

## Textual Sanctity and Engagements: An Assessment of Yoruba Muslims and Abuse of the Qur'an

### TEXTUAL SANCTITY AND ENGAGEMENTS: AN ASSESSMENT OF YORUBA MUSLIMS AND ABUSE OF THE QUR'AN

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#### Abstract

This paper evaluates Yoruba Muslims' engagements with the Qur'an and how those engagements, shaped by history, culture, and local religious practices, have engendered layers of textual abuse. While the Qur'an occupies a position of absolute sanctity in Islamic thought, its place within Yoruba Muslim life has been complicated by remnants of African Traditional Religion (ATR), syncretic customs, spiritual consultancy (*Jalabi*), and evolving Sufi and Salafi interpretations. Using historical narratives, ethnographic observations, and examples drawn from contemporary religious life, the study identifies recurring abuses, ranging from altered Qur'anic writing formulas (*Hantu*, *Khatimi*, *Opa*) to distorted recitations, mystical reapplications, commodification of devotional acts, misinterpretations by Sufi esoteric and Salafi literalists, and the appropriation of Qur'anic verses in popular music and *Asalatu* culture. These practices collectively weaken textual integrity, dilute theological meaning, and normalize an instrumentalized Qur'anic spirituality. The paper argues that the challenge is systemic, rooted in inadequate Qur'anic literacy, cultural overhangs, and the unchecked influence of clerics who commercialize sacred texts. It concludes by calling for a disciplined, knowledge-driven engagement with the Qur'an, one that restores its sanctity, curbs exploitative practices, and repositions the text as a guide for ethical, spiritual, and intellectual renewal among Yoruba Muslims.

**Keywords:** *Jalabi*, *Hantu*, *Khatimi*, *Opa*, Sufi, Salafi, Yoruba Muslim

**Textual Sanctity and Engagements: An Assessment of Yoruba Muslims and Abuse of the Qur'an****1. Introduction**

The Qur'an stands as the peak of Islamic religious instructions and a formidable source of moral guidance, legal authority, and spiritual or devotional practice. Yoruba Muslims, however, enable the interplay between the Qur'anic norms and their cultural heritage, which has produced a complex terrain for concerns on textual integrity and preservation of its sacredness. There are instances of reinterpretation and adaptation to local culture, which have given rise to suspicions and abuses of different sorts. It should not be forgotten that Yoruba society is deeply rooted in African Traditional Religion (ATR). Although they have historically embraced Islam, there are traces of ritualistic engagements with the Qur'an, which calls for serious assessments. This is inevitable because, as Islam spread across Yorubaland from the early centuries through trade, scholarship, and cultural exchange, many local practices were unconsciously diluted with Islam, with the thinking that the end justifies the means. This has led to cross-pollination, generating a spectrum of Qur'anic engagements that range from legitimate devotional acts to practices that constitute outright textual abuse. Such abuses manifest in different ways including writing (*hantu*), coded formulas (*khatimi* and *opa*), reading and ritualistic applications, commodification, distorted recitations, misinterpretations by Sufi and Salafi groups, clerical "Jalabi" services, and widespread misuse in songs, popular culture, and Asalatu societies. The cumulative effect is a gradual erosion of Qur'anic sanctity, theological clarity, and proper religious activities. This article assesses these practices critically, interrogates their historical roots, explores their doctrinal implications, and offers a grounded, corrective framework for restoring responsible Qur'anic engagement among Yoruba Muslims.

**2. Brief History of Yoruba**

Yoruba is one of the major tribes that make up Nigeria. The speakers occupied six (6) out of thirty-six (36) states in the country, and the major occupants of one out of the six geopolitical zones, Southwestern Nigeria. The states are Oyo, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti states. There are also Yoruba-speaking people in two other zones, namely North Central and South South (Jadesola, 2023). These are Kwara and Kogi in the former and Edo and Delta in the latter. The Yoruba are equally found across West African countries like Togo, the Republic of Benin (Agai, 2020), among others. The Yorubas are divided into various sub-ethnic groups such as the Oyo, the Egba, the Ekiti, the Igbomina, the Ijesha, the Ijebu, the Okun, the Ibolu and Igara, among others. Yoruba are the descendants of Oduduwa, who founded Ile-Ife before his children scattered across the land to found different Yoruba communities as they exist today. Their political setting is structured from the Oyo Empire. There are different accounts on the origin of the Yoruba race. According to Doi, who gathered various reports and suggestions from different scholars, Muhammed Bello traced the origin of the Yoruba to the Arabs, while Samuel Johnson traced them to between the Coptic of Egypt and Namuruza, who came from Makkah (Again, 2022). Professor Biobaku was of the view that Sudan is the original home of the Yoruba and probably every black race (Doi, 1983). These accounts seem to be dividing the historians of the latter generation, with religious bias. It is noted that Muslim historians are comfortable with Muhammad Bello's account, which sourced Yoruba from Makkah, while the Christians preferred the Egyptian source from Johnson, since it is linked to the Coptic Christians. In another dimension, Dasaolu and Ofuasia claimed the divine origin of Yoruba when they examined the narrative of Idowu and Awolalu, where it was argued that it was

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Olodumare who sent Obatala to create the earth, and the first was Ile-Ife, but the mission was completed by Oduduwa, who was the progenitor of the Yoruba race (Dasaolu & Ofuasia, 2020). Whatever the case may be, Yoruba are a major ethnic group in Nigeria and have established firm roots in the country. Their language forms one of the three major indigenous languages in the country and has contributed to the socio-political and economic development of the country. They are the most civilised, most industrious, most educated and most influential ethnic group in the country. Yoruba pioneered many developmental strides in Nigeria in different areas of politics, education, social, sports, and economic sectors of the country. Their language is widely spoken across the country, and they dominate both the cultural and entertainment industries in Nigeria.

### **3. Islam in Yorubaland**

Yoruba society, before Islam, was predominantly African Traditional Religion (ATR) adherent, anchored in a polytheistic worldview. They recognised Olodumare as the Supreme Creator but engaged primarily with delegated divinities such as Orunmila, Obatala, Ogun, Sango, Esu, Yemoja, and others who handled specific cosmic and social functions (Agai, 2023). These deities were worshipped, sacrifices and rituals were offered to them for protection, prosperity, and stability. Religion shaped Yoruba culture, driving their social norms, political behaviour, economic practices, and intellectual outlook. Their festivals embodied this religious core, blending beliefs, kinship systems, dress, music, dance, and mythic narratives into community-wide celebrations. Scholars like Olatundun (2019) highlight that these festivals were welfare-oriented, designed to secure communal safety, abundance, and happiness. Participation was not optional; it was a civic expectation reinforcing unity and identity. Ultimately, the Yoruba pre-Islamic system stood in direct tension with Islamic monotheism, setting the stage for the transformative impact Islam would later introduce.

