

# ***Da'Wah* Activities: A Century of Imamship in Igbemo-Ekiti from Imām Sanusi Bada to Abdullah Junaid: 1880-2004**

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## **Abstract**

This article is on *Da'wah* activities: a century of Imamship in Igbemo-Ekiti from *Imām* Sanusi Bada to Abdullah Junaid: 1880-2024. It examines the transformative power of *Da'wah* activities in shaping Islamic identity, promoting community cohesion, and fostering social change. This study sheds light on the achievements, challenges, and lessons learnt from a century of Islamic leadership and outreach in the town, its immediate environment, as well as entire Yoruba land. From the first *Imām* to the fourth *Imām*, the work is historical in nature. Hence, the method used is purely descriptive analysis. Data were gathered through oral interviews and written documents. The theoretical framework for the work based on several keys that are relevant to the study of Islamic missionary work and the evolution of religious leadership within a specific community over time. Social movement theory was used to analyze the roles of *Imāms* while Religious Leadership theory focused on the role of religious leaders within a community, and how they influence the beliefs, behaviors, and practices of their followers. Critical

discourse analysis was applied to study the language and rhetoric used by the *Imām* in their preaching and *Da'wah* activities. These theoretical perspectives helped to contextualize the historical and socio-political factors that shaped the development of Islamic missionary work in the town. It also shed light on the enduring legacy of these influential religious leaders. Findings show that Igbemo-Ekiti had long history of Islam and Islamic scholarship from inception till date. The outcome of this work suggests that the current crop of the scholars and clerics in the town should not deviate from path of their forerunners'.

**Keywords:** *Da'wah*, Imamship, Igbemo-Ekiti, Community, Development, Leadership

## **Introduction**

*Da'wah* is the proselytizing or preaching of Islam<sup>1</sup>. It literally means 'issuing a summons or making an invitation'. A *Da'ī* (one who practices *da'wah*) is thus a person who invites people to understand Islam through dialogue, prayer and manner of Islamic life. It is an act of inviting people to understand and embrace Islam and it has been a

cornerstone of Muslim activities worldwide. In the Ekiti region of Nigeria, this practice has been in place over the last century which had been influenced by the leadership of various *Imāms*. This article explores the history, challenges, and successes of *Da'wah* activities in Igbemo-Ekiti, highlighting the role of *Imāms* in shaping the spiritual landscape of the town. However, the town is overwhelming adjudge and nicknamed as the Makkah of Ekiti from time immemorial<sup>1</sup>.

Igbemo-Ekiti is a town in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area of Ekiti State. She is the largest town of the Ifelodun axis of the Local Government. It was formerly the subordinate area headquarters' of Ifelodun axis now the headquarter of Ifedera Local Council Development Area which comprises Iworoko, Are, Afao, Araromi-Obo and Orun-Ekiti. It is bounded by Iluomoba-Ekiti in the East, Orun-Ekiti in the West, Ijan-Ekiti and Ado Ekiti in the South and Ikole-Ekiti and Ire Ekiti in the North. Both rivers Ogbese and Efo traversed around the town that is where Igbemo derives the sobriquet that is widely saying "*Omo Elefo si 'gbemo oba yii*"<sup>2</sup>.

Igbemo-Ekiti was originally known as Agbaun. It was founded by Onisara some hundred years ago and later joined by other groups of people from different places, Ijomu, Orun and Ijabo peoples with their own independent heads. Agbaun was later changed to Igbemo-Ekiti "*Igbe omo*" due to a statement credited to Onisara and his son Ajana. *Igbe-Omo*, meaning "the voice of a child. The town had originally been ruled by undisclosed number of *Onigbemo* before the emergence of the present

ruling house called *Amujoye* as Oba-Igbemo-Ekiti. The town originally had three quarters, namely, Orun, Iro and Odo-Igbemo. The Orun quarter was granted an autonomous status by Ekiti State government in 2013 after being recognised as an autonomous community outside Igbemo-Ekiti. Hence, Iro and Odo-Igbemo remain the only two quarters that made the town<sup>3</sup>.

