


Research Article

An Islamic Perspective of Superstitious Practices Related to Will (Al-Waṣiyyah) Among Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract. Superstition, as an unscientific and irrational belief, is a long and common practice across the globe and almost in every aspect of human endeavor be it economic, moral, social, psychological and religious. Will, is one of the means of acquiring wealth and taking over the ownership of a portion of an estate after the demise of the real owner. However there are some superstitions that are related to it and are so believed and practiced by people around the world in general and Yoruba people of Nigeria in particular. Therefore, this paper aims at uncovering the degree of involvement of the Yoruba Muslims of southwest Nigeria in the superstitious practices related to will. The paper also discusses the Islamic perspective of the practices. Descriptive and analytical research methods were used in this work. The research findings reveal that ignorance of some Yoruba Muslims of the Islamic systems of Will and Inheritance and their strict adherence to the Yoruba culture are the salient factors influencing them to the involvement in the superstitious practices related to Will. The paper, therefore, concludes by encouraging creation and promotion of more awareness on the significance and relevance of Islamic system of Will not only to the individual Muslim but also to the entire Yoruba people.

Keywords: Islamic Perspective, Superstitious Practices, Will, Yoruba Muslims, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Allah -in His infinite mercy- laid down different ways for human beings to acquire wealth and livelihood. This makes the existence on this planet meaningful, resourceful and continuous. This also brings out in man the qualities and talents of individual in an attempt to survive the sojourn of life and prepare them for the next life journey. This is clearly mentioned in the Qur'ān 67:15 where Allāh says:

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا ۖ فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ١٥

He it is Who made the earth smooth for you, therefore go about in the spacious sides thereof, and eat of His sustenance, and to Him is the return after death.

One of the ways of acquiring wealth in Islam, according to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* is through the institution of inheritance or estate management as used in the conventional law (Mandal, 2017:24) This is corroborated by Qur'ān 4:7 where Allāh says:

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ۚ نَصِيبٌ لِّمَنْ هُوَ ۚ ٧

Men shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and women shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether there is little or much of it; a stated portion.

Another significant means of acquiring wealth by non-heirs and distance relatives is through Will (Al-waṣīyyah). The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) supported will making simply for his love and concern for the welfare of the Muslims especially the non-heirs among the relatives and non-relatives of a deceased if he/she left abundant wealth. This is vividly illustrated in the Ḥadīth below: Sa'ad Ibn Abī Waqqās relates:

جاء النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يعودني وأنا بمكة وهو يكره أن يموت بالأرض التي هاجر منها قال: "يرحم الله ابن عفرأ". قلت: يارسول الله أوصي بمالي كله قال: "لا". قلت: فالشطر؟ قال: "لا". قلت: الثلث؟ قال: "فالثلث والثلث كثير إنك أن تدع ورثتك اغنياء خير من أن تدعهم عالة يتكففون الناس في أيديهم وإنك مهما أنفقت من نفقة فإنها صدقة حتى اللقمة التي ترفعها إلى في امرأتك وعسى الله أن يرفعك فينتفع بك ناس ويضربك آخرون". ولم يكن له يومئذ إلا ابنة

"The Prophet came visiting me while I was (sick) in Makkah and he loathed to die in the land, hence he had already migrated. He (the Prophet) said: may Allah bestow His Mercy on ibn 'Afrā' (Sa'd bn. Khawla). I said, O the Messenger of Allah! (peace and blessing of Allah be on him), May I will all my property (in charity)?" He said, "No" I said, "Then may I will half of it"? He said, "No" I said, "One third?" He said: "Yes, one third, yet even one third is too much. It is better for you to leave your

progenies rich than to leave them poor begging others, and whatever you spent for Allah's sake would be considered as a charitable deed even the handful of food you put in your wife's mouth. Allah may lengthen your age so that some may benefit by you, and some others be harmed by you." At that time, Sa'd had only one daughter." (Muslim bn al-Hajjāj)

Al-waṣīyyah is so significant in Islam as it is clearly underpinned by the *ḥadīth* below:

إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لِيَعْمَلَ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْخَيْرِ سَبْعِينَ سَنَةً فَإِذَا أَوْصَى جَافَ فِي وَصِيَّتِهِ فَيُخْتَمَ لَهُ بِشَرِّ عَمَلِهِ
فَيَدْخُلُ النَّارَ وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لِيَعْمَلَ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الشَّرِّ سَبْعِينَ سَنَةً فَيُعَدَّلَ فِي وَصِيَّتِهِ فَيُخْتَمَ لَهُ بِخَيْرِ
عَمَلِهِ فَيَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ

It is possible for a man to do good for seventy years and at the end he makes an unjust will which could make him end up in hell. In the same vein, it is possible for a man to do evil for seventy years and at the end be just in his will and that will be his last work and earns him Paradise." (Sayyid Sābiq, 1977)