The arrival of Islam in Yorubaland is without a precise date, though scholars have different suggestions for the possible dates or periods of its advent. Gbadamosi explained that the People of Bornu had established contact with Arab Muslims around the eleventh century. He claimed that there were Umayyad emigrants in Bornu as at that time (Gbadamosi, 1978), hence the Kanem ruler, Umme Jilmi, who ruled 1085 and 1097, was said to be the first ruler to accept Islam. He stressed that places like Shanghai, Mali, and even Kano had equally established contacts with Islam between the Eleventh and Fifteenth centuries. He therefore argued that Yoruba had established contacts with these places, hence the possibility of the presence of Islam in the land (Oloyede, 2014). Scholars like Adam and Doi, among others, put the possible date of the appearance of Islam in Yorubaland at the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. This came from the majority of scholars who hold that it was during the reign of the popular king of Mali, Manza Ali Kanka Musa (1280-1337CE) that Islam spread across West African lands or communities, Yorubaland inclusive. This is said to have accounted for the reason why Islam is often referred to by the Yoruba as *Esin Imole* (a religion of or from Mali) (Doi, 1983).

The submission of Adelabu on the precise date or period of the appearance of Islam in Northern Nigeria is instructive because it reaffirms the suggestion of Gbadamosi. Adelabu argued that the practice of Islam in the region could be dated back to the early centuries of Islam because Northern Nigeria had established trade links with North Africa and Arab nations from time immemorial (Adelabu, 2023). In other words, those Arab traders had been practicing Islam in the land, hence its presence as far back as that time. Since it is equally documented that the Yoruba had a long

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trade relationship with the Hausa of Northern Nigeria, the date of the presence of Islam in Yoruba land could not be far different from that of the North. According to Adam, the first mosque was built in Oyo in 1550. This was said to have been built by “foreigners” (Hausa) who were mainly traders. History holds that the centrality of Oyo town to Yorubaland as the seat of government, among others attracted different people from different places to the town. It was at a later date that another mosque was built in Iwo in 1655, then gradually to other parts of Yorubaland, including Iseyin, Ede, Epe, Shaki, Lagos (Oloyede, 2014), among others. In fact, Abdul Rahman Doi (1983) documents how *Shari'ah* was administered in some of these places.

Danmole (2019) compiled many oral traditions that depict the long history of Islam in Yoruba land. He demonstrates how some of these traditions, especially *oriki* (pynegetic), portrayed Islam as an indigenous religion among the Yoruba. Some of these traditions are:

*Aiye l'aba ifa,  
Aye l'aba Imole,  
Osan ganagan ni igbagbo wole de bawa.*

Meaning:

We met with Ifa divination on the earth  
We met Islam on the earth,  
But it is in the afternoon that Christianity came to us.

The above tradition, which refers to Islam as *Imole* (explained above), presupposes that Islam has been in the land right from time immemorial. This lends support to the claims of both Gbadamosi and Adelabu, including that of Sheikh Adam and Doi, earlier mentioned, which proves the presence of Islam in Yorubaland as early as the days of the Umayyad. The religion was said to have been met on the ground because there was no one who could give the exact date or period of its arrival in the land. Unlike Christianity, which was clearly stated to have come in the afternoon. This means that it came when people had become civilized. This is true because the history of the advent of Christianity is greatly connected to the slave trade and colonization of African countries, including Nigeria, which lasted between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Also, another tradition is:

*Aremu Agbe  
O Kole kan gagara ko onimole si  
O wo Alufa ba s'ore  
O wo omokewu se l'ore*

Meaning:

Aremu Agbe  
Who built a gigantic building for Muslims (Mosque?)  
Who chose Alufa (Islamic scholar) as a friend and  
Was generous to Islamic students.

This describes the attitude of the rich Muslims to Islam and Muslims, especially the scholars in early times. The mosque was described as a gigantic building, probably due to the presence of a dome and a minaret. These were the two main symbols of the mosque in the Islamic world across ages. The mosque was therefore relatively new to the people, hence they eulogies the individual who built it. Also, proximity to Islamic scholars in the early days of the religion in Yorubaland bestowed a rare honor on one; hence, the rich and influential individuals in the community made

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it a thing of pride by establishing their closeness to them with their wealth. The same goes for students who are future scholars of Islam. Kindness to them is considered an investment that would bring positive returns in the near future. So, people, especially the rich in society, chose to be nice and kind to them.

The Adekilekun family is one of the prominent Muslim families in Yorubaland, from Ede, Osun State. Their *oriki* reflects the deep nature of the family in Islamic tradition. The oral tradition holds thus:

*Omo Arikewu s'ola*  
*Omo Afi Kurani jagun*  
*Omo afi kalamu damo lekun*  
*Omo Akewu gberu*  
*Omo Akewu gbo re*

Meaning:

The child of the one who prides himself on Islamic scholarship  
 The child of the one who fights battles with the Qur'an  
 The child of the one who makes changes with a pen  
 The child of the one who wins slaves with Islamic scholarship  
 The child of the one who wins gifts with Islamic scholarship

The same goes for Ilorin as an Islamic community in Yorubaland, where many earlier scholars migrated to different parts of Yorubaland. The *oriki* of Ilorin states:

*Ilorin Gerin Alimi*  
*Ilutoyi k'legun*  
*Ilutoyi ko l'oro*  
*Esin l'egun won*  
*Ooko l'oro be*  
*Omo Afikewu gberu*  
*Afi Adua jagun*  
*Afi walaa t'ore.*

Meaning:

Ilorin, the city of Alimi  
 A big town without a masquerade  
 A big town without a cult  
 Horse is their masquerade  
 Sword is their cult  
 The child of the one who wins a slave with Islamic scholarship  
 Who fight battles with prayers  
 Who gifts out slates?

Each of these instances shows how deeply rooted Islam is among the Yoruba. Islam also has a great deal of influence in Yoruba land, cutting across socio-political, economic, and intellectual spaces in the land. This will, however, be discussed at the appropriate place in this work.

