

Spiritualism and Functionalism of the Glorious Qur'an in the Eyes of the Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract. Undoubtedly, the spread of Islam beyond Arabian Peninsula is seen as a blessing to the adherents of Islam who take keen interest in the study, learning and teaching of the Glorious Qur'an. Through learning, recitation and memorization of the Glorious Qur'an, a quite number of Yoruba Muslims have developed morally and spiritually while in some instances, its study has not really transformed positively lives of some Yoruba Muslims. Thus, it seems there is a gap between spiritualism of the Qur'an and its societal reformation. The study adopts qualitative research cum observation method to critically analyze the existing literature on the status of the Qur'an among Yoruba Muslims. The study reveals that a large number of Yoruba Muslims see the Glorious Qur'an as a scripture that addresses spiritual and metaphysical problems and also as a book that is more functional during *aqiqa* (child naming rites), *walimatul-nikah* (wedding feast) *walimatul-Qur'an* (ceremony on the completion of the reading of the Qur'an), *janazah* (funeral rites), Ramadan period and other social functions. The study posits that the applicability and enforceability of the Qur'anic teachings by Yoruba Muslims will go a long way in reforming their decaying society. Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria should see the Glorious Qur'an as a scripture for societal reformation rather than being a mere spiritual or devotional book. The study suggests that Yoruba Muslims should take learning and teaching of the Qur'an more seriously right from the primary school level and that the Yoruba Muslim philanthropists and notable Islamic societies/groups in Yorubaland should support Qur'anic education through the establishment of Qur'an memorization/studies centers, whose curricula will address practicalising the teachings of the Qur'an by individual Muslims beyond its recitation and memorization for competitions.

Keyword: Spiritualism, Functionalism, Quranic Education, Yoruba Muslims, Societal Reformation

1. Introduction

The introduction, spread and development of Islam in Yorubaland between 17th and 20th centuries was a blessing to Yoruba Muslims who took keen interest in the teaching and learning of the Glorious Qur'an. In the early days of Islam in Yorubaland, a quite number of Yoruba Muslims encouraged their children and wards to learn the Glorious Qur'an at tender age. Some of these children had become scholars, doctors and professors specializing in Arabic and Islamic studies. Notable among them are Shaykh Kamaldeen al-Adabiyy, (of blessed memory), Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory (of blessed memory), Dr. Baari Adetunji, Professor Daud Noibi, Professor Muhib Opeloye, Professor Yasir Quadri, Professor Ishaq Oloyede and Professor Kamaldeen Balogun to mention but few. Presently, Yoruba Muslims are those Muslims that are predominantly residing in Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti states and some parts of Kwara state (Adebayo, 2005). In the context of this paper, Spiritualism of the Glorious Qur'an refers to how Yoruba Muslims use the Qur'an to solve their spiritual and metaphysical problems. While, the functionalism of the Qur'an is the way and manner Yoruba use the Glorious Qur'an during their socio-religious functions/events like naming rites (*aqiqa*), wedding feast (*walimatul-nikah*), funeral ceremony (*fi'dau* prayer), Ramadan period (*tafsir*) and other events.

One distinct feature of some Yoruba people is their strong attachment to their indigenous culture and traditional religion. Despite identifying with Islam through their observance of the five daily prayers, known as *irun kiki*, Yoruba Muslims still take cognizance of their indigenous culture in their

spiritual and social lives. Hence, some of the Yoruba Muslims see the Glorious Qur'an as *iwe adura* (prayer book), *iwe oogun* (magic/spiritual book) and *iwe iwosan* (healing book) probably due to the influence of their traditional belief in spirits/divinities, magic and medicine. Other Yoruba Muslims see the Glorious Qur'an as *iwe ofin* (legal book or source of law), and *iwe esin* (religious/moral instructional book) probably due to their enlightenment and knowledge about Islam. There emerged today various learned Yoruba Muslims using the Glorious Qur'an in different ways and for different purposes. There are some Yoruba Muslim clerics known as *alfa akomonikewu* (Traditional Muslim clerics who specialize in teaching children the reading of the Glorious Qur'an), *alfa alasiri/alaajo* (Muslim clerics who specialize in using the Glorious Qur'an for spiritual healing) and *alfa oniwaasi* (Muslim clerics who specialize in using the Glorious Qur'an for preaching /missionary activities). It is against this background that this study aims at critically analyzing the spiritualism and functionalism of the Glorious Qur'an among Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria.