The introduction of Islam to Igbemo-Ekiti dates back to the mid-19th century C. E., primarily through traders, emancipated freed slave of Ekiti heritage and itinerant Muslim clerics who traveled from the other parts of Nigeria. The establishment of mosques and Islamic schools laid the groundwork for *Da'wah* activities. Over the years, various *Imāms* emerged as pivotal figures in promoting the teachings of Islam. Historically, Igbemo-Ekiti is undisputable a Muslim town in the heart of Ekiti land. However, the name of the first Muslim convert(s) was/were not known; also, the name of the first Muslim preacher to preach and admit the natives to the religion was not established. But the long-time missionary work was assisted by the arrival of some prominent preachers in the town, freed slaves of Ekiti heritage and traders. The names of Alfas Abdur-Rahman Dotia and Abdu Salaam Olokooba were very unique for the roles they played in Islamic scholarship in this town. Prominent among the earliest converts were Alfa Sanni Sarumi, Sanusi Bada, Ibrahim Oloko, Uthman Onisere, Amodu Ayodele, Yusuf Fatimehin, Akadiri Osundare, Prince Amodu Adewumi, Maliki Ajana, Bello Ajileye, Ajetomobi among others<sup>4</sup>.

The dignitaries mentioned above were instrumental to the introduction of Islam in Igbemo-Ekiti. The practice of Islamic religion became popular in the town through their influences. The following table reveals the notable Chief *Imāms* of Igbemo-Ekiti during the period under discussion.

S/N	Names	Duration	No of Years
1.	<i>Imām</i> Sanusi Bada	1880-1925	45
2.	<i>Imām</i> Junaid Ikudanikansi Agigi	1925-1942	17
3.	<i>Imām</i> Abdul Kareem Fadumiye	1942-1973	31
4.	<i>Imām</i> Abdullah Junaid	1973-2004	31

It needs be said that an attempt to appoint new Chief *Imām* of Igbemo-Ekiti in 2007 led to the emergence of two factional *Imāms* namely; *Imāms* Ibrahim Yusuf Ogunmilade (2007) and Abdullah Jamiu Oluwadumiye (2009)<sup>5</sup>.

### 1. *Imām* Sanusi Bada, 1880s circa to 1925

*Imām* Sanusi Bada was born in Ilemo Compound, Odo-Igbemo, Igbemo-Ekiti, in the Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Although, the exact year of his birth is unknown, his life's story is a testament to the power of faith, determination, and perseverance. He was born to a traditionalist family in one of the renowned Muslim communities in Ekiti. His early

life was shrouded in mystery, for he was said to have been captured and sold into slavery at the Oluwo palace in Iwo, Osun State, around 1856. He was not alone in his captivity, as he was accompanied by other notable individuals, including Prince Amodu Adewumi, who later became the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti, 1910-1936; Maliki Ajana, Iyedi quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti; Akadiri Osundare, Ijan-Ekiti and among others<sup>6</sup>

During his time at the palace, *Imām* Sanusi Bada came into contact with Islam, and he was captivated by its teachings. He wholeheartedly embraced the faith and began practicing its principles. His newfound faith gave him the strength and resilience to endure the hardships of slavery. *Imām* Sanusi Bada's determination and strong work ethic eventually earned him a position as the head of the palace slaves and later Bada of Iwo land. His leadership skills and dedication to his faith did not go unnoticed, and he became a respected figure among his peers. When *Imām* Sanusi Bada and his fellow slaves were eventually released, he returned to his hometown of Igbemo-Ekiti with a group of like-minded individuals. Their mission was to propagate the faith and establish a Muslim community in the town.

*Imām* Sanusi Bada was one of the pioneers of Islam in Igbemo-Ekiti. Despite facing persecution from traditionalists who saw Islam as a threat to their institutionalized African Traditional Religion, he remained steadfast in his commitment to spreading the faith. One of *Imām* Sanusi Bada's first acts upon returning to Igbemo-Ekiti was to build a local mosque in Ilemo quarters, along with a

Quranic Centre. This mosque quickly became a focal point for the nascent Muslim community in the town. *Imām* Sanusi Bada's dedication to spreading Islam did not go unnoticed, and he was eventually appointed as the town's first chief *Imām*. Under his leadership, the Muslim community in the town flourished with many people converting to Islam and actively practicing their faith<sup>7</sup>.

