indigenous Shàré has one god or gods as the objects of worship. These gods, which the people of Shàré held in high esteem, include Sango, Oya, Ogun, Ifa, Osa, Layewu, Lekewogbe, Aiyendero, and Ologbojo. Oke-Agbonna and Odo-Soose were also worshipped by the people. Most importantly, the most highly revered idol in Shàré, then, was *Osagbolu*, which served as a uniting force that brought not only the rank and file of Shàré people together annually but also the kit and caboodle of the town jointly celebrated the shrine.<sup>7</sup>

It was during the heydays of paganism that Islam arrived in Shàré, precisely during the reign of Olupako Dada (1835-1874), which coincided with Balogun Dare as Balogun of Shàréland.<sup>8</sup> However, oral references reveal that there had been Muslims in Shàré before the reign of Olupako Dada, though he was the first Olupako to accept Islam. Those Muslims were said to have been practicing Islam secretly because paganism was the religion of the day, and they (those Muslims) were not indigenes but Hausa from Katsina. More so, it was evident that those Hausa lived at Onireke and Alapata compounds. The first to be appointed as chief Imam of Shareland by Balogun Ali Dare was Imam Dauda, who was said to be a native of Kishi, Oyo state, but settled in Shàré.<sup>9</sup>

Allah used Balogun Ali Dare for the consolidation of Islam in Shàré. This was successful because he was a warlord and a brave man. According to some sources, he was said to have accepted Islam right from Oyo before migrating to Shàré. In contrast, some other sources hold that he accepted Islam from the hand of a Fulani jihadist he met on his way to Bida in the present Niger State of Nigeria. On his return to Shàré, having accepted Islam, he demolished the shrine of Osagbolu, which was situated at the market square.<sup>10</sup>

Balogun Dare later built the first mosque in Shàré at that point. This triggered adverse reactions from the entire community members, many of whom were in the wilderness, about his decision to demolish the shrine. The hostility continued till he returned to Bida on another battle expedition. Before his return, the community had demolished his mosque and rebuilt Osagbolu. Also, the Shàré people had ousted Imam Dauda. Some oral sources even hold that he was killed and that Imam Salihu, the second Imam, was ousted. On his arrival, Balogun Dare pulled down the shrine for the second time and went to Iponrin, a nearby village, to bring another Imam in the person of Shaykh Muhammad, known as Imam Polofo.<sup>11</sup> He was a knowledgeable scholar with a high sense of erudition and exposition. He led prayers for both Shàré and Tsaragi Muslim communities. He died in 1913.<sup>12</sup>

Imam Polofo's exit led to Imam Lawal's appointment as the new chief Imam of Shàré. He was an Ilorin indigene but settled in Shàré as a scholar and a trader. He lived in *Ile Sa'adu*. This man (Imam Lawal) was brought to Shàré by Imam Polofo, and

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<sup>7</sup> Yusuph, D.G.,...9

<sup>8</sup> *Itan Bi Islam Se Wo Shàré lati in 1874* (A pamphlet issued during the Central Mosque opening ceremony). 6

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid...7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid...8

he married a daughter of Balogun Dare. He (Imam Lawal) also died in 1935.<sup>13</sup> His descendants are still in Ile Sa'adu today. After the death of Imam Lawal, Imam Muhammad Orilowo emerged. Oral sources hold that he was among the entourages of Imam Polofu, while another source saw him as his younger brother. He performed, throughout his tenure, excellently well. He died in 1954.<sup>14</sup>

Imam Ibrahim Olujide later came on the stage. He was one of the most learned scholars Shàré has produced. Many contemporary Islamic scholars in Shàré benefited directly or indirectly from his wealth of knowledge. He died in 1966.<sup>15</sup> 1967 Imam Muhammed Jimoh, popularly called "Yiko Olohun" from the Olu-Isale compound, was appointed. He was a student of Imam Ibrahim Olujide. He was also a pious, ascetic, and highly talented scholar. He died in 1983.<sup>16</sup> Imam Husain Ibrahim was appointed after the death of Imam Jimoh. He was the son of Imam Ibrahim Olujide. He could be best described as a son-like father. Islam and Islamic activities witnessed a moment of positive changes during his time. He died in 2001. Imam Abubakar Adeleye Jimoh, popularly called ADUAGBA, took over as the new chief Imam in 2001. He is the son of Imam Muhamed Jimoh Olusale.<sup>17</sup> He died in 2021, and Shaykh Fazazi Abdul-Qadiri succeeded him as the new and current chief Imam of the Shareland.