Yoruba Muslims and the Teaching and Learning of the Glorious Qur'an

Following the introduction and expansion of Islam among Yoruba Muslims in the areas now known as Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti and some parts of Kwara state, reading, teaching, learning and memorization of the glorious Qur'an continue to assume different dimensions especially in this modern age of information and communication technology. At the early stage of Islam in Yorubaland, Opeloye and Jimoh (2004:66) note that Yoruba Muslims encouraged their children to acquire Qur'an education from infancy. According to them, the Yoruba adage "A ti kekere ni Imole ti nko omo re laso" translated as "from childhood does the Muslim parent prop up his child in the act of soliloquizing". This adage implies that learning of the Glorious Qur'an by a Muslim child starts at infancy. Jimoh (2014) has explained how learning of the Glorious by Muslim children was influenced by the Hausa mentors who initially taught Yoruba Muslim clerics (*Alfa*) the Qur'an. While explaining the Hausa influence in applying rote method of teaching the Qur'an, Jimoh (2014:16) writes:

...the Qur'anic letters were taught to the pupils using the Hausa medium. For example, because the shape of letter *ba*, *ta* and *tha* resembles that of a bow, which is called *goje* in the Hausa language, they were read as *ba' goje*, *ta' goje* and *tha' goje* respectively. Likewise, letter *kha* was read as *ha' mai ruwa* (*ha*

with water) because it has a dot on top in order to differentiate between it and letter *Ha'* that has no dot. Also, for the purpose of differentiation, *ha'* is read as *ha' keremi* (lit. small *ha*) while *ha* is read *ha' baba* (lit. big *ha*).

At the primary stage of the learning of the Glorious Qur'an, Yoruba Muslim child is taught reading, writing and memorization of *suwar* (chapters) of the Glorious. The next stage, otherwise known as '*ilm*' stage is where the translation of the Glorious Qur'an along other subjects is taught. These include *Nahw* (Grammar), Rhetoric (*Balaga*), Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Hadith, Commentary of the Qur'an (*Tafsir*), and *Tarikh* (Islamic history) (Owoyemi and Akanni, 2017). Promotion from one stage of learning the reading of the Qur'an to another stage is usually marked with celebration in form of offerings/sacrifices known as *saara* in Yoruba language.

Interestingly, it is observed that in the course of teaching and learning the Qur'an in Yorubaland, when a pupil completes the reading of the Qur'an from *Suratul Fatihah* (Chapter 1) to *Suratul Fiil* (Chapter 105) an offering, known as *saara* is made by cooking beans. On reaching *Suratul 'Ala* (Chapter 87) otherwise known as *esu kan*, another offering in form of slaughtering a hen is made by the parents of the pupil. When the pupil reaches *Suratul Ya sin* (Chapter 36) and *Suratul Tawbat* (Chapter 9) a goat and a ram are offered respectively (Opeloye and Jimoh (2004). On the completion of the reading of the whole Qur'an (without translation), an elaborate party is made with pomp and pageantry. Sometimes a cow is slaughtered depending on the financial capability of the parents and relatives of the pupil. The celebrant at times will ride on a decorated horse as a mark of honour and prestige for a Yoruba Muslim who completes the reading of the whole 114 chapters of the Qur'an. This celebration/party is known as *walimatul-Qur'an* among Yoruba Muslims. *Walimatul-Qur'an* was a unique religious occasion among Yoruba Muslims in the early days of Islam. Doi (1984:139-140) describes *walimatul-Qur'an* among Yoruba Muslims as follows:

This is an occasion marked with great splendor and solemnity. *Suratul al-Fatihah* and *Suratul-al-Baqarah* verses 1-6 are inserted on a fine slate. On graduation day all members of the family of the graduant, relatives and friends gather together in the house of the *Alufa* or in the school compound. The graduant then reads the Arabic texts on the slate. A cow will be slaughtered if the graduant had not done so on completion of Chapter 9. They proceed to the social side of the occasion, eating and dancing. There

is the usual procession in the streets of the town or village when people in *aso ebi* uniform dress, sing and dance. The decorated slate is carried by a boy or a girl in front of the procession while the graduand rides a horse or a car.

It is important to note that the celebrations, merry makings and fun fares associated with the learning of the Glorious Qur'an actually encouraged some Yoruba Muslims to attend traditional Qur'an schools, known as *ile kewu* at the early stage of Islam in Yorubaland especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, due to economic situation and influence of western education in the 21st century, majority of Yoruba Muslim clerics (*Alfa akomonikewu*) have stopped organizing intermittent offerings and sacrifices except on the completion of the whole Qur'an which is *walimatul-Qur'an*.