Based on the above, it can be deduced that every individual is entitled to certain portion of his or her deceased family member or relative if the latter leaves assets after his or her death. This is a way of showing the fact that the property of a man is not only for himself but also his immediate family members and relatives while alive or dead. Thus, the distribution of the deceased's estate becomes a practice among the Muslims. It is important to note that the modes of distribution in the Arabia peninsular before the advent of Islam were left unfollowed in this present time but the traces of old practices are still in some societies of the world especially in Yorubaland where the practices that are related to inheritance and others are in practice before the advent of Islam in the society. These practices exist throughout the world because every tribe, society and nation has its system of succession, though, it differs from one tribe and ethnic group to another. (Mandal, 2017)

In Yorubaland before the advent of Islam, Yoruba people like the Arabs were generally pagans and worshippers of idols, heroes, ancestors, jinns, and demons, hence, they so much believed in superstitious practices. They have different traditions, norms, ideas, beliefs and superstitious practices related to every facet of their life especially the inheritance. When Islam was introduced to Yorubaland as far back as 12th century (Al-Ilori, 2012) the expectation was that its teachings would be firmly rooted in their day to day practices and activities. Unfortunately, they could not do away with these irrational and idolatry traditional beliefs and practices. They are not aware that they are associating partners with Allāh. Even today, many Yoruba Muslims in the southwest Nigeria, despite their religious awareness and teachings and abundant wealth of knowledge in Islam, still believe and practice superstitions that are related to inheritance like other non-Muslims in the society. (Al-Ilori, 2012)

Surprisingly, many Yoruba Muslims are not left out of these superstitious beliefs and practices. They formulated numerous superstitions; socially, morally, religiously, economically and politically and conform to them accordingly (Adeoye, 1980) Their superstitious practices related to will and inheritance are held in

high esteem as they have become cultural beliefs which the Yoruba Muslims have fallen victims of (Akingbemi, 2005)

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a descriptive research. Descriptive research is concerned with conditions that exist; practices that prevail; belief, point of view or attitude that are developing (Cohen and Manion, 1980). This study therefore, unveiled belief and practice of superstitions related to will among Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria. It specifically revealed the level of involvement of Yoruba Muslims in the practice. The instrument used to elicit information for this study is a self-developed structured interview questions. The instrument has both the demographic section (A); which contains the name, age, occupation, date and address of the respondents and questionnaire section (B); which has three (3) questionnaire items. The method used to collect data for this study is direct administration of the instrument to the respondents (interviewees). The respondents were eighteen (18) selected from the six states of the southwest Nigeria and comprised of both male and female.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Superstition and Will: A Conceptual Analysis

Superstition

The term superstition was derived from old French or Latin ‘superstitio which mean “standing over”; super ‘over’ and stare ‘to stand’. Superstition is universally believed to be a phenomenon that basically implies ‘a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation’ (Merriam- Webster online Dictionary, 2025). Belief and practice of superstitions have become unavoidable systems of most human beings because they have taken superstitions as determinants and means of explaining this life and their own existence. As superstition is so difficult to explain, notwithstanding some people still perceive it as a sign of appease to evil destiny and a means of attaining fortune (Odejobi, 2013).

In the western World, some people believe in the superstition that if a black cat crosses someone’s path, the person will have bad luck. This belief can neither be proven scientifically nor morally and rationally (Encyclopedia Britannica Online 2009). Superstition is also a belief that some objects or actions are lucky and unlucky based on ignorance” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). It is used in Latin to mean irrational or too much belief in fear or magic; especially a foreign or fantastic idea as it was the situation in the ancient Roman Empire (Oxford Latin Dictionary).

Superstition is also perceived to be an unscientific belief because scientifically man could only think ranges between his understanding of physical forces to read other’s purpose (Mandal, 2017). Superstitions do not have a logical basis or any reasonable connection with real life. Belief in superstitions is more common in matters of religion (Saricam, 2020).

According to *M’ujam al-Lughgha al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu‘āṣarah ‘kḥurāfah’* means

جملة الأفعال أو الألفاظ أو الأعداد التي يظن أنها تجلب السعد أو النحس

Superstition is a collection of deeds or sayings or numbers that are assumed to bring fortune or bad luck to people (Aḥmad, 2008). According to *Lisān al-‘Arab*, ‘*khurāfah*’ means الحديث المستملح من الكذب statement that is coined from lie (Ibn Manẓūr 1414 A.H.)

