



Research Article

## An Islamic Perspective Of Superstitious Practices Related To Death Among Yoruba Muslims Of Ogun State

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**Abstract.** Superstition as a belief or tale is generally interesting to most people all over the world in general and the Yorubas in particular. It is a practice that cuts across all aspects of the human's life; religion, social, moral, and economic. The Muslims' involvement in these practices calls for attention of Muslim scholars and researchers. The Muslims in Ogun State are not excluded among the Yoruba Muslims from these practices. Thus, this paper aims at exposing the level of involvement of some Yoruba Muslims in the practice of khurāfāt (superstitions) related to death among other practices. The paper examines the Islamic perspectives of the practices with a view to determining their consonance or otherwise with the fundamental principles of Islam. So, through the use of historical, descriptive and analytical research methods; this paper accounts for the historical background of Ogun State;

explains the superstition practices related to death in Ogun State and analyses the practices using the Qur'an, Sunnah and views of the Islamic scholars. The research findings reveal that negligence of the Muslims is the foremost reason for the involvement in the practice as well as ignorance of the Islamic rules of funeral rites leading to giving preference to Yoruba cultural superstitious practices over Islamic practices. The paper, therefore, recommends that the Muslim leaders, parents, guardians, Islamic Studies teachers and religious organizations should pay adequate attention to Islamic faith-based teachings that are devoid of superstitious practices and other fetish beliefs in order to have well informed and reformed Muslims.

**Keywords:** An Islamic Perspective, Superstitious Practices Related, Death Among Yoruba Muslims, Ogun State.

## INTRODUCTION

Human beings are intellectually endowed to formulate ideas, traditions, cultures, norms, values and manners that suit their environment, community, tribe or nation. This endowment is one of the distinguishing factors that differentiate one tribe from another and one nation from another. The Qur'an affirms that the variation in languages, colours, traditions, norms and ideas is for the purpose of recognition and identity as contained in Qur'an 49:13. Thus, Islām recognizes ideas, norms, cultures traditions and values which are not in contrary to the dictates of Allah and His Messenger. It is important to note that Islām has laid down foundations to unite its adherents on same ideas, norms, traditions and civilization. This is why preference is given to piety and righteousness by Islām over variations of languages and traditions.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O mankind! We have created You from a male and a female, and made You into nations and tribes, that You may know one another. Verily, the Mosthonourable of You with Allāh is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. one of the Muttaqûn. Verily, Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

However, through the efforts of Shaytān, mankind has innovated and practised fetish, idolatry, superstitious and other sort of contradictory beliefs to the fundamental principles and teachings of Islām. This is supported by the Qur'an 7:16 and 17 where Allah says:

قَالَ فِيمَا أُغْوِيْتَنِي لِأَفْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَكَاتِيَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ ۗ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

(Iblīs) said: "Because You have sent Me astray, surely I will sit In wait against them (human beings) on Your Straight Path.

Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their Right and from their left, and You will not find Most of them as thankful ones (i.e. they will not be dutiful to You)."

History establishes the fact that superstitious belief and practice are as old as the practice of polytheism. It exists throughout the world in almost every human race, tribe and culture, but not founded on scientific proof (Mandal, 2017).

During the darkness period (Jāhiliyyah) in the Arabian lands as well as other parts of the world, superstitious belief and practices on death among others were so rampant. The Arabs for instance, had the belief that an eclipse of the sun or moon was an indication of either the death or birth of a noble person. Hence, they attributed the death of Ibrahim one of the sons of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) to the eclipse of the sun that occurred during that time (Al-Mubārakufuri, 2000) but the Prophet faulted this belief by saying:

إن الشمس والقمر آياتان من آيات الله لا ينكسفان لموت أحد ولا لحياته فإذا رأيتوهما فادعوا وصلوا حتى يكشف ما بكم

The sun and moon are two of the signs of God, with which God frightens His servants, and that they are not eclipsed by the death of one of the people, so if you see anything from it, pray and pray until what is in you revealed.(Al-Bukhari, 1987)

There were numerous superstitious practices related to death during the darkness period and nowadays. For instance, during the Jāhiliyyah period, the Arabs held the belief that if a person was killed by another person, the killer would not go free until the bird named Owl (būmah) avenged for him.(Abdullāh, 1990).