In the 21st century, learning of the Glorious Qur'an among Yoruba Muslims is made easy via the information and communication technology. Unlike the rote method adopted in learning the Qur'an at the early stage of Islam in Yorubaland, some Yoruba Muslim clerics and scholars have made efforts in tape recording the whole Qur'an with *tajwid* (scientific form of recitation of the Qur'an). Notable among these Yoruba experts in recitation who have recorded the Qur'an on tape and compact discs are Shaykh Ahmad Alaye, Shaykh Muyideen Ajani Bello, Shaykh Husaym Muhammad, Engr Ibrahim Yahya. For instance, Engr Ibrahim Yahya is said to have recorded on tape and discs *Suratul-Waqi'ah* (Chapter 56), *Suratul Mulk* (chapter 67), *Suratul Ya sin* (Chapter 36) and *Suratul Fatiḥ* (Chapter 48) (Opeloye and Jimoh, 2004:76)

Through recording of the Glorious Qur'an on tape and discs, some Qur'an memorizers (*hufaaz*) and experts in Qur'an recitation (*Qurraau*) have emerged among Yoruba Muslims. Some of them have participated in the National Qur'an Recitation Competition being organized annually by the Centre for Islamic Studies, Uthman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto. One of them is Ustaz Abbas Zakariyyah, from Ibadan and Ustaz Afeez Abou from Lagos (Jimoh, 2014). The learning of the Qur'an and its memorization is further promoted in Yorubaland through the establishments of modern Arabic and Islamic schools/institutions among which are Markaz at-Ta'limul 'Arabi, Agege (Lagos State) by late Adam Abdullah al-Ilory in 1958, Ma'had al-'Arabiyy, Elekuro, Ibadan (Oyo State) by late Murtadha 'Abduls-Salam in 1958 (Opeloye and Makinde, 2013) Al-Adabiyyah School of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Owo by late Khidr Salahudeen

Apaokagi in 1954 (Abubakre, 2012). Amin Arabic Training Centre, Iwo (Osun State) by late Alhaji Badrudeen in 1968 (Adebayo, 2005) and Zulikha Abiola College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Abeokuta (Ogun State) by late Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola in 1985 (Owoyemi, 2004).

2. Spiritualism of the Qur'an in the Eyes of Yoruba Muslims

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English (2006) defines spiritualism as "the belief that it is possible to communicate with the spirits of the dead". Spiritual is something relating to human spirits as opposed to physical things. It can be deduced from this definition that spiritualism refers to things that are beyond this physical world or something that is beyond human perception, comprehension or normal situation. Spiritualism pertains to metaphysical issues or things that belong to the invisible world. In the Yoruba Indigenous Religion, belief in spirits and divinities is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Yoruba. The Yoruba people believe that there is always connection and communication between the world of spirits and the world of mankind, between the dead and the living. Hence, offerings are made to appease to divinities and spirits to assist them in one way or the other. According to Opeloye (2011:11), diseases such as small pox, chicken pox, mysterious experiences like food poison in dreams, compulsive profligacy (*agbaana*) and sale repelling stigma (*okuta*) are caused by evil spirits.

In Islam, spiritual possession may be caused by the *jinn*s if human beings offend them like urinating or pouring hot water on them. Belief in the existence of evil eyes (*al 'ayn*), magic (*sihr*), and witchcraft have prompted some Yoruba Muslims to rely on charms, amulets and black magic (*oogun*) (Oloruntele, 2009). In an attempt to offer spiritual healing for Muslims who have spiritual problems, Muslim clerics (*alfa*) employ different methods. Among them are divination, exorcism and supplication. A special congregational prayer is also organized where selected chapters of the glorious Qur'an are recited to cure problems considered spiritual and metaphysical. These selected chapters include *Suratul Yasin* (Chapter 36), *Suratul Kahf* (Chapter 18), *Suratul Waq'ah* (chapter 56), *Suratul Fatiḥ* (Chapter 48) and *Suratul Mulk* (chapter 67). *Suratul Yasin* is recited to cure any spiritual problem, while, *Suratul Khaf* is for general protection and for Yoruba Muslims requesting for wealth and prosperity, *Suratul Fatiḥ* and *Suratul Mulk* are recited (Opeloye and Jimoh, 2004).

Adebayo (2018) notes that some Yoruba Muslim scholars have made efforts in writing prayer books that contain some chapters and verses of the Glorious Qur'an. The prayer books are written to cure mental, physical and psychological ailments. These prayer books authored by Yoruba Muslims include "*Iwe Adua Iwosan to Daju*", which the author claims it cures stroke, "*Adua Ajebi ina*", "*Lakunm Dinukum*" and "*Du'ah al-Ghayat al-Maqsudat al-Kubra*" written by Alhaji Abdul Azeez Ahmad Balogun al Ilawy al-Adabiyy. The books are said to contain some Quranic chapters for healing purposes (Adebayo, 2018:99). While explaining the use of Glorious Qur'an for healing purpose by Yoruba Muslims, Oloruntele (2009:53) writes:

Yoruba Muslim clerics engage in acts of healing ordinary diseases and exorcism. They do this by organizing congregational supplication for the clients, reciting some chapters and verses of the Qur'an or prophetic prayers in various forms in order to liberate the clients from the evil forces.