Superstition is primarily a faith-like belief that a certain event happens because of another seemingly unrelated one. The cause-effect relationship is based on neither scientific nor religiously valid justification (Khalid, 2011). Superstition, as an element of an irrational belief is found in almost all cultures of the world and has relationship with supernatural like good, or bad luck. This is without doubt a fabricated invalid term, myth and false activity or practice without any rational thought (Khalid, 2011). Perhaps superstition, as a man-made phenomenon, is the only problem that, despite the changes and development of societies, still exists and not only its intensity but also is not diminished in the twenty-first century, but also it seems that its supporters increased. These beliefs are called superstitions established based on the intuitive nature and there have sometimes agreements and disagreements (Roghayyeh, 2014)

However, superstitions gain popularity and play a vital role in many nonscientific, developing and under-developed societies, and indeed remain acceptable and prevalent in some popular culture of many societies of the world (Roghayyeh, 2014). In the Western world, belief in superstitions is also prevalent. Only that the common superstitions over there involve belief in extrasensory perception, astrology, spirituality, alternative therapies and precognition. All these are considered to be a form of magical thinking in that they assume implausible or incoherent causal relationships akin to magic (Griffiths, Shehabi, Murphy and Le Pelley). There is a belief that once causality cannot be directly experienced (causation cannot be seen), its effects can be observed in the form of the contingencies that are experienced between candidate causes and effects. Thus causality can be deduced from observational data by measuring if that outcome occurs more often in the presence of the cue, than in the absence of that cue (Griffiths, Shehabi, Murphy and Le Pelley).

Yoruba tribe, like many other tribes of the world, have strong belief in superstitions and practise them accordingly. The term superstition is known in Yoruba language as (eewo). Some superstitions are ridiculous and irrational while others are injurious. Many Yoruba across southwest Nigeria still hold on to some of these beliefs and practice them. For instance, some Yoruba believe that to break a mirror will bring you seven years bad luck (Olatunji, 2006).

Will

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, “will” is “The legal instrument that permits a person, the testator, to make decisions on how his estate will be managed and distributed after his death” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online 2009) It is “A legal declaration of a person's wishes regarding the disposal of his or her property or estate after death.” (Merriam- Webster Dictionary). According to Chambers 21st Century Dictionary. “It is a written document containing the disposition of one’s money and property at death.”

The concept “will” or “bequest” which connotes “waṣīyyah” in Arabic was etymologically derived from “waṣā” or “ʾawṣā” (simple past tense), “yūṣī” (simple present tense), “ʾawṣī” (imperative tense) “īṣāʾu” or “waṣīyyah” (noun). According to *Mʾujam al-Lughghah* it means:

أوصى إليه بكذا\ أوصى له بكذا: جعله له يأخذه بعد موته

“The owner (testator) gives his property to other person (the legatee) after the testator death” (Aḥmad, 2008)

The system of “Will Making” preceded the system of inheritance globally. This is so because “will” is a document that states officially how the estate left by a testator should be shared among his legatees. It is the first adopted formal document highlighting the way one’s property should be transferred to other people after his demise. Though, it is wrongly practiced by many nations. For instance, the Romans arbitrarily bequeathed their properties to anybody they like be he a family member or non-family member. A Roman might bequeath his estate to non-family member and forbid his children from having shares of it. The Arab during the dark period (Jāhiliyyah) like the Romans, used to proudly make will for outsiders and left their children without any shares (Az-Zuhaili, 1998).

In the western world like other parts of the globe, the preparation and implementation of will are common and formal unlike most developing and underdeveloped nations where the will are more of verbal than written. Though, in rare cases, a nuncupative (orally declared) will is exceptionally admitted under necessity in emergency situations such as a soldier making oral will on battle field, the sailor on board ship, or a person finding himself in immediate danger of destruction or death (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2009).

In *Yorubaland*, the system of Will which is known as *asotele oku* in Yoruba language, had been in existence in *Yorubaland* since the existence of the tribe, only that the Yoruba in the ancient times, were not used to official documentation due to their illiteracy (Daramola and Jeje, 1975). Thus, they only gave oral instruction on where and how they should be buried and what activities should be carried out by their family members and relatives after their death. In *Yorubaland*, every individual has absolute authority on how his/her estate should be shared. At times, one may instruct his potential heirs that one of his/her children or relatives should not be given any part of his/her property after his/her demise (Adeoye (1975). In an interview with Comrade Opatotun Ademola Oladapo, of Osun state Broadcasting Cooperation, affirmed that the system of will is a long system in *Yorubaland* only that it was verbal unlike the present time (Opatotun, 2024).