Before the advent of Islām in Yorubaland, Yoruba people like the Arabs during the darkness period (Jahiliyyah) were generally pagans and worshippers of idols, heroes, ancestral, jinns, demons, etc. They so much believed in superstitious practices as they have different traditions, norms, ideas, beliefs and superstitious practices related to every facet of their life especially death. When Islām was introduced to Yorubaland as far back as 12th century, according to Al-Ilorī, (2012), the expectation was that its teachings would be firmly rooted in the day to day practices and activities of the Yoruba people. Unfortunately, they could not do away with these irrational and idolatry traditional beliefs and practices. They are not aware that their involvement in superstitions is an association of partners with Allah. Even today, some Yoruba Muslims, despite their religious awareness and teachings and abundant wealth of knowledge in Islām, still believe and practice superstitions that related to death like other non-Muslims in the society (Al-Ilorī, 1979).

Astonishingly, many Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State 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).As Akingbemi (2005) submitted, their superstitious practices related

to death are held in high esteem as they have become cultural beliefs which the Yoruba Muslims have fallen victims of believing in.

It is against this background that this paper is concerned about the Islamic stance on superstitious belief and practices related to death among the Yoruba Muslims of Ogun State; in order to eradicate those that are contrary to Islamic tenets and appraise if any, those that conform to the Islamic norms and tenets.

### **Superstition and Death: A Conceptual Analysis**

It is important to briefly explain some concepts that are imperative to this discussion for proper understanding of the topic. The concepts are; superstition taboo and death.

#### **Superstition**

Etymologically, the term superstition was derived from old French or Latin word “superstitio” which mean “standing over”; super ‘over’ or from the two words and stare ‘to stand’. Superstition is a global 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 Dictionary, 2024) Man wrongly, perceives superstitions as means of explaining this life and his own existence. Superstition is a belief and practice that cannot be based on facts that can be proven (Odejobi, 2013). For instance, some people believe in the superstition that if a black cat crosses your path, you will have bad luck. The truth of the belief cannot be proven scientifically, 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, 2024).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, 2024).

Accordingly, Mandal (2017) also submitted that 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. 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, n.d).

In western culture, superstition is believed and practiced and still in existence up till this century. For instance, number 13 is internationally believed to be ill-luck without supporting it with any moral, rational or scientific evidence. So, it appears generally to be a mystery (Inglehart, 2002).Superstitious beliefs are significantly more prevalent in women than men and in less educated people (Griffiths & Bingham, 2005). People with increased educational level are generally less superstitious, but are more skeptics. Religious and non-religious people enjoy almost equal level of belief in superstitions (Mandal, 2017).

In Yorubaland, there are many superstitious beliefs and practices which they apparently hold on to (Daramola & Jeje, 1975). Among the Yoruba, superstition is known as (ewo) which literally means taboos, but critically looking at the two terms, superstitions are different from taboos. Most superstitions are senseless others are harmful. (Daramola & Jeje, 1975)

In Islam, the word superstition is known in Arabic as “Khurāfat” which according to (Aḥmad, 2008) in *M’ujam al-Lughah* 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.

According to *Lisān al-‘Arab*, ‘khurāfah’ means الحديث المستلمح من الكذب statement that is corned from lie (Manzūr, 1414). In the opinion of Ibn Manzūr, it means statement that is covered from lie. From the Islamic point of view, Islām and superstition are two oppositions. While the former is based on sound reasoning as is embedded in the Qur’ān and Sunnah, the later is completely devoid of reasoning but full of unclear reference to the experiences of some individuals or group of people (Khalid, 2011).

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) discouraged superstitions and fought against it in almost all of his actions. For example, he prohibited belief in soothsaying and fortune telling which are utilized in almost all nations of the world as means of forecasting the future and to reveal hidden personal characteristics. During the dark period, the Arabs used to interpret the course of future events names, sounds or the direction in which birds were flying. They also used items like pebbles, chickpeas or beans to foretell the future. (Saricam, n.d)

## Death

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, death is “the separation of soul (or spirit) from the body” (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, 2024). It is the irreversible cessation of life (Oṣanyinbí, & Falana, n.d). It is generally and globally believed to be inevitable. It is the end of life of a living creature (Hornby, 2005). It is the beginning of a permanent ontological exit of the individual from mankind to spirithood (Uduigwomen, 1995).