3. Functionalism of the Qur'an in the Eyes of Yoruba Muslims

Within the context of this paper, functionalism of the Qur'an refers to the way and manner Yoruba Muslims utilize the Qur'an during their socio-religious functions or events like child-naming ceremony (*isomoloruko*), engagement of Muslim couple (*idana*), funerals and remembrance of the deceased Muslims (*adua fun oku Musulumi*, technically known as *fid'au* in Arabic, birthday party (*ojo-ibi*) and other special events in Yorubaland. In other words, the reading of some selected chapters of the Qur'an or the whole Qur'an, in some cases features prominently when Yoruba Muslims mark or celebrate important events in their socio-religious lives. An attempt shall be made to examine these events one after the other and explain how the Qur'an is made to function among Yoruba Muslims during those events.

3.1 Child-Naming Ceremony

The birth of a child is a joyous event among Yoruba Muslims. On invitation, Muslim clerics/ missionaries and other members of the Muslim Community as well as friends and well-wishers of the parents of the new baby attend naming ceremony. Muslim clerics conduct naming child ceremony, during which some selected chapters from the Qur'an are recited. In the early days of Islam in Yorubaland, Doi (1984:139) describes naming ceremony of a Yoruba Muslim child as follows:

The child is brought to the Imam. He holds the child and then recites *adhan* into his or her ear. The Imam first proclaims the child's name also into his ear and then announces it publicly. The Imam then recites the verses used in blessing Ibrahim (i.e. *salatul-Ibrahimyyah*). Sermon may be preached during which parents are reminded of their duty over the child-circumcision, nature and care, school and home education. The ceremony in the morning is followed in the afternoon till late in the evening by merriments, feasting and dancing. Friends and relatives from the sides of the parents of the baby visit them and offer their presents.

Nowadays, *alfas* read some selected chapters of the Qur'an during the naming ceremony. These chapters of the Qur'an include *Suratul Ya Sin*, *Surat Waqi'at* and *Suratul-Mulk*. Following the announcement of the name of the child, special prayers, otherwise known as *alubarika* (prayers for blessing) are offered by the Muslim clerics in attendance. Before the end of the naming ceremony, collection of money for the purchase of the Qur'an for the new baby, otherwise known as *owo oko Kurani* is made by one of the Muslim clerics. Every guest, male and female including the parents of the child will be asked to give out money that will be spent on purchasing a copy of the Qur'an for the child so that when the child is old enough to attend *ile -kewu* (Quran school), he/she will use the Qur'an bought for him with the money collected on the day of his naming ceremony. After the collection of the money, it will be counted and handed over to the parents with the instruction that the money collected should be spent to buy a copy of the Glorious Qur'an for the child. This practice is observed among Yoruba Muslim clerics in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

3.2 Qur'an as a Gift during Engagement/Betrothal Ceremony

Marriage is an important mutual and social contract among Yoruba Muslims. It usually involves coming together of different families and friends. Before a Yoruba marriage is solemnized, certain rites are performed by the family of the groom. One of the rites is engagement which is known as *idana* in Yorubaland. Opeloye (2011) observes that in a typical Yoruba family, it is a tradition for the groom to present the bride and her family bridal gifts which may be in cash and kind. These gifts include *owo idana* (cash gift for engagement), assorted clothing, household utensils, kola nut, yams, salt, goat, wine etc. However, it is observed nowadays that if the two families are devout Muslims, item like wine is excluded and substituted with juice, coca cola, fanta

and other lawful drinks. It is also observed that items such as a copy of the Qur'an, a kettle, *Hijab* and a rosary are added to the bridal gifts for engagement ceremony.

The engagement items are the gifts for the bride. During the engagement ceremony, an officiating person, usually an elderly woman will take the items one by one, using them to pray for the bride. It is believed among Yoruba that engagement items symbolize important things in the marital life of the bride. At the end of the prayer, the bride will be asked publicly to pick the most valuable item of the engagement. Usually, if the bride is a Muslim, she will pick a copy of the Qur'an and show it to guests in attendance.

