

## **A SURVEY OF ISLAMIC MEDICINE STORES IN ILORIN EMIRATE**

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**Abstract:** *The Islamic or prophetic medicine is one of the distinguished features of Islam which makes the religion an all-encompassing one. It has been trending across the Islamic nation but got attention of the people of Ilorin Emirate in the recent time. This study conducted a survey of the stores in the city where the items for Islamic medicine are being sold. The methods adopted are purely historical and descriptive. As the former availed the paper the opportunity to investigate into the historical facts which accounted for the emergence of the Islamic Medicine in Ilorin from the former popular Jalabi practices, the latter also provided the privilege to census and interview the practitioners. The finding of this work revealed that the emergence of Islamic medicine is linked aftermath of inherent imbalances that are associated with Jalabi and the increase in quest of Salafism. It is also discovered that the trend in the practice of the medicine today provides a better future for the community. It therefore concluded that Islamic medicine has the*

*potentials for betterment of lives in the city and beyond and it is a viable outfit that one can venture into and build a career on it.*

**Keywords:** *Medicine, Jalabi, Istikhara, Salafiyyah, Habatu Sawda.*

## **Introduction**

Ilorin is one of the indigenous Islamic Communities in the Yoruba speaking parts of Nigeria, fall within the North central states. The city is a borderline between the North and the Southern part of Nigeria. It is also the administrative Capital of Kwara State which was created in 1967 by the military administration of General Gowon (Agetunmobi, 1991). The city is known for its rich Islamic heritage which accounts for its popular declaration as the city as the Qiblah of Islam to the entire Yorubaland (Jamiu, 2015). This is because the city plays a major role in the Islamization of the towns and cities across the South western part of the country, including Edo and Delta states. The influx of the people from different parts of Yoruba land to acquire Islamic Education from the city is unimaginable from the time past till the present. Also, many of these towns and cities are on record to have invited Mallams from Ilorin to take charge of Islamic spiritualities ranging from teaching of Islamic knowledge to leading various spiritual devotions (Balogun, 2011). With the rudiments of Islamic cultural heritage coupled with the central role that the city is playing in the earlier period, one just notice the sudden appearance of Islamic medicine which is gradually taking the stage over from the local and quasi-Islamic medicine which were in vogue before now. This paper

therefore intends to survey the Islamic Medicine stores in Ilorin Emirate in order to determine their proliferations in the recent time and identify factors that must have responsible for the indiscriminate springing up of these stores within the metropolis. It will also identify the impacts that the presence of the stores have made in the city.

### **Historical Perspectives of the Practice of Islamic Medicine in Ilorin**

From the period of formation and consolidation of the Emirate, Muslim scholars were not only doctors of religious laws and doctrines, but also attended to different health issues and challenges that may arise under their watch. Basically, ailment is one of the major designs of life which is bound to happen to every individual that lives. It may be mental, spiritual or physical ailments. Medicals have largely responsible for various transformations in the world. And Muslim scholars from the early time have made tremendous contributions to that effect (Majeed, 2005).

Even prior to the advent of Islam in Ilorin, or before the establishment of Ilorin Emirate, health and medical issues have constituted major challenges that people were battling with. So, with their acceptance of Islam along with various problems, scholars' device means of tackling various challenges that erupted, especially those of the health and other spiritual matters. This was necessary to demonstrate the potency of their new faith. It will also make Islam appealing to others who are entangled to idolatry out of different reasons such as superstitions, and the conviction that the new religion (Islam) in the town could not solve their problems. This situation is what led to what is known as *Jalabi* (Akorede, 2019). Aliyu defines it as spiritual

consultation of Muslim clerics (Aliyu, 2015). So as a Mallam preached and taught, he also attends to medical and spiritual needs of his followers.

*Jalabi* as the technical local name for spiritual consultancy by Muslim scholars as explained by Aliyu (2015) is of different dimensions. He writes:

*Jalabi* (from Arabic *jalub*, meaning ‘to bring along, to bring about, to cause’) as it is called, is sometimes combined with knowledge of herbal medicine for healing. This vocation includes fortune telling through geomancy and dream interpretation and dream visions (*istikhāra*). Offering prayers to resolve particular personal problems, advising on what actions are spiritually propitious or reversing unfortunate situations among others form a major preoccupation (p. 289).

Oloruntele sees no difference between *Jalabi*, Oogun and magic (Oloruntele, 2009). Balogun argues further that the practice of *Jalabi* is akin to syncretism including deceit of all sorts hence the criticisms and condemnations in the recent time especially from the *Salafiyyah* scholars (Aliyu, 2015).