He also appointed notable personalities to enviable positions, including Pa Yusuf Abeleje and Uthman Onisere, who became Balogun Musulumi of Orun and Iro quarters, respectively. Bello Ajileye, Abdul Kareem Ajongolo, and Maliki Ajana became Otun Musulumi of Orun, Iro, and Odo-Igbemo quarters, respectively. While Bello Ajonibode, Amodu Olosan and Amodu Ayodele became Giwa Musulumi of each of the three quarters. He also canvassed for the establishment of Quranic schools in each of the three quarters of the town and the mosques. His legacy lived on long after his demise, as one of his sons went on to become the first local missionary of the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'ah* in Nigeria.

*Imām* Sanusi Bada was married to Madam Zeenat Olayisade Bada, a native of Igbemo-Ekiti. The couple was blessed with five children, comprising two males and three females. Imam Sanusi Bada ensured that his children received elementary Arabic and Islamic education in Igbemo-Ekiti. One of his children, Alhaji Jamalddin Jamiu Bada, was the youngest of the five. He became the first indigenous missionary of the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'ah* in Nigeria and served

in various locations, including Lagos, Ibadan, Ado-Ekiti, Ikare-Akoko, and Benin.

In conclusion, *Imām* Sanusi Bada's life is a testament to the power of faith, determination, and perseverance. Despite facing numerous hardships and setbacks, he remained committed to spreading the teachings of Islam and establishing a Muslim community in Igbemo-Ekiti. His legacy continues to inspire generations of Muslims in the area, and his contributions to the spread of Islam in Ekiti State are immeasurable.

## 2. *Imām* Junaid Agiigi, 1925-1942

*Imām* Junaid Ogunmola popularly known as *Imām* Agiigi was born to the family of Oloja of Ijabo, a section of Odo-Igbemo Quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti around 1840 circa, there was no accurate record of his birth. Hence, the exact date of his birth cannot be determined. *Imām* Agiigi as he was fondly called, according to tradition was the son of Ogunmola Inkantola Ikudanikansi (a traditionalist, magician, herbalist and holder of ferocious masquerade popularly called *Ede*). He came from Ekiti *Eye-mode*, a boundary between Ikoyi (Ikole-Ekiti) to settle in Ijabo, a section of Odo-Igbemo. *Imām* Agiigi was the only surviving son after the loss of five consecutive babies. It was revealed that he was destined to be a great man. To this effect, he grew up and handed over to the *Emir* of Bida, Mamma Masaba (1859-1873) whom his father (Ogunmola) came in contact with as a warrior during his wars adventure. He was to train him in the art and science of wars. In the process, *Imām* Agiigi became Muslim and eventually learnt Arabic and Islamic knowledge to the fullest. He became a

dependable Islamic cleric. He returned home and engaged himself in *Da'wah* activities in Igbemo and its environs, Ado-Ekiti and Lagos where the like of the popular Chief Asunni Obanikoro and Alli Oloko of present Ita-Balogun in Lagos<sup>9</sup>.

Most of his visitations to Lagos and Epe areas witnessed a rousing and thrilled *Da'wah* programmes and with the support of the above personalities among others, he became frequent visitors to Lagos and Epe on *Da'wah* trails. He was a Godly, kind, rich, prosperous and man of vision. He migrated with his numerous pupils and other family members from his Ijabo ancestral home in Odo-Igbemo to build an edifice that was second to known at *Ojigbemo* market square in Igbemo-Ekiti. This location was adjudged as one of the most dreaded locations in the town and the place was being referred to as *Igbo-Elebo* where those who died mysteriously in the town were being buried. The land was granted by Onisara family through the influence of Uthman Onisere, the then Balogun of Iro quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti. He was able to cultivate the area and established a new community named "Ijabo-Oke-Oja"<sup>10</sup>.

He started the construction after series of attacks from the traditionalists who saw his presence there as a means of blocking their means of livelihood. His devotion to God and his prayer were answered. This singular act captivated and enticed the non-Muslim populations within and outside the town to pay him regular visit, and eventually embraced Islam. He solely accommodated them and was responsible for their needs. He established his own Qur'anic Centre. The

centre was so popular and famous. Its fame reached far and near in Yoruba land and beyond to the extent that the town was being visited to acquire more knowledge<sup>12</sup>. He used to take his *Da'wah* train to many towns and villages around such that his foot prints can still be noticed in town like Ado-Ekiti, Agbado-Ekiti, Ire-Ekiti, Ijesa-Isu-Ekiti, Egosi (now Ilupeju-Ekiti) Itapa, Ijan-Ekiti, Oye-Ekiti and among others. He used his wealth and influence in Epe and Ekiti to spread Islam.