3.3 Qur'an Reading during Funeral and Memorial Ceremony

When a Yoruba Muslim dies, certain religious rites are performed. After the burial, the Imams and Alfas that attend the *janazah* (ritual prayer for deceased Muslim) will gather under tents and offer prayers for the repose soul of the deceased. Apart from the prayers offered on the day of the burial, third or eight day after the burial, other special prayers including the reading of the whole Qur'an are offered for the deceased and his/her family. This prayer is known as *Fidā'u* among the Yoruba Muslims. The whole Qur'an is often read during the memorial service, usually organized on yearly basis for some deceased Yoruba Muslims. Oseni (2014) is of the view that reading of the Glorious Qur'an at *Fidā'u* prayer for deceased Muslims is a meritorious act that can benefit the dead. He argues that reading of the Qur'an can be done with the intention of praying to Allah to grant the reward (of reading) to the deceased and to have mercy on him/her. During the funeral or Memorial Day, some gifts in cash and kind are offered to invitees and guests. The gifts include pamphlets on which some selected chapters, usually *Suratul Khaf*, *Suratul-Yā sin*, *Suratul Waqi'ah*, and *Suratul Mulk* of the Glorious Qur'an are written.

3.4 Tafsirul-Qur'an in the Month of Ramadan

Yoruba Muslims make use of the Glorious Qur'an effectively during the month of Ramadan when capable Muslims observe compulsory fast for twenty-nine or thirty days. Ramadan period offers Yoruba Muslim scholars and clerics opportunity to read, translate and explain the Qur'an to the public via electronic media (radio and television), inside *ratibi* (local) and *Jami'* (central) mosques. This is known as *Tafsir* session among Yoruba Muslims. Mosques are

usually filled with capacity of Muslims, males and females who come from different places to listen to the *Tafsirul-Qur'an*. Opeloye and Jimoh (2004) note that Yoruba Muslims show great commitment to *Tafsir* rendition during the month of Ramadan. They observe that during *tafsir* session, three Yoruba Muslim clerics function effectively, namely *Aafa Taosir*, *Ajanasi* and *Arowasi*. *Aafa Tafsir*, otherwise known as *Mufasssir* (exegete) explains the Qur'an in the most eloquent manner for the audience to comprehend the message of the Qur'an. *Ajanasi's* main function is to repeat with melodious and captivating voice the verses of the Qur'an read by *Mufasssir*. While, *Arowasi* is expected to repeat and give familiar meaning to the explanation given by the *Mufasssir*. Among the sources of *Tafsir* which Yoruba Muslim *ulamau* (scholars) and *Mufasssirun* (Qur'an exegetes) rely on include *Tafsir Jalalayn*, *al-Sawi*, *Ibn Kathir*, *Safwatul-Tafsir*, and *al-Baydhawi* (Azeez, 2010).

3.5 Qur'an Reading during Birthday Celebration

At the attainment of ages 40, 50, 60, 70 and above, many Yoruba people usually organize feast or an elaborate party to mark or celebrate their birthday. This may be probably due to influence of western culture. Some Yoruba Muslims have also imbibed the culture of celebrating their birthday on yearly basis with fun fare, pomp and pageantry. Yoruba Muslim clerics are usually invited to such an occasion when the celebrant will ask them to read the whole Qur'an for him/her. Depending on the number of Muslim clerics at the occasion, the whole Qur'an may be read three times. One *hizb* (one of 60 parts) of the Qur'an may be given to each and every one of the Muslim clerics to read. The reading of the whole Qur'an once or thrice may take two to three hours depending on the number of Muslim clerics involved in the reading. However, if the whole Qur'an cannot be read probably due to fewer numbers of *Alfas* (clerics), some selected chapters of the Qur'an will be read. The selected chapters usually include *Suratul- Kahf* (Chapter 18), *Suratul-Yā Sin* (Chapter 36), *Suratul Waqi'ah* (Chapter 56), *Suratul Fatih* (Chapter 48) and *Suratul-Mulk* (Chapter 67).

3.6 Qur'an Reading During Commissioning of a New House

Building of a house is considered a great achievement in the life of a Yoruba person. Regardless of the type of the house; either face to face bungalow, bedroom flats, storey-buildings etc, its completion always calls for celebration among people. Some Yoruba Muslims, on completion of

their new house, will invite Yoruba Muslim clerics to offer special prayers for them and for the commissioning of the new house. Such prayer may be in form of reading some selected chapters of the Qur'an or the whole Qur'an.