Rulings on Will (*Al-waṣīyyah*)

The rulings of Islamic scholars on Will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) are multidimensional. Deferent factors are taken into consideration while ruling on *Al-waṣīyyah*. The rulings are:

1. **Wajib** (compulsory): Majority of the Islamic scholars unanimously ruled that making *Al-waṣīyyah* is compulsory if there are responsibilities like payment of Zakāt or giving charity or performance of Hajj and willing but the circumstance could not permit him/her to carry out the obligations. Also if any one has any

- property entrusted to him/her or he/she has an outstanding debt. In such situation, will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) becomes compulsory (Badawī, 2001).
2. **Mustahab** (recommended): Majority of the Islamic scholars also ruled that will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) could be recommended (not obligatory) if one willingly writes the will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) to give parts of his estates to the needy and poor people in the Muslim society, most especially the relatives that have no fixed shares from the property. *Al-waṣīyyah* may also become *Mustahab* (recommended) if one intends to give money to the community for the building of school, scholarship, health-care centre and orphanage (Az-Zuhaili, 1998).
 3. **Haram** (Forbidden): Making will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) becomes forbidden in Islam if the testator writes a will to spend certain amount of his property for forbidden things such as building of church, purchase of alcohol, sponsoring of anti-Islamic events and programmes and things that have evil effects on people and harm their physical and personality dispositions. In such case, implementation of such a will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) is forbidden (*ḥaram*). The implementation will be at the disadvantage of the eligible heirs by preventing them from getting handsome shares from the estates of the deceased as prescribed by *sharī'ah*. Anything that can harm human beings is strictly prohibited by Allah and the Prophet (ﷺ) (At-Tuwayjirī, 2010).
 4. **Mubaḥ** (Permissible): Some Islamic scholars ruled that Will (*Al-waṣīyyah*) will become *Mubaḥ* if it is for friends, associates or the wealthy individuals with the aim of endearing them to Islam provided it is not beyond one third of the property. In such situation, bequest will be *Mubaḥ* as it indicates love and respect for humanity and obedience to Allah (At-Tuwayjirī, 2010).
 5. **Makruh** (Detestable): Majority of Islamic scholars also ruled that bequest (*Al-waṣīyyah*) becomes detestable (*makruh*) when the testator is a poor and have family members, relatives and friends that are also poor and always in dare need for help. The bequest (*Al-waṣīyyah*) also becomes detestable (*makruh*) when the testator gives it to someone that is psycho-socially and morally nil and always manifests undesirable behaviours or a person that will utilize the bequest against Islam such as criminal activities and harmful things (Az-Zuhaili, 1998).

Brief Geo-Historical and Religious Background of Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria

Geographically, *Yorubaland* is one of the major regions in Nigeria. It shares boundaries from the south-western frontier of Nigeria through the Republic of Benin to central Togo and to the north with the banks of the Niger River and extends to the Atlantic Ocean to the south. It also extends from the *Òyán* (a tributary of the *Ogun* River) westwards to the basin of the river Mono and eastwards to Benin Kingdom in the present Edo state (Asiwaju, 2009). The land has an area of about 181,300 square kilometres and lies between latitudes 6° 0' and 9° 0' N and longitudes 2° 30' and 6° 30' E (Encyclopedia Britanica 2009). Presently, *Yorubaland* covers the six South-Western states of Nigeria (Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo) and larger parts of Kwara State, few cities in Edo, Niger and Kogi states and towns like Šábe, Kétu, Ìdàìṣà, Iṣa, Ànà (also called Ifè) and M̀nìgrí in the Republic of Benin (Asiwaju, 2009).

Historically, there are different accounts of the origin of Yoruba people. According to Aribidesi Usman and Toyin Falola, an account established that the Yoruba had inhabited their territory from time immemorial, begins with *Olodumare* (God) sending *Oduduwa* from heaven to create the solid earth and the human race. In that myth, it was believed that *Oduduwa* descended to earth on a long chain and landed at *Ile-Ife*, where he formed solid ground and planted the first seed. This legend established *Ile-Ife* as the cradle of not only Yoruba but also the human race in general while further affirmed *Oduduwa* as the Yoruba's first ancestor. *Oduduwa* was believed to be the founder of the first Yoruba kingdom, situated in *Ile-Ife*, beginning the Yoruba kingship (Shaw, 1985).

Another account of the origin of the Yoruba stressed that *Oduduwa* led the Yoruba to their present location after migrating from the eastern world (Arabian Peninsula). The story claimed that the migration was due to political disturbances associated with the expansion of Islam in the East. Though, the exact location of the legend's "east" is not definite (Usman and Fola, 2019). Also, another account differs totally from the above two accounts by asserting that *Ile-Ife* was already inhabited when *Oduduwa* arrived. This introduces the story of *Agbonmiregun*, whom *Oduduwa* met at *Ile-Ife*. Notwithstanding, the three different accounts feature *Oduduwa* as the main character (Usman and Fola, 2019). Early archaeological work at *Ile-Ife* and its immediate environs seemed to support the theory of Yoruba indigenous origin of the land.