### **Factors Responsible for the Growth and Consolidation of Islam in Shàré The Influence of Traditional Rulers**

Islam in Shàré enjoys what it does not in many Igbomina/Yoruba towns and villages. This is because all the rulers, since the inception of Islam in Shàré till the present time, were Muslims. With this, Islam could be described as the religion of the Shàré people. As earlier stated, Olupako Dada (1835-1874) gave Balogun Dare overwhelming support in consolidating Islam in Shàré town. Moreover, that was why the first two Imams resided in his house. While such continued during the reign of Olupako Oyadeyi (1835-37), it was during the reign of Olupako Adeleye (1905-1913) that the Romans Catholic Church and United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) came to visit Shàré, but he reluctantly welcomed them. Hence, the former could not settle in the community.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent rulers, Olupako Abubakar (1913-1927) and Buhari (1927-1935) were said to be staunch Muslims with strict adherence to Islamic values. Records hold that Olupako Muhammad (1935-54) initiated the construction of a new central mosque for the Share community to separate the Yoruba of Share from the Nupe of Tsaragi. This was in 1949, and the mosque was commissioned by

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Abdul-Hamid, A. Alaro, "Learning of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Shàré" (A NCE project, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, 1994) 20. This is also gathered from different informants during this work.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid...21

<sup>17</sup> Yusuph, D.G.,...21and Salami, M.O...142

<sup>18</sup> Gabrel Yemi Jimoh (A Retired Permanent Secretary, Kwara State Civil Service and President of Share Community Descendants' Union). He disclosed this while delivering a lecture on the occasion of the National Association of Share Students (NASS) Convention on December 30, 2003

Emir AbdulKadiri, the 8<sup>th</sup> Emir of Ilorin, in 1950.<sup>19</sup> On his own, Olupako Sulayman (1955-1966) was said to have died in the mosque while observing *Salat*.<sup>20</sup> It is to be noted that each of these rulers contributed immensely to Islam, and they were responsible for the appointment of chief Imams, the construction of mosques, and the establishment of *Madrasahs* (Arabic-Islamic Studies schools) by scholars at various times. Immediate past Olupako, Alhaji Abubakar Garba Dosunmu II, who reigned between 1967 and 2019, was a grand patron, father, and supporter to many Muslim organisations in Shàré and always responded to their calls in moments of need, both morally and financially. He was committed to constructing a new ultramodern central mosque in Shàré. The 9<sup>th</sup> Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Dhul-Qarnayn Gambari, laid the foundation on March 31, 1979, and Sheikh Muhammad Kamalud Dīn Al-Adabiy (d.2005).<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that all rulers of Shàré, since the inception of Islam in the town, were using turban as against crown, which is common to Yoruba rulers.

### **The Itinerant Scholars**

The Islamic historical account of Shàré without reference to the roles of itinerant scholars is incomplete. This is because oral traditions hold that some itinerant Mallams contributed to the consolidation of Islam in Shàré. The first among those scholars was Alfa Muhammad Jamiu, known as *Alfa Mudabiru*. He was a native of Onire, a town in Ifelodun Local Government, Kwara State. He came to preach Islam to the people of Shàré. He stayed for some time. It is believed that his family members are still in Shàré until now. He was the first Mallam to gather people as an *Asalatu* group.<sup>22</sup>

Another itinerant scholar whose visit to Shàré had a more significant impact was Alfa Kokewu Koberé. He was a preacher from Ilorin who moved around villages in the suburb of Ilorin for *da<sup>c</sup>wah* activities. It was during the reign of Olupako Muhammed that he got to Shàré town. He solidly condemned the closeness between the town's central mosque and the Osagbolu shrine. This ignited the struggle that led to the separation of the mosques between the Yoruba and Nupe of the Shàré community in 1949.<sup>23</sup>

Another itinerant scholar, who was not known to have direct or physical achievement on the people of Shàré, was a Mallam whose name is unknown. However, his tomb is being venerated in Shàré till the present time. The man was said to be one of Sheikh Alimi's entourages who died in Shàré on their way to Nupe land for *da<sup>c</sup>wah* activities. It was said that his co-travelers discovered a bequest (*wasiyyah*)

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<sup>19</sup> *Itan Bi Islam Se Wo Shàré* lati odun 1874...8

<sup>20</sup> Alhaji Sulayman Gambari (The Baba Isale of Council of *Ulamau* and the Founder of *Dalā'ilu* group, Share) interview by the author on September 20, 2005

<sup>21</sup> *Itan Bi Islam Se Wo Shàré* lati odun 1874...9

<sup>22</sup> Alfa Ahmed Musa(The Mufassir of Shareland) and Mallam Abdur-Rahim Onireke Zubair (Founder of Nurul-Qur'an Arabic School) interview by the author, September 20, 2003

<sup>23</sup> *Itan Bi Islam Se Wo Shàré* lati odun 1874...7-8

in his luggage, stating that he should be buried wherever he died.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, they buried him in Shàré at the point of his death. The place is known as Ile Aagun today, and the tomb is still there.