At the demise of the first Chief *Imām* of Igbemo-Ekiti, *Imām* Sanusi Bada in 1925, took the mantle of leadership as the second Chief *Imām* of Igbemo-Ekiti. His exposure and erudition of Islamic knowledge placed him above his peers. He saw the need for Islamic scholarship to project good leadership in Igbemo-Ekiti. He developed programmes that made Islam an attractive religion. Islamic education was in vogue in Igbemo-Ekiti such that nearly all Muslim households or Mosques have Arabic and Islamic Studies Centres and the whole of Ijabo community embraced Islam and till date the traditional chieftaincy tool of Oloja of Ijabo reserved a Muslim mandate.<sup>13</sup>

Like his father, he was a warrior who in the process of his interaction with Nupes and some *Ulamā* in Epe and Ikorodu areas acquired deep knowledge of Islam. He was trading in salt and other consumable provisions, all in conjunctions with his *Da'wah* programmes. He was a successful farmer. He established large expanse of cocoa plantation at Uta-Usae and Ugbo-Elehingbehin farmsteads toward the boundary of Igbemo-Ekiti and Ikoyi (Ikole-Ekiti). His exposure and large

expanse of Cocoa, Cola-nut, coffee and plantain plantations was unequalled. He was the one who installed the second Iya-Sunnah of Igbemo-Ekiti, Chief Salamat Osaruku Balogun after the transition of the first holder, Madam Aminat, a native of Ilorin, Kwara State; and the installation of Madam Salamat Maliki as Iyalode and Madam Salamat Bello as Iyalaje Adini of the town. It was early period of his imamship that the old Central Mosque (now Iro Ratibi Mosque) was roofed with corrugated iron sheets in 1930.<sup>14</sup>

He was married to Mariamo Adepoju and was blessed with children, which included late Chief *Imām* of Igbemo-Ekiti *Imām* Abdullah Junaid, Alfa Jimoh Junaid Others are Zainab Bakare, Sabalimat Ajike, and madam Alasege. Among his children were (are) Alhaji Fasasi Jamiu, Alhaji Rabiū A. Jamiu the father of Rt. Hon. Hakeem Jamiu the Deputy Speaker of Ekiti State House of Assembly (the current Baba Egbe Musulumī of Ado-Ekiti), Barrister Abdullah Abdulwahab and among others. Starting from 1915 circa when he returned home from Bida, though he had acquired knowledge, he joined Alfa Abdusalaam Olokooba Qur'anic Centre at Odo-Igbemo before he began his Qur'anic school in his new abode at Oke-Oja. His students were *Imām* Abdu Kareem Fadumiye, the late Chief *Imām* of Igbemo Ekiti and the first registered member of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society in Ekiti land in 1946 and Alfa Jimoh Junaid, who was one of the first set of councilors in Igbemo-Ekiti in 1952, he represented Odo-Igbemo ward, among others. History had it that besides the first two Quranic Centres established by Alfa Dotia and Alfa

AbduSalam Olokooba as a foundational Qur'anic Centres in Igbemo-Ekiti, *Imām* Agiigi Quranic Centre was one of the most prosperous indigenous Qur'anic Centres in the history of Igbemo-Ekiti. According to tradition, *Imām* Junaid Agiigi trained more than three thousand students. By March 1942, the covenant of Allah came upon him at undisclosed age.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. *Imām* Abdul-Kareem Oluwatuyi Fadumiye (Oluwadumiye): 1867-1973

*Imām* Abdul-Kareem Fadumiye was born to the family of Oloja-Ijabo section of Odo-Igbemo Quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti. His father was late Chief Fadumiye, the Oloja of Ijabo Quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti. His mother was Chief Mrs. Aminat Fatumbi, the Eyedofin of Ijabo, Igbemo-Ekiti. His father lived and died as a traditionalist. However, he was able to convert his mother to Islam immediately he became a Muslim. The date of his birth could not be determined because there was no accurate record to justify it. However, it was suggested that he was born before the emergence of Yoruba inter-tribal war called Ekiti Parapo war probably in 1867<sup>16</sup>.