Western scholars perceive death in many ways. For instance, Robert Kastenbaum identifies three meanings of death. These are ‘death as an event’, ‘death as a condition’ and ‘death as a state of existence or non-existence’ (Kastenbaum, 2003). While the first definition above seeks to establish the cause of the death, the second definition looks at the incapability of an organism to carry out certain functions (such as breathing) which it usually performed before its death. The last definition thinks about whether life still continues at death or it terminates at death (Kastenbaum, 2003).

In his own viewpoint, Akomolafe (n.d) opines that “Death is recognised as the point when the spirit separates from the body. Because the spirit is closely associated with breathing, people know that the spirit has gone when a person stops breathing.” Until the late twentieth century, death was defined in terms of loss of heart and lung functions, both of which are easily observable criteria (Martin, 2003). However, recent researches in neuroscience and bioethics have established that death can take place when human brain stops to function.

The Yorubas like any other tribe of the world strongly hold the belief that everybody is going to die. This is vividly revealed in one of their sayings that “àwáyé ma kúkòsí, orunnikanlàrèmabo” (Everybody in this world is bound to die, heaven is only the journey of no return). The Yoruba cultural belief considers death as a separation of the soul from the body, thus, death is perceived as a sorrowful incidence in the life of man (Adeoye, 1980).

The Yoruba people believe that there are three categories of death; the “good death” ikuagba, “bad death” ikuofo and premature death “ikuofo” which is believed to be mysterious and tragic like the death of a young person and abiku also known as akenu (born to die). Deaths under the later two do not usually receive full funeral rites (Osanjinyinbí & Falana, n.d). Traditionally, Yoruba believe that death is not the end of life, but as a transition from this present earthly life to another life in the land of the spirits (Laguda, 2004).

According to Lisān al-‘Arab, the word ‘mawtu’ is the opposite of life (Manzūr, 1414). M‘ujam al-Lughgha al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu‘āsharah defines death as: the departure of the soul from the body. (Aḥmad, 2008).

Inevitability of death is one of the major teachings of Islām as contained in numerous verses of the Qur’ān and Aḥadīth of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that emphasize death and life after death. For instance, Allah says in Qur’ān 39:30 thus:

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Verily, You (O Muhammad Sal-Allaahu 'alayhi Wa Sallam) will die and verily, they (too) will die.

And in Qur’ān 31: 34 Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا  
وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Verily, Allāh! with Him (Alone) is the knowledge of the Hour, He sends down the rain, and knows that which is In the wombs. no person knows what He will earn tomorrow, and no person knows In what land He will die. Verily, Allāh is All-Knower, All-Aware (of things).

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in many Aḥadīth emphasized that death is the end of every soul. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

أَكثَرُوا ذِكْرَ هَادِمِ اللَّذَاتِ عِنَى الْمَوْتِ

Always remember the demolition of enjoyment; thus, the death (At-Tirimidh, 2003).

In another tradition, Shaddād bn Aws narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

الكيس من دان نفسه وعمل لما بعد الموت

The wisest of men is the one who humbles himself and works for the life after death. (Yazid, 2003).

Imam al-Qurtubi (1425) recorded that ‘Umar bn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz used to gather scholars and they used to discuss death, the day of resurrection and the hereafter. They would cry as if there is a dead person before them.

### **Brief Historical Background of Ogun State**

Geographically, Ogun State is a state in southwestern Nigeria. It was created on 3 February, 1976 from the former Western State. It shares borders with Lagos State to the south, Oyo State and Osun State to the north, Ondo State to the east, and the Republic of Benin to the west. Abeokuta is the capital of Ogun State and the most populated city. The major indigenous Yoruba sub-tribes in Ogun State are; Egba, Ijebu, Remo, Yewa and Awori. Other indigenous non Yoruba tribe in Ogun State is the Egun in Ipokia local government (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). Ogun state is a predominantly rain forest zone and has wooden savanna in the northwest (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). It had a total population of 6,379,500 residents as of 2022 population projection (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024) making Ogun State the 16th most populated state in Nigeria (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). In terms of landmass, Ogun State is the 24th largest State in Nigeria with land area of 16,762 kilometer square. (World Gazetteer, 2024). There are twenty local government areas in Ogun State and three senatorial districts; Ogun central, Ogun east and Ogun west.