### **The Indigenous Scholars**

Nearly all indigenous scholars have, in one way or another, contributed immensely to the spread and consolidation of Islam in Shàré. This paper is obliged to select a few ones with outstanding qualities. The first on the list is Imam Ibrahim Olujide.<sup>25</sup> His uncommon influence and charisma allowed him to make Islam a household religion in the town. This highly intellectual blind man and an ascetic taught many students and reverted many pagans to Islam. He fought the idol worshipers not only in Shàré but also in the neighbouring towns and villages.

Before being appointed Imam, he had a *Madrasah* where many people received Islamic education. Apart from the Yoruba, he taught *Tapa* (Nupe) and Hausa, even in their respective languages. His students include Mallam Muhammed Jimoh, who later became chief Imam of Shàré after him, Mallam Yusuf (d.2004), who later became *Nā'ibu 'l-Imam* (deputy Imam) of Shàré, Mallam Muhammed Jamiu Abolaji (d.2003) who was also an erudite scholar in Shàré.<sup>26</sup> His son, Shaykh Husain Ibrahim (d.2001), who later became the chief Imam of Shàréland, Mallam Abdul-Muttalib, the late chief Imam of Oke-Ode, and Mallam Ndagbaja who was an Imam in Tsaragi,<sup>27</sup> to mention but a few. Each student is a father of the present-day Islamic scholars in Shàré.

Another scholar was Shaykh Muhammad Jamiu Essa. He was the *Mufassiru* of Shàré during his lifetime. He was a highly intellectual and a Sufi scholar of the Tijaniyyah order. He established *Zawiyyah* and lectured at Juma'at mosque every Friday throughout his lifetime. He had students both within and outside the State. At the time of writing this paper, his son, Sulayman Muhammad Jamiu, is a Professor of Islamic Studies and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the Kwara State University (Kwasu), Malete. Shaykh Muhammad Jamiu Essa died on May 23, 1987. His journey to the grave started at the Share Central mosque while delivering lectures as the Muslim community's hermeneutic during Ramadan; he slumped and was rushed to an Ilorin hospital but gave up.<sup>28</sup>

Alhaji Uthman Mustapha Araokanmi (1936-1988) was another scholar of high repute in Shàré. He was a thinker, a leader endowed with penetrating intelligence and great vision. His rare intellectual gift and his moral qualities drew to him many followers. He was, to the Muslims of Shàré, a comprehensive personality. He was regarded as an eloquent speaker endowed with a great power of persuasion. He studied in Ilorin and Kano. On his return to Shàré, he called his friends and other

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<sup>24</sup> Yusuph, D.G.,...14

<sup>25</sup> Ibid...15

<sup>26</sup> Ibid...16

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Sulayman M. Jamiu (The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (ACAD), Kwara State University, Malete, the honouree and the son of the Shaykh) Interview by the author April 23, 2020. See also, Yusuph, D.G.,...17

people and taught them Arabic and Islamic studies. He equally encouraged some to further their Islamic education. He founded an organisation called Misbahud-dīn and later changed it to Iyahul-Islam. He established a *Madrasah*, which later became a public primary school today. He died in 1988, leaving behind a footprint challenging to be equalled, let alone being erased.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Mosque and Arabic Schools**

As stated earlier, almost all the compounds have a mosque, and on Friday, *Jum'at* service is being observed at about seven locations in Shàré. These places include Shàré Central Mosque, Ansaru-ud-deen Central Mosque, Ajiga Compound and Ifelodun Local Government Secretariat Central Mosque, Nawair -ud-deen Society of Nigeria, *Jama'tu Ahli 's-Sunah*, LGEA Mosque and the latest one is Adeshina College of Education, Shàré mosque. The total number of *Ratibi* mosques in Shàré is around sixty (60).<sup>30</sup> These mosques have played numerous roles in Islam's growth, spread, development, and consolidation in Shàré. They (mosques) serve as a uniting place that regularly brings the Muslims of the identical vicinity together. Also, some of these mosques have *Asalatu* groups. Moreover finally, family, social, political, and economic issues were also discussed by the people in the mosque.