As a youth, he preferred to join his father in the farm and took hunting as his major hobby. He lost his father at a young age. As he was growing up, he joined the adherents of Masquerade cult in the town and his own brand of Ede masquerade was *Ògòbà*. He was the one who mentored the renowned Ede masquerade in Igbemo-Ekiti, *Oṣo Onígi-Obi* popularly known as Alamudu of high repute. Due to the activities of the early Muslims in Igbemo-Ekiti at that material time, he was influenced by the *Da 'wah* activities of the then Alfa

Junaid Ogunmola Agigi (the second Chief *Imām* of Igbemo-Ekiti) who used to take his *Da'wah* from Igbemo-Ekiti to other neighbouring towns such as Ire-Ekiti, Ijsha-Isu-Ekiti, Ilu-Omoba-Ekiti, Ijan-Ekiti, Agbado-Ekiti and as far as Itapa-Ekiti. By 1918, Pa Oluwatuyi eventually converted to Islam and took Abdul Kareem as his Muslim/Islamic name. He eventually registered as a pupil at Junaid Agigi Quranic Centre, Ijabo Quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti. No sooner was he converted than he became the favourite student of his teacher and he graduated from the school in 1935.<sup>17</sup>

Alfa Oluwatuyi, in 1926, joined Adult Literacy Centre operating in the town in order to acquire reading and writing skills in Yoruba language. He was able to achieve this due to his interest in western education. By 1930, Alfa Fadumiye had been deeply participating in the local affairs of the town. He was *Olu-Ode* (Chief Hunter) of Ijabo Quarters, Igbemo-Ekiti. He was also the Chairman of Cocoa and Kola-nut Farmers Association in the town and (Baba Egbe) leader of *Òrègèlè*, a local age group. His exposure in the course of trading from one town to the other such as Osogbo, Igbeti and Ilorin influenced him to have much interest in western education most especially when the Christians (CMS) in the town were able to found their first western oriented school named Saint John's School, Igbemo-Ekiti. All efforts to get his children registered in this school and not to lose their Islamic identity did not yield result.<sup>18</sup>

By March 1942, after the demise of his teacher, *Imām* Junaid Agigi, *Imām* Abdu Kareem became the 3rd Chief *Imām* of Igbemo-Ekiti. He

had love for western education. He had started looking for solutions to the existing Qur'anic schools for the education of Muslim children. He ordered for the enrolment of the children of Muslims of school age and placed them under late Alfa Jimoh Junaid, a co-student under late *Imām* Junaid Agigi. Alfa Jimoh Junaid could read Yoruba and write figures to a reasonable extent. He was to teach the children both Arabic and Yoruba languages as well as numbers. Later, the service of Alfa Habeeb from Epe, Lagos was engaged in September, 1942. The prospect of the school could not be determined because it lacked government recognition<sup>19</sup>.

The Chief *Imām* did not relent in his effort to get the assistance of the then Olukare of Ikare-Akoko to have similar school operating in his domain. After three years of successive operation of the school, it was officially recognised by the government and named Muslim *Anjuma* School, Igbemo-Ekiti (an Ahmadist offshoot) in 1945. But the management of the school was placed under the Olukare, Oba Audu Muhammad. This did not go down well with the School as it was about to shut down. The *Imām* later got an idea of a Society operating in Lagos that could take good care of the School. Towards the end of 1946, he was able to formalise all arrangements to join the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS) and the Society took over the School. On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1946, the *Imām* was the first registered member of the Society in Ekiti land and by January 12, 1947, he became the manager of the School. He donated an expanse of land to the School while the remaining part of land was set

aside for the construction of the Central Mosque for the town<sup>20</sup>.

At the memorable Ijero-Ekiti meeting of November 4, 1949, he was one of the notable leaders that spoke at the meeting. He was the one that moved the motion for Ekiti Muslims to join the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS) which was unanimously adopted. One of the remarkable events in the life of the *Imām* was that he commanded respect of the entire *Jama'ah* in Igbemo-Ekiti. He used to nominate himself as one of the harvest shareholders in the Mosque throughout his Imamship tenure. On his sick bed, he delegated his lieutenants, Alfa Jimoh Junaid to lead the prayers and Alhaji Jimoh Adesina Balogun to take full charge of the Society's affairs and the Schools. The contributions of *Imām* Abdul Kareem Oluwatuyi Fadumiye to the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society (ADS) in Ekiti earned him posthumous award of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Igbemo-Ekiti branch on two occasions in 1997 and 2010. And at the celebration of 75 years of ADS in Ekiti land in 2024 he was one of the 23 recipients of award and honour in that occasion. He was nicknamed "*Baba Omo Wewe*" for his love for young ones. He married and was blessed with children, grandchildren and great grandchildren among whom is the current Chief *Imām* of the Central Mosque, Igbemo-Ekiti, *Imām* Jamiu Kolawole Abdullah. He had his last breath in the early hour of 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1973. Imam Abdulkarim holds the distinction of being the first registered member of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society in Ekiti land, and his remarkable contributions to promoting education among Muslim children in the region

remain a testament to his unwavering dedication and passion.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4 *Imām* Abdullah Eni-Olorunda Junaid, 1926-2004