Islām became pronounced after the settlement of the Egbas in Abeokuta precisely in August 1830 when a group of Muslims met the then Egba leader, Sodeke to give them a piece of land on which a mosque could be erected. Egba Muslims had been practicing Islam individually without thinking of coming together until 1841 when they were able to acquire a piece of land at Iporo Kobiti in the Egba Alake area, for building of a Jumu’ah mosque in the town. The available record indicates that the large number of the early Muslim settlers in Egbaland was from Egba Owu people and they formed a preponderant Muslim quarter in the town. Prominent among them were Kasumu (Qazeem) and Alfa Oseni (Husayn) of Olusunmade compound in Idi-Ape (Gbadamosi, 1978). The first Imam in Egbaland was Muhammad a Hausa slave of Sodeke who built his mosque at Sodeke where the Egba Central Mosque is located presently. (Al-Illorī, 2013).

Islām was the first foreign religions to be introduced into Ijebuland. It reached Ijebu Ode about 1879 during the later part of the reign of Awujale Afidipote in 1885. It was introduced by a man called ‘Ali; a slave servant of one Tubogun who was a slave

merchant from Porogun ward in Ijebu Ode. 'Ali was a Yoruba man from Ilorin a Yoruba speaking province of Northern Nigeria protectorate. 'Ali was later known and called 'Ali Tubogun because his master Tubogun, gave him, freedom to worship in his own way even though he (Tubogun) then did not believe in the faith (Gbadamosi, 1908).

Superstitious Practices Related to Death among the Yoruba Muslims of Ogun State These practices can be categorized into three; before, during and after death as follows:

### **The Practices before the Death and Burial**

There are a lot of superstitious practices before death in Yorubaland. The Ogun indigenes including some Muslims in the state are also involved in the practices. Notable among the practices are:

(i) Helmsrike bird (Eyekowē): The Yoruba believe that when a person is sick or about to die, the bird called (kowē) will be crowing as death announcement. The sick person and his people will be worried and suspicious. Some Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State are not left out of the belief and practice. This is due to their little knowledge of Islamic 'aqidah (creed) and too much cultural influence (Taiwo, 2023).

(ii) Entrance permit fowl (Ediye Irana): This is one of the prevalent superstitious practices among the Yoruba in Ogun state before death. They have two beliefs about 'Ediye Irana'. Firstly, they believe that it is a gate fee for the dead. Traditionally, no dead gets entrance to heaven freely without it. This is the reason the elders say: "Ediye irana kiise oun ajegbe" (entrance to heaven permit fowl is unavoidable for everyone) (Olatunji, 2006). Secondly, when a person dies in another town or place, the one that leads the convoy to the dead's home town will be plucking the feathers of the fowl while saying: ofe! ofe! (hurry up ! hurry up !), till they reach the home land of the deceased. Immediately they reach his home, they will kill the fowl at the entrance and shed its blood on the ground for those who carry the corpse to step on it before taking the corpse inside. The Yoruba believes that this will prevent occurrence of death of another family member who lives in far place which is technically known as Akufa (Olatunji, 2006).

### **The Practices during the Burial**

(i) Shaving the Hairs and Clipping the Nails: Another common superstitious practice prevalent among the Yoruba in Ogun during the burial is shaving the hair and clipping the nails of the dead person. They will sell the two items along with the sponge used to wash the corpse to herbalists who will use them for local charms (Adeoye, 1980).

(ii) The First Grave Digger: In Yorubaland, the first son of the dead is the first to dig the grave. He will take little soil at the beginning and little one at the end and keep it. The soil is called "ilepa". When there is rancor between the family of the deceased and other person on issues like debt or land matter, they will ask the person to use the soil 'ilepa' as an item of oath (Daramola & Jeje, 1975).