4. Analyzing the Spiritualism and Functionalism of the Glorious Qur'an among Yoruba Muslims

The reading of the whole Qur'an and some selected chapters of the Qur'an such as *Suratul Khaf*, *Suratul Yā Sin*, *Suratul Waqi'ah* and *Suratul-Mulk* for social-spiritual development of Yoruba Muslims may be due to circumstances surrounding the revelation of those chapters as well as the remarks made by Prophet Muhammad on the potency and virtues of those chapters of the Qur'an. Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet said:

Whoever recites *Suratul-Khaf* (Chapter 18) on *Jumu'ah* will be blessed with a light that will rise from underneath his feet to the peak of the sky. This will be a light from him on the Day of Resurrection and he will be forgiven for what is between the *Jumu'ah* and the next *Jumu'ah* (Dabas and Zaraboso, 1985:127)

In another narration, it is reported that Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reports that the Prophet said:

Whoever recites *Suratul Khaf* on *Jumu'ah* will have illumination from the light from one *Jumu'ah* to the next (Dabas and Zaraboso, 1985:127)

On the basis of this tradition, some Yoruba Muslim *ulama* (scholars) opine that recitation of *Suratul Khaf* on Fridays is a form of protection or illumination and guidance from one Friday to another. Lawal (2017) is of the view that if *Suratul Khaf* is recited three times or seven times for seven days, it can wipe out one's enemies and witches. Lawal (2017) further writes:

Suratul Khaf is useful for seeking protection from enemies both known and unknown. It is known for its efficacy such that if one is in the habit of reciting it often, if an enemy thinks of evil about one without carrying out that particular evil, still the evil will befall the enemy (p.7).

Suratul Yā Sin (Chapter 36) is said to have been devoted to the Prophet and the revelation which the Prophet brought. Its subject matter centers on doctrine of revelation of the Qur'an and the Hereafter. Ali states that *Suratul Yā Sin* is the heart of the Qur'an and it is read in solemn ceremonies after death. It is believed that if *Suratul Yā Sin* is recited near a person who is on the verge of dying, an angel will bring a drink to the dying person for *Jannah* and

as he drinks of it, he will feel greatly eased (<http://www.al-islam.org>,2019).

Yoruba Muslims believe that *Suratul Yā Sin* was revealed to protect Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from his enemies (i.e. pagan Makkans) when they surrounded his house with the intention to kill him, but the enemies could not harm him as he was able to leave Makkah for Yathrib (later known as Madina) in 622CE. Allah made it impossible for the enemies of the Prophet to sight him when he left his home to migrate to Madinah. There is a verse in *Suratul Yā Sin* which suggests this divine protection. The verse reads thus:

And We have put a bar in front of them and a bar behind them and further, We have covered them up so that they cannot see. (*Suratul Yā Sin*, 36: 9)

The plot to kill Prophet Muhammad is mentioned in the Qur'an where Allah says:

Remember how the unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out(of thy home). They plot and plan, And God too plans. But the best of planners is God (*Suratul Anfal*, 8:30).

While commenting on this divine protection mentioned in the above quoted verse, Ali (1934:422) writes:

The plots against Mustafa (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) in Makkah aimed at three things. They were not only foiled but God's wonderful working turned the tables and brought good out of evil in each case. They tried to hole the Apostle in subjection... they tried to injure or slay him....they tried to get him and his followers out of their homes. But they found in a new home in Medina, from which they eventually reconquered not only Mecca, but Arabia and the world

Recitation of *Suratul Fath* (chapter 48) by Muslims is seen as if such Muslims were with Prophet Muhammad during the conquest of Makkah. Recitation of *Suratul-Waqi'ah* (chapter 56) by a Muslim will make him/her intelligent and poverty will not come near such a person. Keeping *Suratul-Waqi'ah* in one's possession is a means of increase in sustenance.³⁰ No doubt, among some Yoruba Muslim clerics, *Suratul-Waqi'ah* is known as *isa waka isa wowo* meaning that recitation of *Suratul-waqi'ah* will bring affluence or wealth for Muslims. Recitation of *Suratul Mulk* (chapter 67) by Muslims every night will secure Muslims from the torment of grave and will be rewarded with paradise (<http://www.al-islam.org>, 2019) On *Suratul Mulk*, Prophet Muhammad is quoted to have said:

There is a *Sura* in the Qur'an comprising thirty verses which continued its intercession on behalf of a man

till he was forgiven. It is *Suratul-Mulk* (Chapter 67) (Khan, 1985:506).

All the views expressed by Muslim scholars on the benefits of recitations of these selected chapters of the Qur'an actually encourage Yoruba Muslims to read those chapters with the intention to solve their socio-economic and spiritual problems.