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### 4. The History of Learning of Qur'an among Yoruba Muslims

Islam as a religion is better and successfully practiced only with adequate knowledge of its sciences, starting from the Qur'an and other sources. It is a religion that places a high premium on learning and scholarship, hence the first revelation (Q.96:1-5) focuses on reading, writing, and scholarship. Adebayo (2005) observes that the history of Islamic learning in Yorubaland is not different from the history of the emergence of Islam in the land. This was because religious services such as *Salat* required the ability to pronounce Arabic words. Becoming a complete Muslim, therefore, requires that one have the capacity to read and pronounce Arabic words. So, as the Mallams gained converts to Islam, they quickly set up learning centers known as *Ile Kewu* (*Madrasa*) to acquaint the newcomers with the rudiments of their new faith. Ogunbado (2016) observes that Oyo-ile was the first to have contact with Islam, as early as the sixteenth century during the reign of Alafin Ajiboyede, and the learning of Arabic and Islam (*kewu*) started immediately afterwards. The Muslim scholar who took charge of learning was called Baba-kewu. He taught both the art of reading the Qur'an and some *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. This marked the beginning of *Ile kewu* in all of Yorubaland, before it was later followed by Iwo, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ikirun, Oyo, Epe, and Ijebuode, among others.

The mosque was initially used for this purpose, where people gathered to learn basic things about Islam, especially those that will facilitate the observance of religious duties. There was no formal setting or a clear method of teaching, apart from Mallam taking students according to each individual's capacity and capability. The *Qaidatul-Baghdadiyyah* was used as the starting point before proceeding to a higher level of ten *Juz*. Then, progressing gradually to one completes the entire Qur'an. Some *Ile kewu* hold only at night after *Salatul-Isha*, while some hold both in the morning and in the evening after *Salatul-Asr*. There was no holiday, except for Thursday and Friday of every week. The month of Ramadan is equally observed with the closure of *Madrasah*, till after *Eid al-Fitr*. Also, the period of *Eid al-Adha* is another short period for the closure of the *Madrasah* (Adebayo & Ogunbado). Adebayo gives a clear picture of what was obtainable in *Ile kewu* in those days when he observes further that:

The school program, which was in no way disrupted by any persistent strike or closure, was an interrupted academic session, except when the Mallam fell sick, travelled, or was mourning. There was intermittent organization of feasts to mark the gradual movement of students from short chapters of the Qur'an to longer ones. The method was to encourage lazy students to sit up. As such, on getting to chapter 105 (*Suratul-Fil*), a fowl feast will be held, and in chapter 96 (*Suratul-Alaq*), cooked beans and Eko food will be prepared. On reaching chapter 87 (*Suratul-'Ala*), another fowl feast will be held, and a he-goat will be sacrificed on reaching chapter 55 (*Suratur-Rahman*). On getting to chapter 36 (*Suratu Yasin*), a ram will be slaughtered, and finally, on completion of the whole Qur'an, an elaborate feast where a cow will be slaughtered is organized (Adebayo).

It is therefore after the completion of the recitation of the whole Qur'an that a student will proceed to a semi-advanced level where he will be exposed to *fiqh* books such as *Al-Asmawiyyah*, *Al-Khadari*, *I'ziyyah*, *Risalat*, *Mukhasarul-Khalili*, and the like (Adebayo). As it was, this depended on the ability of the Malam because in most cases, many of the Mallams too were students of another Mallam and would not be able to take the students beyond their level or capacity. It was



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later that scholars like Sheikh Tajul-Adab, Sheikh Kamaludeen Al-Adabiyy, and Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori established a former system of Madrasah education. The prominent ones among these Madaris shall be discussed in the next sub-head.

### 5. Major Madaris in Yorubaland

Yourbaland is a home for Islamic scholarship as *Madrasas* flood every nook and cranny of the southwestern part of the country. From Ilorin to Badagry and Kabba to Ondo state, major towns and communities are littered with different *Madaris* at various levels. These *Madaris*, in their numbers, have roots from where most of them emanated. To this end, the major ones with high profiling shall be selected for this discourse. Hence, the *Markaz ta'lim 'l-Arabi Al-Islami*, *Al-Adabiyyatul-Kamaliyyah*, *Ma'adul-Arabi An-Najiri*, and *Zumuratul-Mu'mini* shall be profiled for this work. There are some other *Madaris* without affinity to these four, but these were selected due to the influence and presence across the communities in Yorubaland and beyond.

**a. Markaz't-Talimu 'l-Arabi wa 'l-Islami (Arabic and Islamic Training Centre, Agege).** Fondly called Markaz Agege, while its products are referred to as *Markazi* or *Markaziyyun* or *Marakizah*, the center was founded by his eminence Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilori (1917-1992) (Nuraen, 2018). It was established in 1952 with a temporary site in Abeokuta before it was moved to Agege, Lagos, where it is today after a few years. The history of the establishment of Markaz was connected to the zeal of Sheikh Adam to have a citadel where future scholars of Islam would be produced to cater to the various needs of the Muslims with a growing population in the land. The Madrasa survived different untoward onslaughts at different stages to stand tall among the comity of Madaris in Yorubaland with outstanding performances. Sheikh Adam, the founder, was himself a rare and uncommon personality and a genius. He surmounted various challenges and broke different barriers to have Markaz in place (Yusuf & Yusuph, 2023).

Sheikh Adam was a native of Ilorin but migrated to Lagos, where he established Markaz. He learnt Arabic and Islamic studies from different scholars both within and outside Nigeria. He was a teacher, preacher, author, and trainer. His objective for establishing Markaz, as listed by Raji (2012), includes:

- i. Promotion of scholarship in Arabic and Islamic studies;
- ii. Bringing modernity into the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies;
- iii. Developing four skills of Arabic learning, viz, speaking, writing, reading, and listening;
- iv. Training of Islamic scholars, preachers, and Imams;
- v. Inculcating Islamic values in the students to make them better Muslims;
- vi. Enriching Islamic thoughts with valuable pearls and providing Arabic libraries with the best intellectual materials.

He successfully achieved these objectives during his life, and the legacy keeps flourishing more after his demise. Markaz has moved from mere Idaddiyyah, Tawjihiyyah to a Diploma awarding center. Today, has been approved by the National University Commission to award a degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Also, many prominent *Madrasahs* across Yourbaland were affiliated with Markaz, especially those that were established by former students of Markaz. Some of them include *Darul-Ulum li Jabhati Ulama'uwal-Ai'mah* in Ilorin, Markaz Talimi Arabi Islami, Saki, Markaz Shababi Al-Islami, Iwo, Osun State, Edo, Ede, Ijebu-Ode, Darul-Da'wahwal-Irshad, Lagos, and Markaz Talimul-Islami, Sakete, Republic of Benin, among others (Yusuf & Yusuph).