In *Madrasah*, it would be recalled that learning Arabic and Islamic studies started from the inception of Islam in Shàré, before the advent of modern Arabic and Islamic Studies schools, traditional learning centres catered for Arabic and Islamic Studies in the community. In the early period, when there were no modern learning centres for studying Arabic and Islamic Studies, most of the compounds or localities had a learning centre. The most flourished ones were found at *Ile Olujide I, II, and III, Ile Olu Isale, Ile Saadu, Ile Tuntun, Ile Orilowo, Ile Onireke, Ile Ofa* and *Ile Abioye* among others.<sup>31</sup> Almost all these centres have gone into the dustbin of history. Two factors could have been responsible for this. The first is the death or old age of the founders. This was because it was challenging to find someone to continue with the school, even among the children, when the Mallam, who doubled as the founder, died or became incapacitated due to old age. This is the case of *Ile Ofa, Ile Abioye, and Ile Tuntun*. Add to these that some Mallams have no male child, or none of their children specialises in teaching Arabic and Islamic studies. So, the centre became moribund due to the absence of a competent son to handle it after the father's demise.

The second is the advent of the modern Arabic and Islamic learning system. This could be linked to the first point because some founders/teachers have sent their children to places like Ilorin to learn advanced Arabic and Islamic studies. So, they change the styles and methods by giving modern touches to the existing style. This could be said of *Ile Olu Isale, Ile Saadu, Ile Orilowo, Ile Olujide I & II, and Ile Onireke* centres, where the offspring of the founders transformed the centres into semi-modern ones.

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<sup>29</sup> Yusuph, D.G.,....17

<sup>30</sup> Ibid...18

<sup>31</sup> Mallam Ibrahim Muhammad Orilowo (Founder of Darul-Mubarak and Al-Mubarak College, Share) interview by author, October 12, 2019

However, the modern methods that take after Western education styles retired the old methods, and in some cases, it is through the transformation from the old style to a modern system. The principal modern *Madrasah* in Shàré are *Madrasatu Ihyahi 'l-Islam*, *Madrasatu-Nuri 'l-Quran*, *Madrasatul- Ridwanullahi*, *Al-Ma'hd 'l-Irshad*, *Madrasatu Dari 's-Salam*, *Ma'hdul-Istijabah*, *Madrasatu Rawdati Thaqafatil-Islamiyyah* among others. These various schools have immensely contributed to the growth and development of Islamic activities in Shàré. The latest is the *Markaz Daril-Mubarak*, which was founded in 2014. It aims at training pupils up to the *Thanawiyyah* level.<sup>32</sup>

### **Asalatu Groups and Muslim Societies**

As could be noted from the early submissions in this paper, the Muslim *Asalatu* group had emerged in Shàré since the early days of Islam. However, it was first trumped by Alfa Muhammad Jamiu, known as Alfa *Mudabiru*, during the time of Imam Muhammad Orilowo.<sup>33</sup> The group was then called *Alasalatu*. After this, Alfa Ibrahim Alabi of Ile Sa'adu was second to be noted for gathering people for *Asalatu* on his return from Jebba.<sup>34</sup> They usually gathered at the central mosque on Friday after the *Jum'at* service for *Asalatu*. They discussed the topical issues that can promote Islam and Islamic values among the members and the community. In the same way, they usually put on the same dress whenever they have an occasion, either among the members or in commemoration of any of the Islamic festivals.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from the men's organisation (*Asalatu*), women in the community equally gather themselves together under the leadership of *Mualimatu Memunatu Lawal*. This group was popularly known and called *Iya Sunna* (mother of *Sunnah*).<sup>36</sup> They, too, used to assemble themselves on Friday after *Jum'at* service. That was how both men and women in *Asalatu* became consolidated in Shàré. They usually celebrated *Mawlidu 'n-Nabiy* (birthday of the Prophet) together. This encouraged the pagans and idol worshipers in the town to embrace Islam *en masse*. It is worth noting that these *Asalatu* groups encouraged the educated (Western) and Islamic scholars in the town to come together under the umbrella of Islam.<sup>37</sup>

The modern Muslim organisations in Shàré have existed since the late 60s. The people of Shàré had been members of *Nawairudin*, *Ansaru-ud-din*, and *Ansarul-Islam*, among others, during this period. However, as expected, this association could not flourish then because the same sets of people were members of each of them. Also, these members are primarily the community's traditional *Mallam* (scholars).<sup>38</sup>

Another society consisted of almost the same people. Alhaji Sulayman Gambari founded the *Dalā'ilu* group on his return from Ghana in 1971. This group was formed

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<sup>32</sup> Yusuph, D.G....27

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid...29

<sup>35</sup> Ibid...28

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Alhaji Sulayman Gambari...

<sup>38</sup> Mallam Abdur-Rahim Alabe (The representative of Share Muslim in Jama'atul-Nasri-Islam) interview, September 10, 2003



only to organise prayer and to recite *Dalā'ilul-khayrat* (a book of supplication) on a rotational basis among the members.<sup>39</sup> It has since flourished till the present time. In the early 70s, Jama'atu Nasir-l-Islam emerged in Shàré with the Igbomina Ekiti Muslim Council. However, these two organisations in the Shàré community are inseparable.<sup>40</sup> This is because the same set of people were members of both of them.