Religiously, before the advent of Islam and Christianity, the *Yoruba* like other Africans practised the traditional religions like *Obatala*, *Egungun*, *Oro*, *Ogun*, *Esu*, *Agemo*, *Eyo*, *Eluku* and other gods and goddesses and believed so much in the dictates of soothsayers, fortune tellers and *Ifa* priests (Oyelakin, 2013). Islam had been in *Yorubaland* long before the introduction of Christianity in 1842 because the *Yoruba* people had some contacts with the Islamised areas both in war and in peaceful times through the activities of soldiers, settlers, missionaries and above all traders. These various contacts facilitated the intermingling of *Yoruba* with other peoples and ideas which eventually aided the penetration and spread of Islam in *Yorubaland* (Gbadamosi, 1978).

Shaykh Adam Al-Ilori opined that it was during the period of Mansa Musa of Mali (d. 1337 C.E.) that Islam spread to most parts of Nigeria, including *Yorubaland* (Al-Ilori, 2013). It is evident from the discussion so far that Islam gained entrance to many parts of *Yorubaland* through peaceful means like the activities of the Muslim traders and clerics which had tremendous assistance in the spread of Islam in *Yorubaland*. Before 1840, Islam had gained firm root in many places in *Yorubaland* like *Ilorin*, *Saki*, *Ijebu*, *Ibadan*, *Badagry*, *Igboho*, *Ikoyi*, *Iseyin*, *Ketu*, *Epe*, *Lagos*, *Oyo*, *Ibadan*, *Osogbo*, *Iwo*, *Ede*, *Ogbomoso*, *Abeokuta* and other places (Makinde, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Superstitious Practices Related to Will (Al-Waṣīyyah) among Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria

In *Yorubaland*, there are many superstitious practices related to will (Al-Waṣīyyah). The common and prevalent ones are:

- (i) **Burial in the Room:** In *Yorubaland*, making written or verbal will of burial in the room and home environment is a common tradition. The burial is usually practised especially by the pagans and some Muslims across the *Yorubaland*. In an interview, comrade Opatotun Ademola Oladapo, of Osun state Broadcasting Cooperation, submitted that if a person makes a will either written or verbal that he must be buried in his room, no one should do contrary to the will, rather, it should be followed to the letter. The comrade then narrated an eye witness of the burial of an oracle priest (*Onifa*) in his room on 18 June, 2008 at *Oke Baale, Ota*, Ogun state (Opatotun, 2024).

According comrade Peter Ayodele John, English Language teacher at *Ilugun* High School, *Elega, Imala, Abeokuta* North, Ogun state, he asserted that making will of burial in the room is a common tradition among the Yoruba idols worshippers. Comrade Peter Ayodele further submitted that he witnessed a burial of Yoruba man at *Akoko Edo*, Edo state on Friday 17 March, 2023 (Peter, 2024). Like other interviewees, Chief Ganiyu Adebisi of *Ogodo Area, Sanga, Oyo*, Oyo state, in an interview, also established that stipulating in the will that one should be buried in the room is a common practice among some Christians, few Muslims and majority of the idol worshippers in *Yorubaland* especially the *Ogboni* confraternity cults. He further stated that the practice is still in vogue among the pagan across the *Yorubaland* in the present time (Ganiyu, 2024).

The view of Mrs Hammed Sikira of *Ode Alare, Baago Area, Oyo*, Oyo state, in an interview, confirmed that Yoruba order of inclusion of burial in the room in the will is paramount among the idol worshippers. She added that she had witnessed numerous incidences of burial in the room in Oyo and some other towns in Oyo state and other parts of the southwest Nigeria (Hammed, 2024). In an interview, Mrs Emenike Oluwaseun a Mathematics teacher at Adeoye Lambo Memorial High School *Obada Oko, Ewekoro*, Ogun State, also was of the same opinion that burial in the room is still practised in *Yorubaland* nowadays provided the dead had stated in his will to be buried in his room. She therefore, gave an eye witness account of a burial in the room that took place in February, 2010 at *Itoshi, Abeokuta* North, Ogun state (Emenike, 2024).

According to Mr. Salahudeen Waheed Oyekunle of *Ileosaji's* compound, *Iragbiji*, Osun state, in an interview, he avowed that burial in the room is perceived by most Yoruba traditionalists as the best way and manner of burial because the belief of Yoruba people is that the burial is a kind of honour and respect for the dead especially if he/she had included in his/her will that he/she should be buried in the room. Mr. Salahudeen Waheed Oyekunle further added that she witnessed such burial at *Igbajo*, Osun state in 2003 (Salahudeen, 2024). Mrs Olayemi Aolat of *Isanpa Area Iragbiji*, Osun state, in an interview, also submitted that in 1982, when she was seven years old, she witnessed a case of burial in the room at *Iragbiji*, Osun state (Olayemi, 2024). According to Mr. Abdul Kabir Uthman, student, from *Akungba Akoko, Ondo* state, in an interview, he confirmed that burial in the room is a common practice across all the states of the southwestern Nigeria (Abdul Kabir, 2024).