**Textual Sanctity and Engagements: An Assessment of Yoruba Muslims and Abuse of the Qur'an****b. *Al-Adabiyyah Al-Kamliyyah***

This is another prominent Islamic learning outfit with influence across the Yorubaland and beyond. The full name is *Az-Zumratu Adabiyah li Taalim lughatul Arabiyya wa Thaqafiya*, and it was founded by Sheikh Muahmmad Kamalideen Habeebullahi Al-Adabi (Aliyu, 2015). It has graduated an army of Islamic scholars across Yorubaland. He was an Ilorin-born Sheikh but moved to Lagos around 1923 after the demise of his teacher, Sheikh Tajul-Adab, whom he followed across Yoruba towns and villages for *da'wah* activities. Sheikh Tajul Adab himself died and buried in Abeokuta in 1923 (Nuraen). His Madrasa, Zumuratul-Adabiyyatil-Kamaliyyah, has branches across Yorubaland as students after their graduation settled in their hometown to establish Arabic schools modelled after their Alma mater.

His reform agenda started around 1938 when he returned from his first journey to Makkah for pilgrimage. It was then that he thought of changing the face of learning Arabic and Islam in southwestern Nigeria. He introduced a similarity of the formal Western education system where students put on a uniform, sit in classes, on benches, and use textbooks for learning Arabic and Islam, against the former system where both the teacher and the students sit on the bare floor. The teacher stands in front of the students using and chalkboard to teach. These were quite innovative and elicited criticism from some quarters, especially the Makondoros, who declared his method as Satanic (Kewu Shaytan) (Aliyu). He remains undaunted, despite all the initial problems. He was committed to achieving his goals.

Aliyu observes that:

By the 1950s, Kamalud-deen had developed strong connections with Al Azhar University in Cairo. A branch of Al Azhar was established in Ilorin in 1963, where it was named Al-ma'had al-dīnī al-Azhari (Al Azhar Islamic Institute, Ilorin). Here, both Egyptian and Nigerian tutors trained students by following the Al Azhar curriculum in a pre-degree or thanawiyya course. Importantly, this enabled students who had completed the Ilorin Azhari course to acquire higher education in Egypt, and not only in the field of religious sciences, but in law, medicine, or journalism, for example (Aliyu).

The school has now churned out many scholars across different spheres of human endeavor, especially outside the twin field of Arabic and Islamic studies. It should be stated that, unlike Sheikh Adam, Sheikh Kamaludeen adopted Western education and established schools in this regard, too. This was done courtesy of Anasurul-Islam Society of Nigeria, which founded in 1947 (Aliyu). Muhammad Kamaludeen University has been approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to commence the academic session soon.

Nuren writes that Sheikh Kamaludeen, courtesy of Al-Adabiyyah, was the father of modern Islamic education in not only Yorubaland but throughout Nigeria. It was from his Madrasa that the following key reformative agenda that shaped the future of Arabic and Islamic learning in Nigeria was first noticed. They include:

1. Grouping students of the same educational level into identifiable classes.
2. Promoting successful students from lower to upper classes at the end of each academic year.



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3. Awarding certificates to students at the end of their studies.
4. Identifying and recommending some specific Arabic textbooks for specific \categories of students.
5. Introducing registers to the various classes of students for record purposes.
6. Designing syllabuses for use in various classes in his school.
7. Introducing regular continuous assessment tests and final examinations based on the school syllabus and printed Arabic textbooks.
8. Introducing the use of blackboards, desks, benches, as well as chairs and tables for the teachers.
9. Including in the school curriculum, the teaching of secular subjects such as arithmetic, History, Geography, Drama, Logic, etc.
10. Training students as professional Islamic Educators (Nurean).

### c. Ma'hadal-Arabiyy An-Naijiriyy, Ibadan (The Arabic Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan)

The great citadel was founded by Sheikh Murtada Abdus-Salam in 1958. It is located at Elekuro in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria. It is one of the foremost centers for learning Arabic and Islam in the Yoruba land (Nurean). According to Opeloye and Makinde (2012), Ma'had was established by Sheikh Murtada under the supervision of Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori. This was possible as a result of mutual love and interactions that existed between the two great minds. Sheikh Murtada was on record as having consulted Sheikh Adam, informing him of his desire to replicate Markaz in Ibadan. Sheikh then responded by not only offering him technical advice on how to start, but also provided him with the first set of teachers from Markaz to make the mission a realistic one. Sheikh Suleiman Raji, a prominent student of Sheikh Adam and a teacher in Markaz, was the first to be sent by Sheikh Adam to teach at Ma'had. There was also movement of students from Ma'had to Markaz to ameliorate the obstacles at the beginning of the great journey. These interactions lasted till Ma'had came of maturity and can stand on its own.

The philosophy of the Madrasa was founded on religious epistemology, as could be inferred from both Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khalidun. The school later had an alliance with the Saudi authority, thus the beginning of another journey in its history, as it changed to Saudi styles. Opeloye observes further on the methods of the school when he writes that:

The structure and curriculum of the institution were made up of three distinct stages, which have been maintained till today. These segments are Tahadiri or Ibtida'i (Preparatory or Primary), Idadi (Junior secondary), and Thanawi or Tawjihi (Senior secondary). The period for the three sections is altogether seven (07) or nine (09) years, depending on the Arabic background of the student before admission into the school. Their respective curricula are designed in a standard form by which studies are classified into different subjects (Opeloye & Makinde)

### d. Zumratul Mu'minina (Makondoro)

This is another major group of Muslims that spread across Yorubaland. The formation of the group is linked to four different sources, as could be inferred from Aliy. The first view tagged the origin to Sheikh Sheikh Tajul Adab, as the grand teacher of the Zumratul Mu'meenina, and that the group first referred to themselves as Zumratul Sheikh Tajul Adab. The second view attributed the group

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to Sheikh Zakariya Bakini (Tajul Mumeen), as the teacher of Sheikh Yusuf, and it was his name that the group finally adopted for their organization. The third view linked the origin of the group to Sheikh Yusuf Al Hamdaniyu bn Adaara Agbaji. This is the view of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al Iluri, and the group also pinned their origin to him, though they acknowledged his teacher, Sheikh Zakariya Bakini, as well as Sheikh Tajul Adab. The fourth view credited the founding of the group to Alfa Bamidele, who is widely acknowledged as having galvanized the group and popularized their activities and characteristics (Aliyu).