It should be mentioned that most of these allegations may not be true. This is because, as submitted by Akorede, what it is clear from every indication is that the early Muslim scholars, despite their commitment and dedication to the course of Islam, got little exposure to many Islamic literatures but were confronted with different problems which are outside the limit of their knowledge. They therefore device means of fine-tuning the local practice by giving it an

Islamic coloration. The best instance can be given in respect to prescription of *Sara* (*Şadaqah*) for the beggars in the place of *ebo* (ritual sacrifice) which they used to placed at the junctions (Aliyu, 2015). Another one is Arabic geomancy as a replacement for oracle consultations which was prevalent in the earlier period. Nevertheless; there are some scholars as who never dabble into these practices. Some are Sufis who relied much on supplications while some worked miracles to solve whatever problems that were presented to them (Aliyu, 2015). A historical sketch on how Islam got to many cities and villages or how many people accepted Islam in Yorubaland will be linked to invitation of a Mallam to a certain community or by a prominent personality to cure some epidemic diseases that ravaged a community. Balogun (2011) writes:

...Ilorin, while advancing reasons why Yoruba accepted Islam, largely agrees with Babalola but in contrast to him, he posits that Muslim missionaries and teachers delved into the art of medicine and the curing of spiritual related illness was due to the fact that the Muslim converts hitherto used to patronise the unbelievers and diviners, (*Babalawo*), and in order to divert their attention, and attract them to Islam, they started using Qur'ānic verses to solve their many problems. He claims that not every Muslim *Mu'allim* delved into this art, but many people and even the traditional rulers accepted Isam *en masse* because of this feat (p. 134).

In most cases, it was Ilorin scholars, people used to invite for that purpose, having been tagged the *kiblah* of Islam.

### **Emergence of Islamic Medicine Stores in Ilorin**

Arising from the popular *Jalabi* practices and the tide of criticisms for different reasons which include but not limited to syncretism, shirk, diabolism, occultism, magic, witch-crafting, fraud, deceptions among other un-Islamic elements that the practice entails, there was the need to provide pristine Islamic alternatives. There had been awareness of Islamic medicine courtesy of the popular work of *Tibbu 'n-Nabawi* (Prophetic Medicine) compiled by Ibn Qayyim which some scholars have had access to, though many could not divulge the meaning properly or could not get most of the medicinal items that are contained therein. This is because most of them do not grow on the Nigerian soil.

The major event that gave the rare opportunity to people to have access to those items is when people travel to Makkah for pilgrimage. The opportunity is used to procure some of those items while coming home. Another major avenue for procurement of those items was through Kano, Kano State, Nigeria. This is not unconnected to the Kano's long trade ties with the Arab nations which started precisely in the early days of Islam (Doi, 1984). So, the Hausa had been exposed to the items of Prophetic medicine and had been applying them to solve medicals. Interview with bduSalam (personal communication, 2020), revealed that the shop started to spring up around 2001 as a progress from what was in operation before then where brothers used to hawk some of these materials from mosques to mosques especially on Fridays at the Jum'at point.

However, it is noticed that in the recent times, there is a new dawn because the city is now witnessing the influx and increase in the springing of Islamic medicines shops across the nook and cranny of the city. Below is the list of the factors that responsible thereof.

### **Factors for their Emergence**

#### **i) *Salafiyyah* trend in the city**

The practice of Islam in Ilorin has witnessed some changes in the recent times which culminated to some noticeable differences between how it was practiced in the early days and what is obtainable now. One of the major actors of this change is *Salafiyyah* trend. The *Salafiyyah* is a cluster of Sunni Muslims who advocate for the practice of Islam as it was practiced in the days of the *Salaf* (the first three generations of Muslims) (Al-Khattab, 2005). It is a global trend with tentacles across Islamic world. The advocates are known with different names such as *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'at*, *Ahlu Hadīth*, *Wahhabiyyah*, and *Ahlu Athar* among others as the city of Ilorin witnessed the influx of different *Salafiyyah* blocs and their activities (Al-Khattab, 2005).

It should be stressed that the *Salafiyyah* web of activities covers the practicalization of prophetic medicine since their emphasis is on domesticating the prophetic ways in tackling issues which health is one of them. With this trend, the names of items for prophetic medicine such as *Habatu Sawda* (black seed), *Zaytūn* (olive), *Siwāk* (chewing stick) among others started to spring up and gradually becoming an household name, hence shops were established by some *Salafiyyah*

brothers to bring those items closer to the people of Ilorin Emirate.