In an interview, Muhammed Nuhu, a student of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic *Owo*, Ondo state, he gave an eye witness account of burial of a Yoruba man in his room on

3 March, 2016 in Oshogbo, Osun state (Muhammed, 2024). According to Hammed Abdul Hamid, student, from *Akungba Akoko*, Ondo state, in an interview, he stressed that burial in the room is still rampant among the Yoruba in the present time. He further gave an eye witness of a burial of a Yoruba Christian that occurred in June this 2024 in Oyo, Oyo state (Hammed, 2024). In an interview, comrade Zakariyah Isiaq Temitope, civil servant, *Igbe, Ikorodu*, Lagos state, avowed that making will to be buried in the room is a wide spread tradition among the traditionalists and few Christians and Muslims in Yorubaland. He further stressed that he had witnessed many cases of such burial in Ikorodu and that some Muslims and Christians are still involving in the practice (Zakariyah, 2024).

(ii). **Will to organize Funeral Party after Death:** Another common superstitious practice that relates to will in Yorubaland is the inclusion of funeral party in the will and that no family member or relative should ignore the instruction. According to comrade Opadotun Ademola Oladapo, of Osun state Broadcasting Cooperation, in an interview, he emphasized that inclusion of funeral party in the will is a common practice among some Muslims, Christians and idol worshippers in *Yorubaland* and that anybody that fails to engage in the party will be affected by the wrath of the dead. The comrade further confirmed that he had witnessed many cases of such and specifically narrated the one that took place at *Gberigbe, Ikorodu*, Lagos state on 16 January, 2007 (Opadotun, 2024).

According to Chief Ganiyu Adebisi of Ogodo Area, *Sanga, Oyo*, Oyo state, in an interview, he declared that Yoruba people perceive elaborate funeral party as an indication that the dead will be well accepted in the heaven. So, most elderly people in *Yorubaland* use to include organisation of elaborate party in their Will with strong warning for any child or relative that may be willing to ignore the instruction (Ganiyu, 2024). Mrs Hammed Sikira of *Ode Alare, Baago Area*, Oyo, Oyo state, in an interview, she also had the same view as Chief Ganiyu Adebisi and further added that the practice of stating in the will that funeral party must be organised is common among the traditionalists, many Christians and few Muslims in *Yorubaland* (Hammed, 2024).

In his view, Comrade Seriki Monsuru O., submitted that making will for funeral party after one's demise is so rampant in *Yorubaland*. He further established that there is the belief that any bereaved that refuses to partake in the funeral ceremony will be afflicted with evil and misfortune (Seriki, 2024). According to Mrs Adeyemi Rukayat of *Ojomu's compound, Iragbiji, Osun* state, in an interview, she stated that inclusion of organisation of funeral party in the will is a common superstition among the Yoruba people. She further stressed that she had witnessed some cases of such practice and specifically mentioned the one that took place in *Ile Ife*, Osun state on 2 August, 2012 when a Muslim man clearly stated in his will that funeral party must be organised after his death (Adeyemi, 2024).

According to Mr. Salahudeen Waheed Oyekunle of *Ileosaji's compound, Iragbiji, Osun* state, in an interview, he established that making will that funeral party must be organised after one's demise is a common practice in *Yorubaland*. He further declared that he witnessed a Christian man who not only included organisation of funeral party in his will but also threatened to curse any of his children that might fail to comply. He added that the incidence occurred at *Igbajo, Osun* state in 2003

(Salahudeen, 2024). Mrs Olayemi Aolat of *Isanpa Area Iragbiji*, Osun state, in an interview, also stressed that compelling the family members and relatives to organise funeral party after one's death is a wide spread funeral practice in *Yorubaland*. She added that some elderly people in *Yorubaland* do include organisation of funeral party in their prepared will and threat to curse any family member that might be willing to jettison the order (Olayemi, 2024).

In his view, Mr. Abdul Kabir Uthman, student, from *Akungba Akoko*, Ondo state, submitted that he witnessed the preparation of wills of fathers of his two friends, one in Ede, Osun state and the other in Saki, Oyo state. He further stated that both fathers included organisation of funeral party after their death in their will (Abdul Kabir, 2024). Mr. Muhammed Nuhu, a student of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo, Ondo state, also gave an eye witness of a prepared will of a Christian man in *Osogbo*, Osun state on 3 January, 2015 wherein he included that it is mandatory upon all his children to organise funeral party after his death (Muhammed, 2024).