What is not disputable from the above account is that each of these prominent personalities contributed immensely to what makes up *Zumurat 'l-Mu'minin* as it exists today, hence the attribution of the genesis of the group to each of them. *Zumuratul-Mu'minina* does not have a formal Madrasah but has significantly contributed to Islamic scholarship in Yorubaland. Hardly would there be a community, no matter how remote or small it is, that members of this group would not be found there carrying out Islamic proselytization. The group has different identities that distinguish them from other Muslim groups in the land. Basically, they dress in a big turban and have their local songs called Waka, which they used to chant on different occasions.

### 6. Yoruba Muslims and Abuse of the Qur'an

This study examines textual engagement among Yoruba Muslims in contemporary times, raising concerns. It examines how reverence for the Qur'an, which is rooted in classical Islamic scholarship and reinforced by scholars of all ages, collides with evolving cultural practices and everyday religious expressions of the Yoruba Muslims. Highlighted in this section are the common practices among Yoruba Muslims that constitute abuse of the Qur'an, such include writing, reading, and interpreting, among others.

#### i. Abuse by writing (*Hantu*)

One of the ways through which the Qur'ān is abused is by writing. The art of writing or reproducing verses, chapters, or the whole Qur'ān is technically called *Hantu* among the Yoruba Muslims. This is not peculiar to Yoruba, but Hausa equally engage in *hantu*. It is called *rubutu*. *Hantu* is also a frequent name among the Yoruba *Jalabi* practitioners. Balogun (2011) defines *hantu* when he writes that:

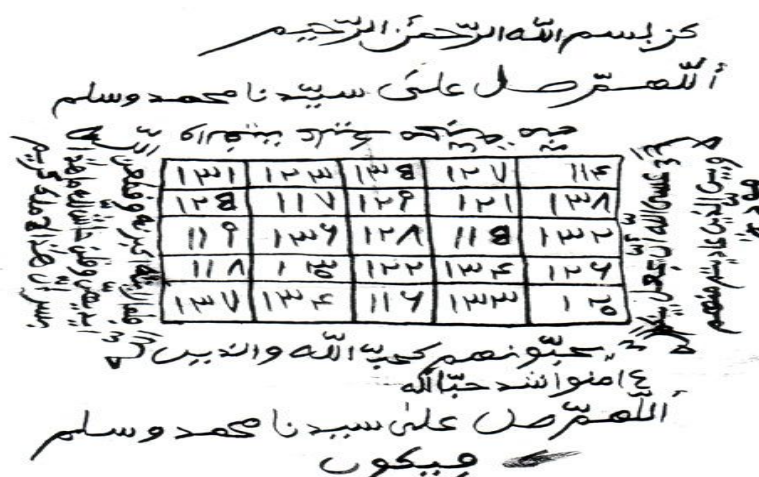
*Hantu*: (*Khatt*) is a written spiritual diagnosis prepared with black ink, called *tadaa* or *tadawa*, and then written with a fountain pen referred to as *kallamu* (*qalam*) on black slate, called *walaa* (*lawh*), and washed with water to be drunk, bathed, or rubbed on the body. The Yoruba call it *Hantu*, while the Hausa call it *Hanturu* in a corrupt way.

*Hantu* is therefore called when a Quranic verse or chapter is written for different purposes, either on the slate or paper. Sometimes they are drunk, hung, or bath with. The verses of the Qur'ān are written on different items, depending on what one intends to use them for. Some are written on the slate or other concrete objects for reading or washing for drinking, bathing, or rubbing of the body (Oloruntele, 2009). At times, verses of the Qur'an are written with prohibited substances like faces, blood, urine, and the like. Virtually, every chapter and verse of the Qur'ān is reproduced, and each is used for a distinct purpose.

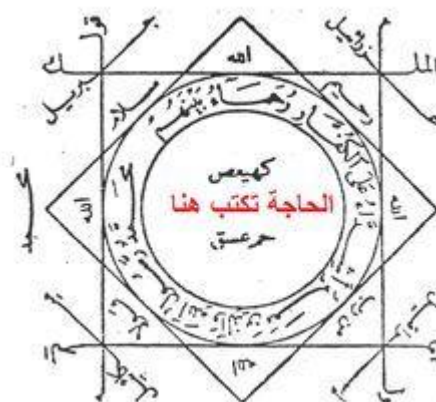
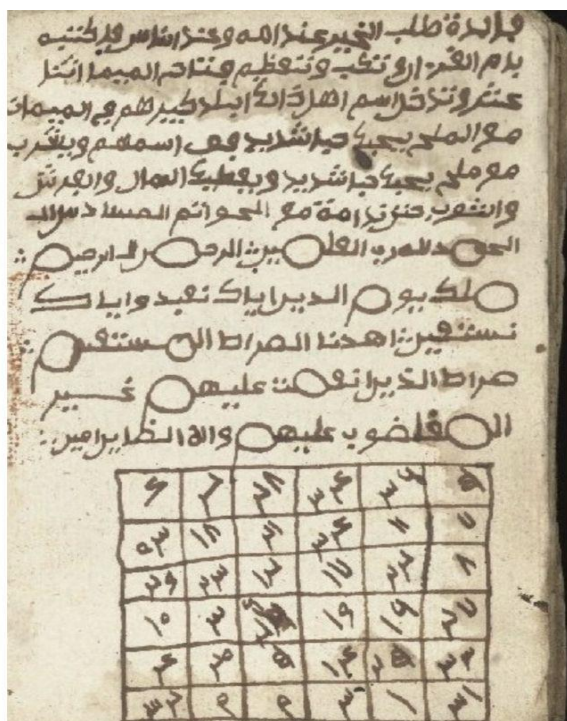
One of the ways of writing the Qur'ān, which constitutes an abuse, is reducing a verse or chapter to *Khatimi* (Balogun). *Khatimi* is a special formula with which verses of the Qur'ān or

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chapters are coded. It may be drawn in different forms, tabular, triangular, or circular form, with numbers and names in and outside of it. There is a mathematical formula that is used to reduce the Arabic alphabet to numerals and from letters to words, then to generate codes. A different portion of the Qur'an has a specific *Khatimi* that scholars have worked on to arrive at. The *khatimi* is used for different purposes, for the prevention of evils and to attract goodness. It is equally used to harm people.