(iii) The Diggers of the Grave: According to Chief Obadina Sulaimon, in Yoruba tradition, the sons-in-law are the ones to dig the grave of their father and mother in-



law. Yoruba believe that it is a way of being appreciative and dutiful to the father and mother in-law by digging their grave when they die. If the son in-law could not dig the grave due to old age, he will pay for the digging or buy local gin (ogogoro) for the diggers. It is a big surprise that some ignorant Yoruba Muslims in Ogun State are also partaking in such anti-Islamic belief and practice (Obadina, 2024).

(iv) Deceased Food in the Grave: In an interview with the Chief Imam of Moore Central Mosque, Obantoko, Odeda, Alhaji Abdur-Razaq Abdul-‘Aziz, it was affirmed that another prevalent superstitious practice during the burial in Ogun 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) by the side of the corpse in the grave before filling the grave with soil. He added that he tried to prevent the practice during the burial of one of his uncles in 2004 but one elderly relative prevailed over others and later gave them one gruel instead of seventeen without the awareness of the Imam (Abdul-Razaq, 2023).

### **Types of Burial in Relation to the types of Death**

Yoruba believe that every type of death has a traditional way of burial. The way and manner are superstitious because of its unscientific proofs and irrational baseless reasons. Some notable types of burials are:

a. Emere / elere / elegbe(Out peer group). Emere or elere or elegbe is a child that Yoruba believe to have spiritual power and connection with an ‘out peer cult group’. Every emere is Abiku but not every Abiku is emere. When an emere died in Yorubaland, some parts of his body will be burnt because they believe that he/she is coming back to be reborn by his/her mother (Taiwo, 2023). This was so prevalent among the Yoruba before the burial. In an interview with Chief Jebooda Femi, the head of Itun, Idena Traditional Council, Ikosa compound, Odogbolu, Ogun state, he declared that Abiku is real and that his great grandfather was an Abiku who later stayed alive after performing rituals. He added that the meaning of the name Jebooda is: “let the sacrifice be accepted” So, when he was born again, he grew up, married many wives and lived longer before he finally died. (Jebooda, 2024).

b. Adete(leper). If a leper dies in Yorubaland, his corpse will be taken to the bush for burial with the performance of some rituals. They believe that this will curb the occurrence of such death (Daramola & Jeje, 1975). Some less faithful Muslims in Ogun State also do engage in the practice especially those who live in the rural areas of the state.

c. Abuke (Hunchback). A hunchback person is believed by the Yoruba to be an extraordinary person. So, when he dies, they give him unusual burial by putting him in a big pot and cover the pot with another big one. The corpse is buried by cult members with sacrifice (Olatunji, 2006).

d. Soponna / Baba/ Olode(Smallpox). In an interview with Chief Jebooda Femi, the head of Itun, Idena Traditional Council, Ikosa compound, Odogbolu, Ogun state, he submitted that if smallpox causes the death of a person in Yorubaland, the people will not say that he was died of soponna rather they would say that “Babagbelo” (Father has taken him or her away) or “Baba ti gbeni iyawo” (father has married him or her)” (Jebooda, 2024). They will feel happy and rejoice at his or her death. They believe that

if they feel sad, soponna (smallpox) will kill some other members of the family (Jebooda, 2024).

e. Ara (Thunder). Yoruba believe that anyone that dies of thunder should be buried by the Sango worshippers. They will scare away all other people and take his corpse firstly to blacksmith workshop ( agbede or ilearo). They will put him beside the fire and so as to remove the thunder stone (edunara) in his body. The most superstitious act is that the Sango worshippers will collect all the property of the deceased emphasizing that it is forbidden for his family to use. They will also collect ram (agbo), bitter cola (orogbo) and money for the burial rites (Daramola & Jeje, 1975).