Mr. Hammed Abdul Hamid, student, from *Akungba Akoko*, Ondo state, in an interview, narrated an eye witness of a pastor in *Akure*, Ondo state on Thursday 21 September, 2017 who stated categorically in his will that it is a must for all his family members to organise funeral ceremony after his death and that ordeals of different kinds will befall anyone who fails to partake socially and financially in the ceremony (Hammed, 2024). In an interview, comrade Zakariyah Isiaq Temitope, civil servant, from *Igbe, Ikorodu*, Lagos state, confirmed that many Yoruba are of the belief that funeral ceremony is so significant and that some Muslims, like Christians and traditionalists, also put it in their will that funeral party must be organised after their death. He further stated that there are cases of such in *Ikorodu*, Lagos state (Zakariyah, 2024).

(iii) **Will to put food items and money in one's grave:** Another common superstitious practice related to will in *Yorubaland* is to instruct children and relatives to put food items and money in one's grave during his/her burial so that he/she would have access to them when the need arises. In an interview with the Chief Imam of Moore Central Mosque, *Obantoko, Odeda*, Alhaji Abdur-Razaq Abdul 'Aziz, he affirmed that another prevalent superstitious practice during the burial in *Yorubaland* is the belief that the deceased will need to eat food in the grave. So, immediately they put the corpse in the grave, they will put seventeen (17) wraps of cornstarch gruel (*eko*) beside the corpse in the grave before filling the grave with soil (Abdur-Razaq, 2024). In an interview with Comrade Opatotun Ademola Oladapo, of *Osun* state Broadcasting Cooperation, he affirmed that he witnessed a burial of a *Yoruba* Christian that food items of different kinds were put in his grave. According to him, the superstitious practice happened in 1979 at *Oke Omiru, Ilesha*, *Osun* state (Opatotun, 2024).

According to Mrs Hammed Sikira of *Ode Alare, Baago Area*, Oyo, Oyo state, in an interview, she admitted that putting food items in the grave for the dead to eat in the heaven is an old superstitious practice in *Yorubaland*. She however stressed that it is still rampant in some villages in *Yorubaland* where traditional beliefs and religions gain ground (Hammed, 2024). According to Chief Hammed Tijani Erinfolami of *Aare Oke Ona* compound, *Iyaji-Sanga*, Oyo, Oyo state, in an interview,

he admitted that he witnessed a burial of a Yoruba Christian man in *Tede*, Oyo state and that food items of different kinds were put in his grave (Erinfolami, 2024). In an interview, Mr. Owofemi Oluwanifemi, a student of Rufus Giwa polytechnic, Owo, Ondo state, confirmed that some Christians put food items in the grave of their dead persons with the belief that the dead would need food in the heaven. Mr. Owofemi Oluwanifemi further established that this practice is so prevalent among the Christians across the *Yorubaland* (Owofemi, 2024).

Islamic Perspective of the Superstitious Practices Related to Will (Al-Waṣīyyah) among Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria

(i) **Burial in the Room and Home Environment:** Contrary to the Yoruba practice of burial in the room and home environment, Islam totally prohibits the practice because Muslim homes are meant for purposes such as dwelling, training of children, recitation of the Qur'ān, worship of Allah and the like. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) prohibited burial at home environment and warned fervently against it. This is supported by the ḥadīth below:

عن أبي هريرة، أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، قال: "لا تجعلوا بيوتكم مقابر، إن الشيطان ينفر من البيت الذي تقرأ فيه سورة البقرة"

On the authority of Abu Hurairah, he said: The Messenger of Allah said: "Do not turn your homes into graves, for Satan flees from a house in which Surat Al-Baqarah is recited. (Muslim bn al-Hajjāj, 1987).

By implication, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in the Ḥadīth established that it is good to usually read the Qur'ān in our homes. The consequence of burying in the room is that it will prohibit recitation of the Qur'ān in that room which may make it easy for Shaiṭan to have easy access to the home and eventually harm the inhabitants. Muslims are encouraged to bury their dead in the Muslim cemetery for many benefits such as seeking forgiveness of Allah for the dead and frequent prayers by those who visit the cemetery. This is supported by the saying of Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) thus:

لقول عائشة للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلمك "كيف أقول يا رسول الله؟ (تعني إذا أتاها المقابر) قال: "قولي السلام على أهل الديار من المؤمنين والمسلمين، يرحم الله المستقدمين منا والمستخين، وإنا إن شاء الله بكم للاحقون"

Aisha said: What should I say to them, O Messenger of God? He said: "Say: Peace be upon the people of this home, from the believers and Muslims, and may God have mercy on those of us who have gone before and those who will come after, and we, God willing, will join you (Muslim bn al-Hajjāj, 1987).

In accordance with the teaching of the ḥadīth, the will executor and the family members of the deceased should ignore the instruction of the testator in the will that he/she must be buried in his/her room or home environment.