This is an example of what Khatimi is all about. Each of the letters in the boxes represents letters and wordings of the Qur'an which are not written directly but reduced to letters.

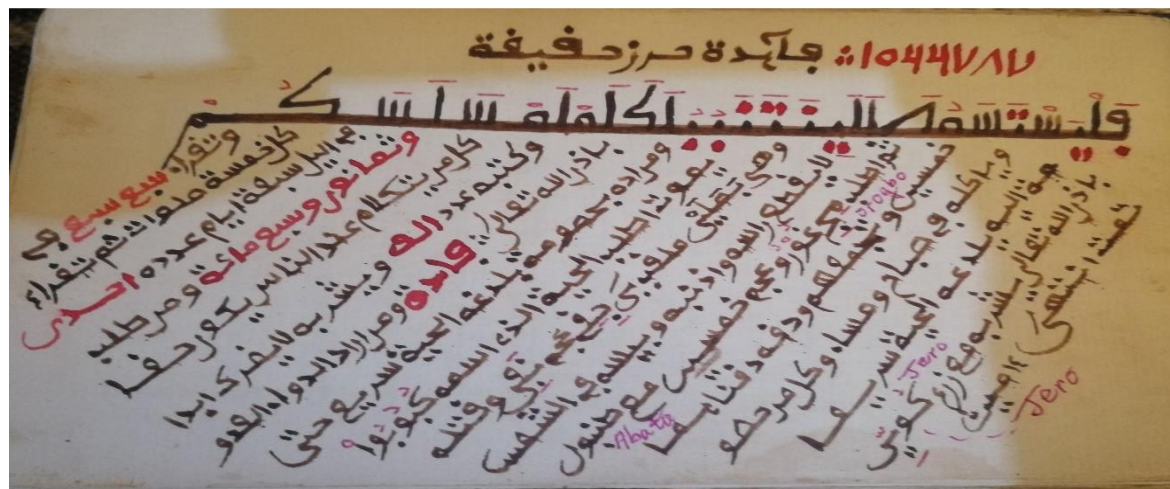




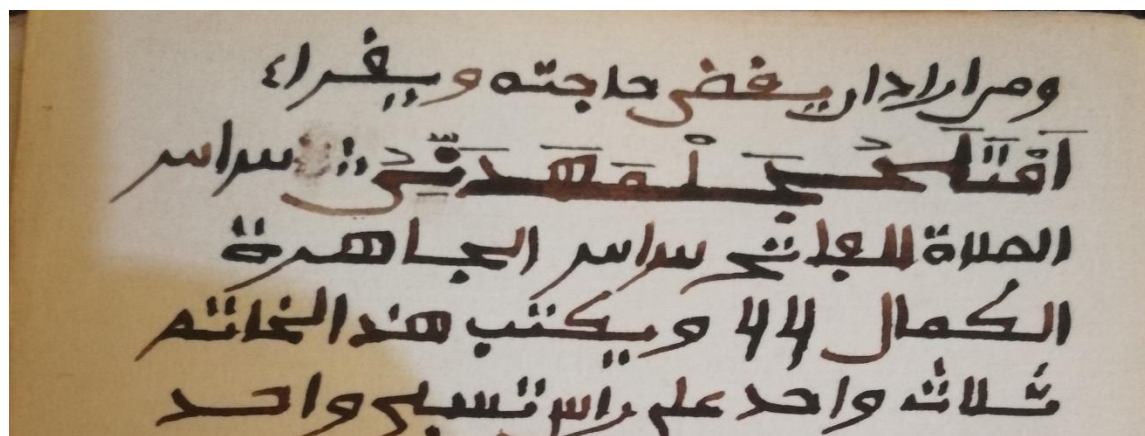
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This is another instance of how Qur'ānic verses or chapters are reproduced by Khatami that is used to achieve a target end.

There is also another nomenclature that is closer to the first one. It is known as *Opa* (stick). This is when a verse or chapter of the Qur'ān is rewritten in a manner that will make it difficult to identify such a verse or chapter, either by writing or pronunciation. Like *Khatimi*, *Opa* is also a special formula that is used for different purposes. After the reduction of a particular verse to *Opa*, it is that *Opa* that will be written instead of that verse. An instance is:



Another one is:



These are regarded as the names of, the Jins, but they are not; it is the verses of the Qur'ān that are reduced to these *Opas* through mathematical means. The first is Q.113 and 114 (*Ma'widhatayn*), while the second is *Suratul-Nasr* (Q.110). These were arrived at by having found the numerical values of the letters in the Surah and other arithmetical processes. So, instead of reciting the chapters, these would be recited in their place.

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Some write verses or chapters of the Qur'an as *oku* (dead), *afoju* (blind), and *aye* (living). The first one describes the writing of a portion of the Qur'an without dots and diacritical marks, the second without diacritical marks alone and the third one as revealed. The writing may sometimes be for *aseje* (concoction). This is where the Qur'an is written, either whole or in part, to make special preparations for specific purposes, like healing or spiritual deliverance. In some instances, verses of the Qur'an are written with different substances, such as the blood of animals, as *tadaa*. Some of the verses are written on paper but buried inside the toilet or at any lavatory place where ordinarily, the Qur'an must be kept away from places (Balogun).

There is also *gari-tira*. This is where some substances are prepared and added to what is written as a condition or ingredient that will make it as effective as expected. Different items can be used for this, such as plants, leaves, roots, and anything that may be prescribed by the first Sheikh to use it. They used to write verses or chapters of the Qur'an to make or *paro* (amulet) and for magic purposes. There is not much difference between the writing and reading of those chapters. What was stated above with regard to each of the three chapters in terms of usage and the reasons thereof are similar (Oloruntele).

The permissibility or admissibility of these writings has remained a subject of controversy among the Muslims. There is, however no argument on writing the verses of the Qur'an as indicated above, if the wordings are not changed, many scholars, including Ibn Taymiyyah. From his *Majm'u Fatawa*, we bring this report.

وَيَجُوزُ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ لِلْمُصَابِ وَغَيْرِهِ مِنَ الْمَرْضَى شَيْئًا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَذِكْرُهُ بِالْمِدَادِ الْمُبَاحِ وَيُغَسَّلَ  
وَيُسْقَى كَمَا نَصَّ عَلَى ذَلِكَ أَحْمَدُ وَغَيْرُهُ

It is permissible to write for a sick person or others, a portion of the Qur'an, with permissible inks. Then, wash and drink as reported by Imam Ahmad among other scholars (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2000).