The society in Shàré with much influence on the Muslims is Misbahu-Dīn, founded in 1971 but transformed into Jama'atu Ihyau 'l-Islam in 1982. The organisation of Muslim Unity (OMU) was introduced in 1985. Ansaru-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, founded in 1998, Nasirullahi 'l-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) 2002, Nawair-ud-deen, 1998, Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), 1994, Sherif-d-Dīn, 1985, Jama'tul - 'Ibādu-Ra-Rahamān founded in 1989, Federation of Muslim Women Organization Of Nigeria (FOMWAN), 2001 among others.

Some other organisations are no longer in existence or exist passively. Some of them are Nuru 'l-Haq, Da'wahtu 'l-Haq, Salaud-deen, and the most recent ones, Ash-Shabāba and Ihdina Sirāta 'l-Mustaqima. The existence of these organisations was truncated because the founders and members were primarily secondary school students. So, after their schooling, they leave the community for different purposes, like educational pursuits, thus accounting for the termination or passivity of the societies they founded. Also, some organisations aspire to grow and have recorded noticeable influences on the people, such as *Tājul-hudā*, *S'aadatullahi*, and many others.

### **The Impacts of Islam on the People of Shàré**

With the advent and consolidation of Islam in Shàré, Islam and Islamic activities have witnessed drastic changes, and people's lives have been improved. This is because the level of entrenchment of Islam and Islamic activities in the community is increasing daily. Nearly every Muslim in Shàré belongs to one group, organisation, or society. This has tremendously helped to promote a common agenda not only on Islamic affairs but also on communal matters. It is worth noting that Islam is the religion of the majority in Shàré. Therefore, only Islamic matters are held in high esteem. For instance, New Year syndrome (December), an essential means of bringing together the rank and file of other communities in Yoruba/Igbomina towns and villages, is unimportant to Shàré people. The Christians in the town have no option but to join the Muslims in celebrating *'Idu 'l-Kabir*.

In terms of the five daily prayers (*Khamsu Salāwāt*), Muslims in Shàré face no difficulty in observing them due to the availability of mosques in every nook and cranny of the town. Also, there are seven scattered locations where *Jum'at* services are observed. In the same way, the establishment of Arabic and Islamic schools has made Islamic learning an easy task for all Muslims in the town. Muslim organisations in Shàré, in the bid to promote and develop Islam, have extended the scope of their programmes to some neighbouring villages around Shàré. Both NASFAT and Ansar-

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<sup>39</sup> Mallam Abdur-Rahman Baba Bello (Chairman et al. Division) mentioned this in his address delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of new executive members on November 30, 2003

<sup>40</sup> Yusuph, D.G....51

ud-dīn had established *Asalatu* centres in Iyana Shàré and Alagongo, Bode-Sadu, and Jebba.<sup>41</sup> They are still looking forward to doing the same in other villages. With all these, Islam in Shàré has been developing and attracting the attention of non-Muslim individuals.

The spiritual lives of the people of Shàré have been improved with the consolidation of Islam in the land. This is because apart from the conventional religious obligations, there are other avenues for more spiritual development through these organisations. For instance, as stated earlier, some of the organisations in Shàré have weekly prayers and observation of *Tahajjud* (midnight prayer) on the first and last Friday of every month. They also organised rotational prayers among the members.<sup>42</sup>

**Socially:** There are various social activities staged by the Muslims in Shàré, which have elevated the social lives of the Muslims. These social programmes were set up purposely to make life meaningful to the Muslims and to create social relations and interactions among the people of Shàré in general and the Muslims in particular. For instance, some Muslim bodies in Shàré, like the Organisation of Muslim Unity (OMU), usually celebrate both *Ādu 'l-fitr* and *Ādu 'l-Kabir* with various programmes, such as Islamic Quiz competitions among the *Madaris* (Arabic-Islamic schools) or Quranic recitation competition.<sup>43</sup> It is also important to mention that the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) is noted to have held a unique *Iftār* programme to mark the *Ādu-l fitr* celebration, though it has since been stopped.