According to Ustadh Haruna Abdul-Lateef in an interview, he narrated an eye witness of two persons that were struck by thunder in 2010 at Ita Malaka, Odan-Aje, Idiroko, Ipokia local Government, Ogun state. He stated that one of them was a devout Muslim who engaged the second person to work for him in his building under construction. The labourer died on the spot while the devout Muslim was revived through the fervent prayers by the Muslim clerics around. The Sango worshippers took the corpse of the second person away for burial (Haruna, 2024).

f. Ode (Hunter). The corpse of a dead hunter will be taken to bush for burial. The superstitious aspect of his burial is that all his hunting materials including his hunting dress (amula) will be taken to the bush. After the burial they will wear his hunting dress (amula) for a standing stick and put his hunting cap on it. This will look like his image so that anyone that passes by the place would think that it is the person that is standing there (Oṣanyinbí & Falana, n.d).

g. Ibeji (Twins). Another superstitious practice rampant in Yorubaland is the belief that if one of the twins dies, they should not announce his death they should rather be telling whoever ask about him that: “o losokuntabi o lo raiwoesintabi o lo sieko (He went to isokun or he has gone to buy horse horn or he has travelled to Lagos) (Jebooda, 2024).

### **The Practices after the Burial**

#### **i. The Concept of Reincarnation (At-Tanāsukhu)**

Reincarnation is a widely spread idea across all cultures of the world. They all hold to the belief that individuals are to be reborn according to their merits as humans, animals or even vegetable form (Adeoye, 1980). Many African cultures also hold to the belief in reincarnation, of which the Yoruba people of Ogun state is a subject matter (Jebooda, 2024).

The Yoruba people in Ogun state as well as other southwestern states believe in reincarnation (atunwaye). They actually believe that the souls of some individuals do return after death to live again in a different body (Oṣanyinbí & Falana, n.d). In Yorubaland, there are different kind of atunwaye which are Abiku, ipadawaye and akudaaya. With regards to Abiku, it is when a dead person reincarnates in another person through rebirth. This is a phenomenon of repeated mortality and birth by the same mother. It is believed that it is the same soul reoccurring to be born as the same child many times over (Oṣanyinbí & Falana, n.d). In the case of Ipadawaye, Yoruba believe that the life after death is in heaven (orun), which is of two compartments; orunrere (good heaven) and orunapaadi (bad heaven).

It is believed that those who died good death are rewarded with *orunrere* while bad people are kept in *orunapaadi* (Oṣanyìnbí & Falana, n.d) while *akudaaya* is when the dead person is believed to live in another place different from where he lived and died. It is usually interpreted in relation to premature death. It is believed that if the destiny of what the 'ori' of that person was to fulfill was terminated abruptly without fulfillment, or if he is not properly buried, he will not be qualified to enter the ancestral cult but will reincarnate in another body or the soul will keep roaming the world (Oṣanyìnbí & Falana, n.d). In an interview with Chief Obadina Sulaimon, he affirmed that his aunty used to give birth to Abiku and that the family decided to burn the corpse of the child so as to be rejected by his peers in the heaven. When the mother gave birth, the baby was reborn with traces of burn on his body (Obadina, 2024).

(ii) The Third Day (Ojo Ikota): According to Chief Jebooda Femi, in an interview, he established that Ojo Ikota is another significant superstitious practice related to death after the burial. He emphasized the belief of the Yoruba that the dead will depart from his immediate environment to another place or heaven on the third day of his burial. On that day, they will kill a goat (*ewure*) and cook it for the whole family to eat. On that day, the children of the deceased will dance round their house and the entire compound (Jebooda, 2024).

(iii) Vengeance (Riro Oku): Another noteworthy superstitious practice after burial in Yorubaland is vengeance (*Oku riro*). It is a process of avenging the suspicious death of a person. Yoruba believe that not every death is timely and Godly. They believe that the death of a young person is caused by some devilish human beings. So, they resort to vengeance (*Oku riro*). This is done by putting a knife in the right palm of the dead and ordering him or her to use the knife to avenge him or herself. They strongly believe that the dead will use the knife to kill his killer within the seven days of his burial (Jebooda, 2024)

(iv) Widowhood (Opo): Widowhood is universal and normal only that certain superstitious practices are introduced into it. For instance in Ogun State, it is a must for a widow to wear black dresses throughout her period of widowhood and always sit on mat for the whole period. She must be visiting the grave of her husband three time in a day; morning, afternoon and evening. The elderly women will tie a black rope to her head each time she goes to the grave of her husband. On the last day, the widow will off the black dress and will be ordered not to wear the dresses she used during the widowhood for the whole of her life time. The dresses will be burnt (Adeoye, 1980).