The report equally cites that of Ibn Abbas, among other earlier quotes in this chapter. The same position is maintained by *Al-Lajnat'd-Dai'mah* (2019). The only point of disagreement is when verses of the Qur'an are written in a manner that contradicts how it was revealed. This is what therefore constitutes an abuse because that is not the way the Qur'an was revealed. The position of this study therefore aligns with permissibility and admissibility of *hantu*, if it is done within the permitted limit in *Shari'ah*. *Haram* substance must not be used, except in case of necessity (*Ad-Darurah*) and the wording needs not to be changed (Q.6:115, 18:27). This is based on the *hadith* that Allah will not put solutions in whatever He prohibits for the Muslims (Al-Bukhari, No. 5613).

### ii. Abuse by Reading and Recitation

Ordinarily, the reading of the Qur'an should follow the pattern of its arrangements, compilation, and standardization by both the Prophet and the early Muslims, as discussed in the previous chapters. But the Qur'an is read in different ways that are devised by the local Mallams for different purposes. The verse and chapters are re-arranged or re-grouped, while some are emphasized over and above others. They have a different selection of the verses and chapters under a different heading such as *ayat'l-hirz* (verses of protection), *ayat'l-Rizq* (verses of blessing), selection of forty (40) *Rabana*, 29 *Muqatta'at* chapters selected, regrouped according to the letter that starts each of them. There are some other forms of re-groupings. They also assigned different numbers

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of rounds or times for their recitations. To some, there are specific times they can and cannot be recited. There are also those with certain conditions for their recitations and the modes, and states among others are equally stipulated. Sometimes, verses or chapters of the Qur'an are reduced to *Opa* (stick), which is chanted instead of reading the verses or chapters directly. Also, in an attempt to Islamise their *kufi* heritage, some read verses of the Qur'an as a replacement for incantations. What is also commonly attributed to these chapters is the sacrifice of cow, ram, sheep or goat as may be convenient for one. At times, *Sara* (*Sadaqah*) is prescribed to go with each of them.

Specifically, *Suratu 'l-Mulk* is often read for dominion, victory, success and the like, where someone is seeking a leadership position at any place or to lord over people. There are different ways of using it. They counted the number of times الرَّحْمَنُ appears in the *Surah* and discovered it is four (4) times. Different acts are performed when one reads to each of the spots where it is mentioned. Some of them include changing directions, starting over again the next one, before starting again, stopping to continue from there to another spot the next day, which makes the completion of the *Surah* last for four days. Reciting with other verses, chapters and repetition of certain prayers at each spot and so on. Some are recited while standing, sitting, walking, facing or backing the *Qiblah* and many more.

*Suratul-Waqi'ah* is popularly known as *Isawaka*, *isaw'owo*. It is read or recited for money magic, especially on Thursday to Friday night. Some portions will be repeated several times. Like verse 26, may be repeated a thousand times (1000), during or after reading the whole verse. The verse between 28 and 35 which described paradise are also used for ease and better life. Verse 89 is also recited for a deceased person. They also use the *Surah* for other purposes such as protection, gaining affection, tackling enemies, and winning litigation among other usages. They also developed *Khutbah*<sup>43</sup> for this chapter which must be read after the completion of the chapter or the stipulated number of rounds to be recited.

*Suratu 'l-Kahf* is recited or read for protection and prosperity in an endeavor. There are different ways of reading it, depending on the purpose for which it is to be read. It is noted that the chapter contains one hundred and ten (110) verses. So, it is divided into eleven (ten each) in which at the end of each portion, another chapter of Qur'an, often *Suratu Yasin* or *Al-Fatihah* will be recited before moving to the next ten. Where someone wishes to retain something or courses others to forget what is with him, he recites مَا كُنْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا (verse 3) repeatedly to achieve that. Also, if the intention is to grow in business, have high patronage or have a mammoth crowd at a particular place, فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا (verse 99) is repeated severally as may be determined by presiding or recommending clerics.

### iii. Abuse by Application

One of the ways of abusing the Qur'an by the Yoruba Muslims wrong assumptions about the Qur'an that led to faulty application of it. It is believed that the Qur'an has a special spiritual power of its own with which it can work miracles. It is for this reason they are fond of reading and reciting the Qur'an to tackle their spiritual problems. There are different portions of the Qur'an they used to tackle different problems in different ways. This often emanated from their faulty understanding of Q.59:21



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لَوْ أَنزَلْنَاهُ الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ  
الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, verily, thou wouldst have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of Allah. Such are the similitudes which We propound to men, that they may reflect.

The mountain in this verse to them means “problem” hence they say: *Oke-isoro*. It is thought that the Qur'ānic statement is therefore metaphorical, hence they apply the Qur'an either through reading, writing or other means to teardown their problems. In fact, in some instances, a person with a problem will be asked to perform ablution they carry the Qur'an on their head while others recite it. It is believed that the Qur'an will metaphorically crash the mountain so the problem of such an individual.



The picture indicates some group of Muslims at their *Asalatu* where they read the Qur'an while carrying a copy on their heads.

Another instance of abuse through an application is when Allah commands the Muslims to marry four wives. Q.4:3 is thus popular in this regard. People take the verse of the glorious book in its arbitrary sense, without necessarily considering the attached conditions. The mantra “*me ni Olohun wi*” is a household claim across the Yoruba societies. Another instance of abuse is the story of how a million Qur'an was recited in 1997 in Abuja with the belief that all Nigeria's problems would be solved with such a huge number of recitations of the Qur'an. This has not changed anything practically as things continued to get worse in the country until the present time.

Yoruba Muslims believe that the verses of protection in the Qur'an such as *Ayatul-Kursi* (Q.2:255), *Ma'widhatayn* and the like have given the whole book the spiritual power of protection, hence a copy of the Qur'an is often placed at the head corner of a newborn baby for protection against evils. Some Muslims used to hang verses of the Qur'an on the neck for protective purposes.

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Some write or recite to attract benefits to themselves. They also attached different chapters and verses to different events and occurrences. Such include *Suratu 'n-Nasr* for victory and crowding at a marketplace. *Surat 'l-Masad* for an improve sales. Another common practice which constitutes abuse of the Qur'an is printing of pamphlets with selected chapters and verses of the Qur'an which are distributed at occasions freely to people. The abuse comes from the indiscriminate distributions among those who could not read the Qur'an, and sometimes collected by non-Muslims. Some of the recipients are in state of impurity while collecting the copy of the present.