Furthermore, *Mawlid-Nabiyy*, *Hijrah* (Islamic New Year), *Laylatul-Qadir* (Night of Majesty), and other notable Islamic festivals attract programmes to commemorate them by Shàré Muslims. Among what should be mentioned is the organisation of Islamic week by *Ihyahu-Islam* in those days when Christian missionary activities were at their peak. During this week, they organised drama, competitions, lectures, and film shows, among others, to gather all the old and young Muslims together and keep them throughout the Christmas and New Year's of the Christens to avoid being lured away. It is to be noted that this occasion commences on December 25 and ends on January 1.<sup>44</sup>

In the same light, NASFAT, Shàré branch, in its bid to make Islam a contemporary religion, rejuvenated and added colour to these programmes. On the last day of these events (December programmes), NASFAT will stage an Arabic Mallam programme (like Father Christmas) where the children will be given a series of gifts. Apart from the above, there used to be a programme organised if any organisation member had occasion, either positive or negative, or from the organisation which he/she is a member or from other organisations. Despite the organisation's jealousy and envy, holding such programmes is possible because the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid...52

<sup>42</sup> Ibid...38

<sup>43</sup> Ibid...55

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

husband and wife may belong to different organisations, among the brothers and sisters.<sup>45</sup>

**Economically:-** Since man has various economic needs, it is necessary to exaggerate its importance because it is seen as man's main problem. However, Muslims in Shàré, especially at the societal level, have been trying to alleviate economic problems in the town. Al-Amana and Al-Amin co-operative societies were formed in 2008 and 2011 for economic relevance and importance. As-sunnah co-operative was also formed in 2020 to improve the economic standards of their members and Shàré Muslims in general. Also, each Muslim organisation in Shàré plans to generate and distribute funds. Each group sets up a financial committee that looks after fiscal and monetary affairs. Under this, a business sub-committee is in charge of buying and selling the needs of the members and non-members alike.

In the same way, there is, under the above committee, a daily and weekly contribution sub-committee. With these, the members are encouraged to save part of their daily and weekly incomes, as the case may be. This committee's responsibility also includes granting the members loans for commercial purposes.<sup>46</sup>

The Muslims in Shàré have good records in the aspect of finance. This is because each organisation used the money generated from various activities and proceeds from business-related ventures to empower the members and non-members who are Muslims or members of other organisations. Also, the money was used to execute various programmes embarked upon by them (organisations). For instance, some organisations have capital projects to construct mosques, schools or event centres.<sup>47</sup> In the same development, a sub-committee looks after orphans, the needy, widows, and other destitute affairs. This committee is charged with the responsibility of making necessary provisions for them. The committee also has a pocket for philanthropic gestures where the well-meaning Muslims in the town who wish to donate to the less privileged members of society can do so.

**Politically:-** In politics, the Muslims in Shàré have gained the upper hand. This is possible because most of the political office holders, in the past and present administrations at various levels of government, from Shàré are Muslims. Furthermore, several Shàré indigenes, who are Muslims, have occupied different political offices both within and outside the State. For instance, the immediate former Executive Governor of Kwara State, Alhaji (Dr) Abdulfatah Ahmed (2011-2019), is a Muslim from Shàré. He had held different offices, like Commissioner for Finance and Economic Planning, before being elected as the Governor in 2011 and re-elected in 2015 for a second term. Outside the State is Honourable Abdur-Raheem Jide Jimoh. He was previously elected twice as a lawmaker at the Lagos State House of Assembly and Chairman of Yaba Local Council Development Authority before his election in

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid...57

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid...61

2015 and 2019 as an honourable House of Representatives, National Assembly, Abuja member.

Others are Personal Assistants and Special Advisers to the Executive Governor of Kwara State, many of whom are not only from Shàré but also Muslims. Also, in the public service, Shàré Muslims have produced the likes of Professor Sulayman Jamiu, who is currently the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Kwara State University, Malete, and former Chairman of Governing Council, Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (CAILS). Alhaji Jimoh Afolabi Olokoba, who retired as the Deputy Accountant General, Kwara State. There is Justice I.B. Garuba, a retired Justice of the Kwara State High Court of Justice, and the Wife, Alhaja Maryam Ayodeji Garba, who recently retired as a Permanent Secretary at Kwara State Ministry of Education, Ilorin. Also, the late Alhaji Uthman Adeyemi (Rtd), Assistant Inspector General of Police, the Baba Adini Igbomina/Ekiti Muslim Council, among others. Lastly, outside the political terrain, Shàré Muslims have produced *Khalifah* Bello Folounsho (d.1998), who was appointed by Shaykh Ibrahim Niass Al-Khawlakhi (d.1975) as his grand *Khalifah* for the entire Tijaniyah members in Kwara State in 1972.<sup>49</sup>

**Intellectually:-** In this wise, the Shàré Muslim community accords high importance to the education and intellectual development of the people. As they are aware that education continues to be an essential ingredient of human development and a tool to spread religious messages and awareness, Muslims in Shàré took education as a mandate. They established Nursery and Primary schools for young ones and adult education centres for the old ones who wish to improve their religious knowledge.