ii) Unemployment and poverty

Unemployment and poverty are twin brothers which constitute a major socioeconomic challenge that are not only intricately interconnected but glaringly evident in Nigeria. Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) over the period of times show that the country's unemployment rate in 2006 averaged 14.60 percent until 2011, when it reached an all-time high of 23.90 percent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). NBS figures released in early 2013 revealed that, despite favorable economic growth and performance, Nigeria's poverty rate jumped from 54.7 percent in 2004 to 60.9 percent in 2010. In 2011, 100 million Nigerians lived in absolute poverty and 12.6 million more were moderately poor (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

In a complementary manner and in 2018, the Nigerian Minister of labour and employment is noted to have remarked as follows:

The high unemployment rate of 23.1 percent and underemployment of 16.6 percent by the National Bureau Statistics (NBS) of 2019 report was alarming. It is a worrisome status as the global poverty capital; and concomitant high prevalence rate of crimes and criminality, including mass murders, insurgency, militancy, armed robbery, kidnappings and drug abuse, among others (Ngige, 2019, p.2).

It is undoubtful that where the level of unemployment is increasing as observed by the



Minister, it gives and automatic license to poverty and crimes. This goes in line with the saying that an idle mind is devils workshop. Despite the challenging situation, many youth, while in such or after the school, endeavour to get them a means of survival which culminated to their becoming self-employed individuals. So, while considering legitimate options, some got inclined to establishing an Islamic medicine outfit. This is the story of most the owners of the stores interviewed during the course of this work.

iii) Network/branches

It was discovered during the course of interview on this work that some of the Islamic medicine stores are branches to the main stores or the headquarters. Some of those stores have national and international connections. The best instance in this regard is the case of Ashifah Organic Store which is an international outfit but just open a branch in Ilorin to serve as a distribution centers. Another instance is that of At-Tanweer Islamic material with about five branches in Ilorin alone and Ibadan, Lagos among others. Ar-Rahman also has the same attribute like At-Tanweer (Ngige, 2019).

### **The Census of the Islamic Medicine Stores in Ilorin**

The list of major Islamic medicine stores in Ilorin are as follows:

1. At-Tanweer Islamic Materials. It was established by Mallam Ibrahim AbdulSalam in 2001. It has five branches across Ilorin. These are Kankatu, Emir's Road, Oloje, Apalara and Oja tuntun.
2. Ar-Rahman Islamic Store. It was established by Mallah Ibrahim Abdur-Razaq in 2014. It has two branches both at Oloje and Oko-Olowo.

3. Al-Huda International Store, Olomda's House, Omoda Round About, Ilorin. It was also established in the year 2014 by Ustadh AbdulWasi'i. It has no branch, either in Ilorin or elsewhere.
4. As-Shifatul-Haq Organic Store is a branch of As-Shifah International, Balogun Fulani Road, Ilorin. It is man by Mallam Saheed who was said to have been in charge of the store for over a period of two years.
5. Dawahun Nabawi Global Services International, Sabon line Junction, Ilorin. Mallam Abdul-Qawiyi Abubakar is the founder and the Director. It has no branch in Ilorin but outside Ilorin, especially South western Nigerian states like Oyo, Osun, Ogun among others.
6. Al-Madinah Store, Adeta Round About, Ilorin. It was established by Mallam AbdulRahim Hussain Olugbon. It has branch at the premises of University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) and outside Ilorin. The Shop started around 2007 and has since been flourished.
7. Al-Ameen Islamic International. It is situated at Taiwo Road, Ilorin. It was established by Mallam Abdul-Kabir Shittu in the year 2006. The store sells different Islamic materials but with particular interest in Islamic Medicine.

### **A Synopsis of Various Interactions**

During the course of investigations and interviews with the managers of these shops, various questions bothering on their businesses and expertise in the city were asked and answers were provided to that effect. A synopsis of the answers supplied by the respondents revealed that the store for the sales of Islamic medicine in Ilorin sprang up around 2001 and it was pioneered by Mallam Ibrahim AbdulSalam, the

founder of At-Tanweer Islamic materials. He actually started with the sales of Islamic materials like Qur'ān, Islamic books, prayer mats among others but later settled for Islamic medicines. It was in the 2006 and 2007 that Al-Amin and Al-Mdinah also came on board respectively. 2010 till date witnessed the springing of different shops around Ilorin and the shops are still on the increase.

It was also discovered during the course of investigation that virtually all the store owners learnt the art of Islamic medicine through training of different sorts, from within and outside the country like Senegal, Togo, Saudi Arabia, and India among others. They also have networks for consultations from the experts, via internet, phoning among others. Also, they get themselves acquainted with *Tibb 'n-Nabawi* of Ibn Qayyim among other relevant Islamic books which serve as the manual to their operations. Except Al-Ameen which deals purely with sales of the medicinal items, others offer consultation services on utilizing the Islamic Medicine to treat patients with diseases who approaches them. It is said by some of them, especially Ar-Rahman that they do admit patients for treatment of different sorts. Even, Al-Ameen hinted that where they are consulted, they have experts whom they used to refer people to for prescriptions, though it is done independently.