(v) Funeral party (Inawo Oku): Yoruba believe that any dead person that his family members and relatives refuse to organize funeral party for will be misleading the bereaved to commit crimes. The funeral party day is known as "ojo ikoleibu". The party starts from the evening of the seventh day to the whole day of the eighth day. They will kill ram, goat or cow on that day. They will be rejoicing, singing and dancing (Adeoye, 1980).

## An Islamic Perspectives of Superstition Practices Related to Death among Yoruba Muslim of Ogun State

### a. An Islamic Perspectives of the Superstition before Burial

It is importance to note that Islām is an embodiment of norms, culture and practices. It proffers solutions to all social, moral, psychological, political, economical and religious problems. Thus, it accepts those practices that are not in contrary to the dictates of Allah and His Prophet and it rejects those that contradict the Islamic monotheism. There are discourses on the superstitions practices related to death among Muslims in Ogun State.

On the superstitious practices of Helmsstrike bird (kowē) which the Yoruba believe to be the announcer of death, it is likened to the eclipse of the sun and moon that the early Arabs believe to be announcing the birth or death of a significant person. By this, they attributed the death of Ibrahim, son of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) to the eclipse of the sun that occurred during that time. Contrary to this, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) faulted this belief by saying:

إن الشمس والقمر آياتان من آيات الله لا ينكسفان لموت أحد ولا لحياته فإذا رأيتوهما فادعوا وصلوا حتى يكشف ما بكم

The sun and moon are two of the signs of God, with which God frightens His servants, and that they are not eclipsed by the death of one of the people, so if you see anything from it, pray and pray until what is in you revealed (Khalid, 2011).

Based on the above ḥadīth, it can be said that the crowing of Kowe bird has nothing to do with the death of anyone either Muslim or non-Muslim. This notion is wrong and against the Islamic creed just as the ideology of sun and moon eclipses for the death of anyone (Ibn Daqīq, 1995).

On the entrance permit fowl (Ediye Irana), this is also contrary to the Islamic belief of angel of death and the angels in charge of questioning in the grave who do not need any fee or entrance permit from anyone. Allah says in Qur'ān 32:11:

﴿قُلْ يَتَوَفَّكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

Say: The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die, then to your Lord you shall be brought back.

The verse explicitly establishes that once a person dies its soul returns to Allah without any hindrance and barrier. Therefore, the belief in Adiyē Irana does not come in the belief of a Muslim whose 'Aqīdah is based on Qur'ān and Sunnah. Islām also frowns at shaving the hair, clipping the nails as well as maiming and taking parts of the corpse for rituals. The Prophet would say to the leader of the Muslim army:

اغزروا في سبيل الله ولا تغلوا ولا تغدروا ولا تمثلوا

“Fight in Allah’s cause. Do not misappropriate the booty, do not breach the covenants that you hold with others and do not mutilate the dead” (Abdul Azeez, 2024).

#### b. An Islamic Perspectives of the Superstition during Burial

In Islam, the expenses related to burial starting from digging of grave, burying and shroud-clothes (kafnu) and others are part of the money to be taken from the wealth left by the deceased (Balogun, 2011). However, if the deceased is not rich enough to shoulder the responsibilities, the family members will take charge of the expenses. This shows the simplicity as well as consideration of Islam and magnanimity of Allah and the noble Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

With regards to the belief and claim that the dead eat food in the grave, hence, putting seventeen (17) wraps of gruel (eko) clothes and money beside the corpse in the grave, it is alien to Islam. Similarly, the slaughtering of ram and goat does not hold ground in Shari’ah. This is because there is no food or money or other materials for the dead in the grave except his 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 ويبقى معه واحد يتبعه أهله وماله وعمله فيرجع أهله وماله ويبقى 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 and to everything. On this, the Prophet 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 وصيام 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)