Apart from those above, Shàré Muslims give scholarships to students and less privileged children who diligently pursue their educations. The Shàré branch of NASFAT has sponsored an engineering student at the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State.<sup>50</sup> Ansaru ud-Dīn, Ansarullahi, M.Y.M, and a host of others have been noted for sponsoring and payment of examination fees of indigent students in Secondary Schools. Through these, the Muslim Organizations have increased Shàré Muslims intellectually and educationally.

As in the early thirties (30s), Muslims in Shàré have faced educational challenges, especially as coordinated by the Christian community in the town, which used education as a tool for proselytisation. The first missionary school, the United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA) primary school, which was used to convert many Muslims in the town, was established in 1933.<sup>51</sup> Having realised this and the importance of education as a tool for personal and community development, Muslims in Shàré put their resources together to establish Muslim Community Primary School in 1975.<sup>52</sup>

In 2008, a severe imbroglio broke out between the two missionary schools (UMCA and CAC) in Shàré over the use of *hijāb* (veil) by Muslim pupils. This led to the establishment of *'Ihyāu 'l-Islam* Primary School, and 2014 also witnessed the establishment of the first Muslim Junior Secondary School (MCJSS) in the town. The MCJSS has now been upgraded to a full secondary school status, following the approval by the Kwara State Teaching Service Commission, Ilorin, 2021. The Muslims

swung into action when it was noticed that the two Christian Primary Schools in the town had submitted proposals to upgrade their schools to a Junior Secondary School status. This was done to prevent Muslim parents from sending their children and wards to either of the two schools under any pretense. Al-Mubarak College was also established as the town's first Muslim Private Secondary School in the same year (2014).<sup>53</sup> Although the existing Adeshina International College (AIS) and Brightway Secondary School (BSS) were owned by Muslim individuals in Shàré, they do not have much Islamic outlook like Al-Mubarak.

### **Challenges of Islam in Shàré**

The early Muslims in Shàré quenched the fire of pagans and paganism, wrestled down the tentacles of the Christians, and raised the precepts of the Prophet of Islam. They suppressed all challenges and resistances against all odds. That is why Shàré is relatively a Muslim-dominated community today. In fact, despite the efforts of the non-Muslims, especially Christians, who used Western education to win members, they only succeeded in converting a few Muslims. Notably, the bulk of their convertees are traditionalists or idol worshippers. However, with the passage of the early Muslims, various challenges came outside the inherited ones from their precursors. The challenges come under two sub-heads. The internals are challenges the Muslims create for themselves, and the externals come from the non-Muslims.

### **Internal Challenges**

**At-Takhlit (Syncretism):-** It is said that the principles of Islam are practiced side by side with the principles of other religions.<sup>54</sup> Many Muslims in Shàré are addicted to practices that are strange or abhorred by Islam. Such include oracle consultations, superstitious beliefs, magic, and witchcraft. Until now, many Muslims in Shàré still believe in divination in matters relating to marriage, sickness, or what confuses them. Muslims in the town still conduct weddings at the registry, while some combine it with *Nikāh*. The *egungun* festivals are held in high esteem by the Muslims. In fact, the popular slogan during the festivities of *egungun* is: *Bi ao tie ki irun, aati e seyi na*. (Even if we observe *Salat*, we will do this first). This depicts acts of syncretism and *Shirk* (polytheism).

In the early 80s, when there was a rampant case of motor accidents along the Ilorin/Shàré road, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NUTRW) Shàré branch, which was full of Muslims, thought of invoking *Ogun*, the god of iron, believing that appeasing it (*Ogun*) will bring the occurrences to an end. This turned into a significant faceoff between them and the youth *Alfas*, but it was later allowed to die down.<sup>55</sup> The practice of syncretism was boosted as one of the aftermaths of the inter-communal clashes between Shàré and Tsaragi. Since the year 2000, when the first clash occurred, many people, including Muslims, sought rejuvenation and resuscitation of idol worshipping by invoking Oke-Agbonna and Soose Stream for succour. Folklores in the community portray both as possessing spiritual powers, primarily to protect against enemies. In fact, after 2008, a priest from Oshogbo was invited to Shàré for the rites.<sup>56</sup> It was equally noticed that most compounds

resuscitated their abandoned gods and goddesses out of the belief that their abandonment was responsible for the Nupe invasions.

**Islamic Scholarship:-** This is another major challenge that faces the existence and consolidation of Islam in Shàré. Presently, there is a paucity of Islamic Scholarship. Despite the number of Mosques, *Madrasah*, and Islamic societies, the town has scanty Muslim scholars to manage them properly. Apart from the available Madrasah operating at the *Ibbitda'iyyah* (primary school) level, many of the Mallams are just holders of *Idaddiyyah* certificates. There is a domestication of religious responsibility, which provides that someone must lead the compound's mosque as an Imam from the same compound, regardless of whether or not that person possesses the requisite knowledge of Islam. In no small measure, this has accounted for imperfections and discrepancies of different sorts in executing Islamic dictates, even *Salat*.