On procurement, it was discovered that many of the shops go into production of some of the items they sold, especially the honey and other items which they could established the local name from the original Arabic name. The instance is that of *Habbatu Sauda* (Black seed) which is said to be called ESO ASOFUN EYE JE. They also engaged in a quasi-production

through mixture of different items to make a new one. Almost every one interviewed submit that they buy items from different places from within, especially Kano and outside Nigeria in places like Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Kwait, Iraq, and Egypt among others.

On diagnosis of a particular disease, Dawahun Nabawi Global Services disclosed that the shop procure some machines for the purposes while the general response was that they used to rely on report of medical examination as may be presented to them by the patients or sometimes, they used to refer patients to diagnostic centers for examinations before prescriptions and treatment. It was also discovered that in some places, except Al-Ameen and Tunjinah stores, other practitioners allowed a sort of apprenticeship who are trained in art of buy, selling, production and how to treat patients.

Each of the shop owners admits that the patronage is on the high side, especially in the recent time when there are much awareness on the use and effectiveness of Islamic medicines. It was also discovered that the high cost of orthodox medicines which makes it somehow difficult for the low income earners to afford accounted in no small measures for the increased patronage.

### **The Impacts of Islamic Medicine Stores in Ilorin Emirate**

**Medical Impact:** it is a common knowledge that in the recent time there had been various advocacies for alternative medicine to address various failures that have recorded against the orthodox medicine. Research also indicates that chemicals consumptions are detrimental to health which is the source of many drugs

that are being used in the practice of orthodox medicine. Islamic or Prophetic medicine is then seen as one of the best alternatives to orthodox medicine. This is because it is 80% natural and less in chemical contents. Its effectiveness in treating different diseases ranging from bacterium to viral diseases is confirmed.

**Economic Impact:** the availability of Islamic medicine in Ilorin Emirate has improved the economy base of the city and has increase productivity. It has also provided jobs for the teaming youth who ordinarily would have been roaming the street in the face of unemployment which is on the increase in the country. Youth now find something meaningful to engage in. Also the low income earners in the city have gone into the practice to increase their income base. This is the reason why some of the practitioners interviewed engage in the sales of other Islamic materials, just to increase their patronage and profit base.

**Social:** The emergence of Islamic Medicine stores and shops has improved the social activities of the people of emirate, especially the Muslims. There had been social interactions which culminated to the formation of Association of Herbal Practitioners of Nigeria. It is an umbrella body for the practitioners of alternative medicines which include Herbal, Spiritual, and Prophetic Acupuncture Medicine among others. The Association was put in place to regulate their activities and to unite different practitioners of different background. The body is registered with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and with the State Ministry of Health and had since been functioning well since its inception over a decade ago. It should be pointed out that membership of the Association is not compulsory as

there are some like Dawahun Nabawi and Al-Ameen who refused to joined for reasons best known to them.

**Spiritual:** The proliferation of advocacy for Islamic Medicine has increased the level of spirituality of Muslims in the city. This is because it involved some supplications while some are purely supplications without necessarily consuming any item. The *Hadīth* literature is saturated with different supplications for different diseases and prevention of many of them.

**Intellectual:** The advent of the practice of Islamic medicine coupled with increase in its acceptance has necessitated the scholars to embark on further research into this medicine in order to tackle various medical challenges that cropped up by the day and to the ravage diseases that post destruction to humanity. As there is in-depth research into different aspects of Islam, so also there is external research being conducted on the existing medical practices to find out the common grounds and the areas of difference. This has accounted in no small measure for the different synergies that are coming up to harmonize the all these methods.

## **Conclusion**

Efforts have been made in this paper to discuss the practice of Islamic medicine in Ilorin Emirate and related issues. It is clear from every indication that what metamorphosed to Islamic medicine started from the Practice of local medicine which the Muslim scholar adopted to device Islamic means of tackling various problems and challenges that arose during the course of preaching of Islam. It is also discovered that the spread of *Salafism* to every nook and cranny of Muslim Community contributed in no small measures to rapid

growth of Islamic medicine among the Muslims in Ilorin Emirate. Added to this, are the anomalies that characterized the practice of Jalabi. Within tip of time, the city did not only witness the emergence of Islamic medicine stores but also witnessed their rapid growth. Various other factors were identified to have responsible for this. The presence of the practice has provided several positive impacts in the city and Islamic Medicine has the potential of improving the economic activities in the city and the state in general.

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