*Imām* Abdullah Eniolorunda Junaid was born at Ijabo Quarters, Odo-Igbemo, Igbemo-Ekiti in 1926 C.E. His father's name was Ogunmola Jinadu Agigi Ikudanikansi, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chief *Imām* of Igbemo Ekiti. His mother's name was Mariamo Adepoju Junaid. *Imām* Abdullah Junaid was not opportune to attend western oriented school because there was none at Igbemo-Ekiti when he was young. He, however, acquired little western education through evening classes and interaction with literate people. He started his elementary Islamic education at the tender age in his father's Qur'anic School at Igbemo-Ekiti. He later proceeded to Ilorin and Yola for further Islamic education. He settled at Kano for a while before returning to Igbemo-Ekiti in 1958 to take over the Qur'anic School of his father. At the demise of *Imām* Abdul Karim in 1973, he was installed as the 4<sup>th</sup> Chief *Imām* of Igbemo Ekiti<sup>22</sup>.

His tenure recorded several milestones and achievements throughout Ekiti State. He paid the salaries of many *Mu'allimūn* in the inherited Quranic school of his father known as *Imām* Junaid Quranic School, Oke-Oja Street, Igbemo-Ekiti. He (*Imām* Abdullah) played active role in the establishment of Igbemo Community Comprehensive High School, Igbemo-Ekiti in 1975. The same was applicable to Oloketuyi Memorial Grammar School, Igbemo Ekiti in 1979. He single-handedly influenced the establishment of Olorunda Primary School, Igbemo-Ekiti. He also acquired

land from the people of Igbemo-Ekiti for the establishment of the proposed *Hijrah* University, Igbemo-Ekiti in 2002 by *Hijrah* Foundation. He was one of the leading *Imāms* that founded League of *Imāms* and *Alfas* in defunct Ondo State in 1987 and he played pivotal roles in sustainability of the Association. As result of this, he was nicknamed Peace-maker by *Imām* Yayi Akorede, the then Chief *Imām* of Akure land and President General, League of *Imāms* and *Alfas*, Yoruba, Edo and Delta States. At the creation of Ekiti State in 1996, *Imām* Abdullah Junaid was one of the notable *Imāms* that founded Ekiti State chapter of *Rabiṭah* in the new State. He served as the chief arbitrator in virtually all minor and major conflicts or disputes arose within the *Imāms* and *Alfas* in Ekiti State. His achievements in sustaining the unity of Muslims in Ekiti State earned him the title of the first *Amīr-ul-Mu'min* (Commander of the Faithful) of Ekiti State. A position he occupied until his death on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2004.<sup>23</sup>

His marriage was blessed with wives, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Among his children are Barrister AbdulWahab Abdullah, Bashir K. Abdullah, a renowned Chattered Accountant, Ustas Tijani Abdullah and others. These and other achievements of Baba in Igbemo Ekiti, Ifelodun, Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Authority, Ekiti and former Ondo State earned him the Award of Excellent Performance while alive. Though, he is no more alive, his achievements live after him. He was recipient of Award of Excellence being conferred on him by Ifelodun Muslim Community, Ifedara LCDA, Ekiti

State, Nigeria on January 13, 2024 for his selfless service rendered to the Muslim communities in Igbemo-Ekiti, Ifelodun/ Irepodun, Ekiti State and old Ondo State in his life time<sup>24</sup>.