**Lack of Commitment:-** Many Muslims in Shàré are just ceremonial or Muslims by name and identity. Their level of commitment to the course of Islam is nothing to write home about. There is a lack of dedication as required by chapter 61, verse 11 of the glorious Qur'an. It is clearly stated therein that Muslims should commit their lives and wealth to the course of Islam. The instances can be cited from the incident of 2008 when the construction of the proposed Shàré Muslim College was truncated by Tsaragi's invasion, which resulted in the clash of 2008. Until now, the school remains a daydream without effort to make it a reality.<sup>57</sup> The second is the reconstruction of Shàré Central Mosque, which was long overdue before it was initiated in 2017 by Alhaji Abdulfatah Ahmed, the former Executive Governor of Kwara State. Since he left the office in May 2019, nothing has been done again. In fact, out of hopelessness, the Muslim community had no option but to return to the mosque for observation of *Jum'at* services. It is not that the initiator cannot continue with the construction or that no wealthy Muslims in the community can take the project up. However, it is a question of commitment and dedication to the service of Islam.

**Youth Restiveness:** Youths are the leaders of tomorrow and the custodians of every tradition of a given society. It, therefore, becomes an obligation for any society that wishes to preserve its customs for future generations to invest heavily in the youth. This is quite relevant to the scene in the Shàré community, especially the Muslim youths. Shàré Muslim youths are essentially at slumber in terms of Islamic Culture. A more significant percentage of them valued Western education and devoted their time to it than Islamic education. Many see fortune in a free life rather than taking the path of Islam. They enjoy being politically attached rather than having affiliation with the religion of Islam. They find comfort in sitting in assembly and having conventional social gatherings rather than religious ones. It is not that there are no right-minded youths in the town, but the percentage is too low if compared.

**Segregation:** - The Muslims in Shàré are not united. They speak in thousands, and this makes their voices challenging to hear. There is no common front. Class distinction and lack of mutual understanding are responsible for this. There are envy,

hatred, superiority, and inferiority complexes, and a lack of respect among others in their midst. These have made it somewhat challenging to have a sense of direction. The effect of this, to be precise, is the absence of standard Arabic and Islamic schools where at least a *Thanawiyyah* certificate can be obtained. Forces are not joined, but each works independently and maintains his lane. The Muslim community Junior Secondary School suffers neglect because of the lack of joint effort among the Muslims. The scholars in Lagos conceived the idea of having a standard school in Shàré; those in the town equally made a fresh move in 2014 instead of continuing from where the 2008 move was stopped. Some groups of Muslim bodies and individuals from the community stand apart from making MCJSS what it should be. Resources are not put together just because the move by a particular society to manoeuvre the establishment of MCJSS got aborted.

### **External Challenges**

**Challenges from the Traditionalist:-** The Muslims in Shàré face many challenges at the hands of the traditionalists or idol worshippers. As indicated above, while discussing syncretism, the hope of traditionalists rose due to the high patronage they recorded recently. The *Sango* festivals abandoned to the extent that the worshippers have almost disappeared, are now gaining momentum. The last celebration was in 2017 when a priest from Osun State was brought to the community. The Aiyendero masquerade has regained its annual celebrations. The same story was that of *Soose*, which, during the celebration in 2009, a priest was appointed from Shàré. Each of these scenarios is a booster for idol worshipping and entrenching doubts and confusion in the minds of Muslims.

### **Christian Evangelism and Proselytisation**

This is another major challenge threatening Islamic activities' smooth running in Shàré. Despite their small size in the town, compared to their Muslim counterparts, they do not relent in their efforts to conquer the community. They used to stage different programmes to entice Muslims and win many converts. Their attempts to use education have been discussed above, yet they keep staging many evangelical activities within the community. They equally posed to use charity, hospital visitation, and *isoji* (revival), among others, to win many Muslims. Prominent Muslim individuals going through trials were noted to have patronised the Christian clerics for succour.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper has given a historical account of how Islam got to Shàré and consolidated. Shàré is an ancient Igbomina town in Kwara State with a solid Islamic history among other Igbomina towns and communities. The date of entrance of Islam into the town was synonymous with the period of the second Olupako. Islam enjoyed royal support and was entrenched in the community from its inception. Many factors contributed to the spread of Islam in the town and its consolidation. The traditional rulers, Muslim scholars, Islamic organisations and *Madaris*, among others, played a significant role in making Islam a household name in the town. The existence is not

without challenges, both among the Muslims and non-Muslim community members. The Muslims in Shàré have risen to tackle those challenges and are winning the struggles against the enemies of Islam.

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