(ii) **Will to organize Funeral Party after Death:** The Yoruba practice of inclusion of funeral party in the will and that no family member or relative should ignore

the instruction else, they will be affected by the wrath of the dead is totally opposed to the teaching of Islam. In Islam, any stipulation, condition or tradition that contradicts the teachings of Islam should be totally ignored. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

عن عائشة قالت: قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: "ما بال أقوام يشترطون شروطا ليست في كتاب الله؟ من اشترط شرطا ليس في كتاب الله فليس له, وإن اشترط مائة مرة"

On the authority of Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: What is the matter with people who stipulate conditions that are not in the Book of Allah? Any condition that is not in the Book of Allah is invalid (Al-Bukhari 1994).

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) forbade killing animal for the funeral party and fervently warned against it. *Anas bn Malik* reported that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

لا عقر في الإسلام

"There is no slaughtering of animal on graves in *Islam*" (Abu Dāūd, S. Ḥadīth 2304)

So, the instruction in the Will that funeral party should be organized after one's demise should not be implemented because only stipulations that are in accord with the commandment of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) should be followed.

(iii) **Will to put food items and money in one's grave:** The belief of Yoruba people that the dead eat in the grave, so, this leads many people to include in their will that food items and money should be put in their graves during burial. This practice is clearly opposed and alien to Islam. Similarly, the slaughtering of ram and goat does not hold ground in *Shari'ah*. This is because no food or money or other materials will be beneficial for the dead in the grave except his/her good deeds on earth. This is corroborated by the narration of *Anas bn Malik* that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

"يتبع الميت ثلاثة فيرجع اثنان و يبقى معه واحد يتبعه أهله و ماله و عمله فيرجع أهله و ماله و يبقى عمله"

"Three things follow the deceased person to the grave, two of them return and only one remains. His family, wealth and actions follow him. His family and wealth return, but his deeds will remain." (Muslim bn al-Hajjāj, 1987)

From the above *Ḥadīth*, it can be deduced that nothing will be useful after death other than good deeds which will be the only means of benefit to the dead in the grave and hereafter. On this, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said on the authority of *Abu Hurayrah* that:

أتدرون المفلس؟ قالوا المفلس فينا من لا درهم له ولا متاع فقال إن المفلس من أمتي يأتي يوم القيام بصلاة و صيام وزكاة ويأتي قد شتم هذا وقذف هذا وأكل مال هذا وسفك دم هذا

وضرب هذا فيعطى هذا من حسناته وهذا من حسناته فإن فنيت حسناته قبل أن يقضى ما عليه أخذ من خطاياهم فطرحت عليه ثم طرح في النار

Do you know who are bankrupt?" They said, "The one without money or goods is bankrupt." The Prophet said, "Verily, the bankrupt of my nation is the one who come on the Day of Resurrection with prayers, fasting, and charity, but also with insults, slander, consuming wealth of other, shedding blood, and beating others. The oppressed will each be given from his good deeds. If his good deeds run out before justice is fulfilled, then their sins will be cast upon him and he will be thrown into the hellfire (Muslim bn al-Hajjāj, 1987).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, an attempt has been made to discuss superstitious practices that are related to Will (*Al-Waṣīyyah*) among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria. The paper succinctly discussed the word superstition and inheritance as concepts both from western, Yoruba and Islamic point of views. It also gave brief geo-historical accounts of Yorubaland. It also discussed the superstitious practices that are prevalent among the Yoruba people like Will to be buried in the room, will to put food and some other valuable items in one's grave and Will to kill animal and organise funeral party on the third day and eight day of one's demise and discovered that all the interviewees established that the practices are prevalent and common among the Yoruba. It then examined it from the Islamic perspectives to determine the basis for the practice. It was discussed that the practices are unfamiliar to Islam as they are contrary to the teachings of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. It was revealed that negligence and ignorance of Islam of some Yoruba Muslims in Southwest Nigeria make them get involved in the superstitious practices related to will.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the above, to achieve an upright and ideal Yoruba Muslim community devoid of superstitious beliefs and practices related to Will, the following recommendations were made:

- (a) Efforts should be made by every individual Muslim to implement the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) on will and inheritance.
- (b) Every individual Muslim should prepare his will in accordance to the Islamic dictates and avoid all sort of traditions that are contrary to the Islamic system of will and inheritance.
- (c) Muslim Societies in Yorubaland should also be teaching Islamic system of will and inheritance and try to encourage if not prevail on the family members and relatives of the deceased who may want to be aloof to the Islamic will system.
- (d) Islamic scholars in Yorubaland have the duty of spearheading the propagation of Islam and conveying its teachings (especially Will and Inheritance) to the nook and cranny of the land in particular and Nigeria in general.

- (e) Department of Islamic studies at the tertiary level of education in the Southwest region of the country should always organise periodic seminars on Islamic system of will and encourage the students to carry out their researches on Will and Inheritance related topics.

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