Functionalism of the Qur'an especially during Ramadan period, child naming, wedding and funeral ceremonies will also be critically analyzed. *Tafsir* session being held among Yoruba Muslims during Ramadan fast as earlier mentioned in this study is commendable. However, it is observed that such a meritorious and intellectual act should not be restricted to Ramadan period. Rather, *Tafsir* session should be held at least once in a week in *Ratibi* (local) and *Jumu'ah* (central) mosques for Yoruba Muslims to understand and appreciate the meaning of the Qur'an, so that they can apply its lesson to their daily activities. Waiting for the month Ramadan to hold *Tafsirul-Qur'an* is not augur well for Yoruba Muslims. The *Ratibi* and *Jumu'ah* mosques across Yorubaland should be made to function effectively on weekly basis for Qur'an exegesis.

The Glorious Qur'an is also appreciated and celebrated during *aqiqah* (child naming rites) among Yoruba Muslims. During the ceremony, it is observed that some Yoruba Muslim clerics (*alfas*) do collect offerings from the guests. This offering/money is known as *okowo kurani*, meaning money meant to buy a copy of the Qur'an for the new baby. The fact is that most of the Muslim parents who are given this *okowo kurani* with the intention to buy a copy of the Qur'an for the child will either spend the money on the same day or few days after the naming ceremony. The implication of this act is that when it is time for the child to start attending *ile-kewu* (local Qur'an school), the parents may not have the money to buy a copy of the Qur'an or the child may not attend any Qur'an school at all. Hence, the aim of collecting money (*okowo kuran*) to buy a copy of the Qur'an for the child on the naming day is defeated. It is important to note that collecting *okowo kurani* to buy a copy of the Qur'an for a Muslim child is a reminder to the parents that Qur'an education is a must for every Muslim as encouraged by Prophet Muhammad, who is reported to have said:

The best among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it (to others) (Khan, 1997:444).

Interestingly, it is also closely observed during the wedding ceremony that a copy of the Qur'an is always presented to bride as one of the items of

engagement presented by the family of the groom. During such an occasion, Yoruba Muslim brides are asked to pick the most valuable of the items of the engagement offered them. In most cases, the brides will pick a copy of the Qur'an. This practice indicates that the Qur'an is the most valuable item or gift which should be presented to Muslim brides with the intention that the Qur'an will be their source of guidance in their matrimonial homes with a view to having a happy married life. In addition, the Muslim wife is expected to read the Qur'an, understand its teaching and apply it in her marital affairs. However, the experience has shown that despite having copies of the Qur'an at home, some Yoruba Muslims couples often fail to apply the teaching of the Qur'an to settle their disputes which may lead to divorce or broken homes. The implication of this divorce is that the aim of presenting a copy of the Qur'an to a Muslim bride as a gift of the engagement during wedding ceremony is defeated. In this case, such Muslim husband and wife have failed to heed to Allah's instruction in the Qur'an where Allah says: If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family and the other from hers. If they wish for peace, God will cause their reconciliation. For God hath full knowledge and is acquainted with all things (*Suratul-Nisai*, 4:35).

Recitation of the whole Qur'an or selected chapters of the Qur'an during *Fida'u* prayers or memorial service for deceased Yoruba Muslims is common in Yorubaland. *Fida'u* means a ransom, redemption, saving someone and a sacrifice (Oseni, 2014:189). *Fida'u* is to pray that Allah grants the deceased Muslims peace, blessing, pardon and tranquility in the grave. Such prayers consist of glorification of Allah and recitation of *Suratul Fatihah*, *Suratul-Falaq*, *Suratul-Nas* and *Suratul-Ikhlās* with the intention of asking Allah to grant the reward to the departed souls (Oseni, 2014:189). Though some Yoruba Muslim clerics have kicked against the practice claiming that it is an innovation to organize prayer for deceased Muslims, a quite number of Yoruba Muslims still organize memorial service or *fidā'u* prayers for their deceased Muslims. One of the Muslim groups who condemn *fidā'u* for deceased Muslims is *Fidā'u Harām* Movement in Ogun Waterside, Ogun State. The group preached against prayer for the deceased Muslims and offering food, drink or money to sympathizers on the day Yoruba Muslims are buried (Adeleke, 2014). However, Oseni (2014) does not see anything wrong in organizing *fidā'u* whereby the Qur'an will be recited. While trying to clarify his view on the permissibility of reciting the Qur'an at *fidā'u* session, Oseni (2014:189) writes *inter alia*:

Recitation of the Qur'an can be done with the intention of praying Allah to grant the reward to the deceased and have mercy on him. The intention must be clear that the recitation is a form of prayer for the deceased no more, no less. On this Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal stated categorically that all goods acts performed on behalf of the deceased do benefit him.