In the case of the types of burial due to types and causes of death, this is not only alien to Islam but also has been scientifically proved to be wrong. (Khalid, 2011). In Islām, dead persons are given the same kind of burial regardless of the types of their death. Thus, they will be buried in the Muslim cemetery (Maqbarah) in either lahdū or shaqqu grave after performing janazat prayer. 'Abdul-Ilahbn' Abbas narrated that a man fell from his mount and died while he was with the Prophet at 'Arafat. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

"اغسلوه بماء وسدر و كفنوه في ثوبين ولا تحنطوه ولا تخمروا رأسه فإنه يبعث يوم القيامة ملبياً"

"Wash him with water and Sidr and shroud him in two pieces of cloth and neither perfume nor cover his dead, for he will be resurrected on the Day of resurrection saying "Labbaik" (Al-Bukhari, 1987).

Therefore, the one that drown is neither buried by the river side, nor humpback is put in two big pots, nor pregnant woman is buried by the cult members while the corpse of a criminal is not left for dog, vulture and wild birds to eat (Balogun, 2011).

### c. An Islamic Perspective of Superstitious Practices after Burial

It is important to note that the using of grave soil 'ilepa' to swear is not only a superstition that Muslims should avoid but also one of the major sin. Allah is the Only One that has every right to swear by any of His creatures as contained in the Ḥadīth of Ibn 'Umar that Allah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

من كان حالفا فلا يحلف إلا بالله" و كانت قريش تحلف بأبائها فقال " لا تحلفوا بأبائكم

He who has to take oath, he must not take oath but by Allah. The Quraysh used to take oath by their fathers. So, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: Do not take oath by your father (Al-Bukhari, 1987).

On the superstitious practice of reincarnation after the burial, it is a belief that is unislamic, unscientific, irrational and absolute falsehood. Allah categorically dismisses the belief in many places in the Qur'ān, such as Qur'ān 23:99-100 where Allah says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿١٩٩﴾ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: Send me back, my Lord, send me back; Haply I may do good in that which I have left. By no means! it is a (mere) word that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised.

Islām also condemns the punishment meted out on the widows by compelling them to wear black clothes throughout their widowhood and visiting the grave of their husband three times in a day with profuse wailing. This habit is forbidden and punishable in Islām in line with the Ḥadīth ‘Abdullah bn‘Umar that: the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

“ليس منا من لطم الخدود وشق الجيوب ودعا بدعوى الجاهلية”

“He who slaps the cheeks, tears the clothes and follows the tradition of the days of ignorance is not from us” (Al-Bukhari, 1987).

The belief that a dead person can avenge for himself is a superstitious belief that is also baseless and rejected in Islām. Allah is the One that kills when he wills and at appropriate time for every soul in line with Qur’ān

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.

Based on the above verse, it can be established that only Allah can take lives of His creatures at their appointed times. Funeral party on the eight day and forty day is a mere superstition. It is the same with al-‘aqīra that was practiced among the Arabs during the dark period. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) forbade the slaughtering of animals at graves. 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 Islām” (Abu Dāūd, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this paper to discuss superstitious beliefs and practices that relate to death in Yorubaland in general and the Yoruba Muslims of Ogun state in particular. The paper looked into it from the western, Yoruba and Islamic perspectives. The work discussed the superstitious practices that are prevalent before the burial like interpretation of the crowing of the bird wrote (kowe)

and entrance to heaven permit (adiye irana); during the burial like types of death as determinant of the types of burial and after the burial like reincarnation. It then looked into it from Islamic perspectives to determine the basis for the practice. It was discussed that each of the practices is alien to Islam as they are contrary to the teaching of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In light of the above, to achieve a Muslim community devoid of superstitious belief and practices, all hands must be on deck to implement the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Every individual Muslim should prepare his will in accordance to the Islamic dictates and states confidently in it that his funeral rites should be in line with the Islamic teachings. The Muslim organisations in Ogun state should also be monitoring the burial rites of the Muslims and try to prevail on the family members and relatives of the deceased who are trying to be aloof to the Islamic funeral rites. The Islamic scholars in Ogun state have the duty of spearheading the propagation of Islām and conveying its teachings to the nook and cranny of the state in particular and Yorubaland in general.

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