### **The Role of *Imāms***

*Imāms* have been instrumental in *Da'wah* activities in Ekiti land. Their responsibilities extend beyond leading prayers, for they serve as educators, community leaders, and spiritual guides. The first *Imāms* in Ekiti focused on basic teachings, emphasizing the importance of prayer, charity, and community welfare. As the community grew, so did the complexity of *Da'wah*, requiring *Imāms* to adopt more nuanced approaches<sup>25</sup>

- i. **Educational Initiatives:** *Imāms* established *madrasah* (Islamic schools) to teach children and adults about Islamic principles. These institutions became centers for learning, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
- ii. **Community Engagement:** *Imāms* often engaged with community leaders and organizations to promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation. This approach not only enhanced understanding between different religious groups but also showcased the positive contributions of Islam to societal development.
- iii. **Social Welfare Programs:** Many *Imāms* initiated social welfare programs that addressed poverty, education, and health care. These initiatives not only fulfilled religious obligations but also demonstrated Islam's commitment to social justice.

### **Challenges Faced by *Imāms***

Despite the significant progress made in *Da'wah* activities, several challenges persist:<sup>26</sup>

**i. Societal Resistance:** In a region with diverse religious beliefs, there can be resistance to Islamic teachings. Misunderstandings and stereotypes often lead to tensions between different faith communities.

**ii. Limited Resources:** Many *Imāms* operate with limited financial and educational resources, which can hinder their ability to effectively carry out *Da'wah* activities. This limitation affects the quality of education and outreach programs.

**iii. Youth Engagement:** Attracting younger generations to Islamic teachings presents a challenge. Many youths are drawn to secular lifestyles, necessitating innovative approaches to make *Da'wah* more relevant and engaging.

### Success Stories in Igbemo-Ekiti Muslim Community

Despite these challenges, there have been numerous success stories in Igbemo-Ekiti community:

**i. Increased Awareness:** Over the past century, there has been a noticeable increase in awareness and understanding of Islam among non-Muslims, primarily due to the persistent efforts of Imams and community leaders.

**ii. Interfaith Dialogues:** Successful interfaith initiatives led by *Imāms* have fostered mutual respect and understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, reducing tensions and promoting peaceful coexistence.

**iii. Empowerment through Education:** The establishment of Islamic educational institutions has empowered many community members, providing them with knowledge and skills that benefit both their personal and professional lives.

### The Future of *Da'wah* in Ekiti

Looking ahead, the future of *Da'wah* activities in the Ekiti community appears promising, provided that Imams and community leaders continue to adapt to changing circumstances:

**i. Embracing Technology:** Utilizing social media and other digital platforms can enhance the reach of *Da'wah* activities, making Islamic teachings accessible to a broader audience.

**ii. Youth Involvement:** Engaging youth in *Da'wah* through leadership roles and innovative programs can help instill a sense of responsibility and pride in their faith.

**iii. Collaborative Efforts:** Continued collaboration between different religious groups and community organizations can strengthen the overall impact of *Da'wah*, fostering a more inclusive society.

**iv.** Exploring the impact of imamship on women's empowerment in Ekiti community.

**v.** Investigating the role of Islamic education in promoting social cohesion.

**vi.** Analyzing the intersection of Islamic values and sustainable development in Ekiti.

### Conclusion

The journey of *Da'wah* activities in the Igbemo-Ekiti community over the past centuries reflect the resilience and dedication of its *Imāms*. Through education, social welfare, and community engagement, they have laid a strong foundation for Islamic teachings to thrive. As challenges persist, commitment to adapt and inventing innovation

became crucial in ensuring that *Da'wah* continues to inspire and uplift the community for generations to come. As we reflect on a century of imamship in Igbemo-Ekiti community, it becomes clear that the *Da'wah* activities of Islamic scholars and leaders have played a transformative role in shaping the social, cultural, and religious landscape of this vibrant community<sup>27</sup>. From humble beginnings to the present day, the dedication, resilience, and vision of Igbemo-Ekiti *Imāms* and Muslim clerics have left an indelible mark on the lives of countless individuals and families. Over the past centuries, they have navigated complex challenges, adapted to changing contexts, and innovated ways to engage with diverse audiences. Through their tireless efforts, they have fostered a strong sense of Islamic identity and community; promoted interfaith understanding and cooperation; supported education; healthcare, and social welfare initiatives; empowered women, youth, and marginalized groups and preserved Islamic heritage and cultural traditions. As Igbemo-Ekiti Muslims look to the future, the lessons learned from a century of imamship offer valuable insights and posed challenges to the next generation of imams and community leaders that will emerge, they would do well to draw upon the rich legacy of their predecessors. By building upon existing foundation.

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