Furthermore, it is important to state that recitation of the whole Qur'an or some selected chapters of the Qur'an during socio-religious functions like child naming, wedding, birthday, funerals and other events needs to be properly made by following the scientific rules guiding the correct recitation of the Qur'an known as *Tajwid*. It is always observed that some Yoruba Muslim clerics (*alfas*) who recite the Qur'an during such occasions often read the Qur'an in haste or hurry manner, not following the *Tajwid* rules. In other words, letters of the Qur'an are not properly pronounced due to the high speed at which the recitations are done. This, no doubt, will have serious implication on the meaning of the Qur'an. Recitation of the Qur'an individually or collectively in any gathering or in any occasion should be done in *tartil* (clearly and in slow style) as enjoined in the Qur'an where Allah says:

... And recite the Qur'an in slow measured rhythmic tones (*Suratul Muzzamil*, 73:4)

In another place in the Qur'an, Allah declares thus: (It is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts from time to time) in order that you might recite it to men at intervals. We have revealed it by stages (*Suratul-Israil*, 17:106)

The recitation of the Qur'an or its memorization should be seen by Yoruba Muslims beyond using it for spiritual healing or for socio-religious functions. It is observed that some Yoruba Muslim clerics are yet to imbibe the moral teaching of the Qur'an in their life. It is quite unfortunate that some Yoruba Muslim clerics who claim to have read and memorized the Qur'an have been accused of engaging in sharp practices or immoral acts that are forbidden by the Qur'an. For instance, it is reported by Nigerian media whereby some Muslim clerics have confessed to have committed offences like rape, abduction, killing, money rituals etc. (*PM News*, 2015, *The Punch*, October, 2016, March 2017, *The Pulse*, July, 2017).

No wonder, some Yoruba Muslim clerics teach and learn the Qur'an but do not allow its moral teaching to have impact on their lives. Prophet Muhammad has mentioned sets of these Yoruba Muslim clerics in his tradition when he said:

The example of him (a believer) who recites the Qur'an (and acts on its order) is like that of a citron which tastes good and smells good. And he (a believer) who does not recite the Qur'an (but acts on its order) is like a date-fruit which is good in taste but has no smell. And the example of a dissolute wicked person who recites the Qur'an (and does not act on its order) is like the *Raihana* (sweet bones) which smells good but tastes bitter. And the example of a dissolute wicked person who does not recite the Qur'an (not acts on its order) is like the colocynt which tastes bitter and has no smell (Khan, 1997:441).

From the above quoted *hadith*, one can deduce that Prophet Muhammad distinguished between reading the Glorious Qur'an and following its teachings by comparing recitation of the Qur'an with some fruits whose tastes are either bitter or smell good. The implication of this prophetic tradition is that reciting Qur'an for socio-religious and spiritual purposes by Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria is not enough but following or applying its commands/laws in their daily activities is very important.

5. Conclusion

The study has been able to establish the fact that the Glorious Qur'an occupies important position in the lives of Yoruba Muslims. The teaching and learning of the Qur'an especially among the early Yoruba Muslims have produced scholars, memorizers and experts in the recitation of the Qur'an. Interestingly, quite a number of Yoruba Muslim clerics otherwise known as *Alfa* have used Qur'an effectively in addressing their socio-religious and spiritual affairs. Hence, the Qur'an functions effectively among Yoruba Muslims during Ramadan period, child naming, wedding and burial ceremonies as well as in other events. However, some Yoruba Muslim clerics and others have been accused of not imbibing the moral teaching of the Qur'an in their lives and this accounts for their involvement in acts condemnable and forbidden by the Qur'an. The Glorious Qur'an should be seen beyond a book of recitation and memorization for socio-religious and spiritual purposes rather it should also be seen as a scripture for societal reformation and moral development. It is obvious that what some Yoruba Muslim scholars and clerics lack nowadays is good moral, hence the Qur'an cannot be *hujjatan* (a proof or reference point for good moral) for those categories of Yoruba Muslims. Arising from this study, it is suggested that:

- Yoruba Muslim philanthropists and other influential Muslims in Yorubaland should encourage the teaching and learning of the Glorious Qur'an by offering financial

- assistance to the existing Qur'an schools and centers.
- More modern Qur'an schools and centers should be established across Yorubaland where by the learning of the Qur'an cum its moral teachings is taught and imbibed by learners.
- The league of Imams and Alfas in Yorubaland should sanction Yoruba Muslim clerics who use the Qur'an for fraudulent acts.
- Every Yoruba Muslim parent should ensure that his/her child learn the reading and meaning of the Qur'an from early stage of life.
- Every Muslim should see the Glorious Qur'an as a complete manual of life that guides Muslim in all daily affairs.

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