### iv. Abuse of the Qur'an among the Sufis

The Sufis are the adherents of Sufism. It is a spiritual practice that tends to purify the soul from vices to virtue, from spiritual filths to spiritual purity and from blameworthy deeds to praiseworthy ones. It uplifts the lives of the adherents from the abysses of animalistic life to living an angelic life. Sufism therefore teaches self-purification, and moral improvement, which can lead to building inner and outer peace to attain the truth and eternal bliss (Shaidah, 2014). It entails discipleship, initiation, spiritual training, exercises and practices, and observation of spiritual changes always.

Sufism is premised on various verses of the Qur'an and *ahadith* of the Prophet. For instance, Qur'an in *Suratu's-Shams* verses 9-10 mentions *Tazkiyyah*, while the Prophet mentions *Ihsan*, which has been explained by Ibn Qayyim (Ibn Qayyim, n.d) to mean awareness of the status of the soul. The former describes soul purification as a virtuous deed, which leads to prosperity in the two worlds. The latter, *Ihsan*, connotes kindness and the feeling of God's presence. Scholars like Yusuph (2018) have argued the connection between the two, stating that the former is a process while the latter is the result. Both equally describe what Sufism is all about. The prophet, his companions, and the people of the early community of Islam (*Salaf*) lived their lives, exemplifying this, though the practice was not referred to as Sufism during these periods. The adopted nomenclature then was *Zuhd* (asceticism), without a distinct code of life or worship, as it was later put together during the period of the *Salaf*, by the second generation of Muslims (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 2001).

Sufism, therefore, developed and spread across the Muslim society as one of the effects of worldliness that became the order of the day during the reign of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates (Martins, 2004) and later became a distinct practice among Muslims as time passed by (Ibn Hajar, n.d.). Today, Sufis are a major component of Sunni Muslims and are present in every Muslim community throughout the Muslim world. In Nigeria, with reference to Yorubaland, Sufism is practiced courtesy of two major orders, viz, Qadiriyyah and Tijaniyyah. There are many other Sufi orders, but these two are the most common Sufi bodies in the country at large and Yorubaland in particular. The Qadiriyyah is one of the oldest and most widespread of the Sufi orders in Islam. It was founded by Sheikh Abd 'l-Qadir al-Jilani (D.1166), who was a Hanbali scholar in Baghdad. It was therefore named after him. The order had since been flourishing and spread across the Muslim world courtesy of his disciple. The order got to Nigeria without a precise date, but it was practiced by Sheikh Uthman Ibn Fudi (d.1817), who was responsible for the Islamic jihad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which gave birth to the Sokoto Caliphate (Kawra, 2014). It was from the north that the order went to Yorubaland, through Ilorin, courtesy of Sheikh Alim. The order is now being widely practiced among the Yoruba Muslims (Soalgeberu, 2000).

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Tijaniyyah is the second most widely spread Sufi order across Yorubaland. The order was founded by Sheikh Ahmad Tijani (d.) in Fez, Morocco (Solagberu). The order got noticed in Nigeria when Sheikh Umar Al-Futi (d.1864), who was responsible for its spread across the West African sub-region, including Nigeria. The order is said to have more followers than the Sufi order in Nigeria, courtesy of the efforts and influence of Sheikh Ibrahim Niass Al-Kawlakhi (d.1975). His brand of Tijaniyyah, known as Ahlus-Faydah, is the most prevalent Tijaniyyah in the country (Solagberu). Tijaniyyah has been practiced in Yorubaland for quite a long time, even before the Jihad of Sokoto, because Solagberu, the great scholar of Ilorin before the arrival of Sheikh Alim, was a staunch Tijaniyyah member (Imam, 2018). No doubt, it is from Ilorin that the order spread to Yorubaland.

Sufis approach the Qur'an from the esoteric perspectives. This is otherwise known as *Ilmu 'l-Bātin* as opposed to *Ilmu 'z-Zāhir* (the exotericism), which is said to be the knowledge of *Shari'ah*. They are opposite to each other. One is apparent, while the other one is hidden. The latter is taken from the former. Sufis, through the knowledge of esotericism, bring meaning to verses of the Qur'an that are far from the apparent meaning or direct interpretations. This is often premised on the story of Prophet Musa and Khidr as contained in *Suratu 'l-Kahf* (Solagberu, 2017). The Yoruba Sufis have, however, gone beyond the ordinary application of this to indulge in what is primarily alien to *Shari'ah* and Islam. An instance is *dhikr* as contained in Qur'an 29:45, which is understood as jettisoning the compulsoriness of *Salat*. It is on this basis that some Sufis forsake *Salat*, believing that *dhikr* is more important than it. Other instances to come in the appropriate place.

This thesis does not seek to delve into the questions of the legitimacy of either Sufism or both Sufi Orders in Islam, which have been generating hot debates over time, but to discuss their practices vis-à-vis the abuse of the Qur'an, because they form major groupings among the Yoruba Muslims today. Also, it is pertinent to state that the discussion on Sufi groups entailed Jalabi scholars too. This is because reality has shown that both have different names, they are one and indivisible entity. Most Jalabi practitioners are Sufis across Yorubaland. It is in the area of specific that emphasis may be placed on one of the Sufi groups here for a better discussion. The Sufis have abused the Qur'an in different ways, especially in interpretation. Some of the instances of their interpretations include Q.42:49-50, which reads:

لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْاَرْضِۙ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُۚ يَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَآءُ اِنۡثٰى وَيَهَبُ لِمَنۡ  
يَشَآءُ الذَّكَوٰرَۙ

To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan), or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He will: for He is full of Knowledge and Power (Q.42:49-50).

The verses are interpreted to mean exoteric and esoteric, which Allah, according to the Sufi Allah bestows either on whosoever He wishes, but the best is he who is blessed with the two together. So, male and female are taken as exoteric and esoteric knowledge (Solagberu). Another instance is Q.27:34, where *Al-Muluka* (king) is interpreted as “fear of Allah” and *Qaryah* (village) is taken as “the heart” (Solagberu). These are some of the instances of how the Sufis interpret the Qur'an,

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which are ordinarily different from the popular meanings of the verses. It constitutes an abuse because it can change the original meanings of the verses of the glorious book.

### v. Abuse of the Qur'an among the Salafis

The Salafis are the adherents of the practice of Islam as it was practised by the *Salaf*. The word *Salaf* simply refers to the Muslims of the first three generations of the Muslims. This is based on the celebrated hadith of the Prophet, which reads:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قَرْنِي، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ»

On the authority of Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, who reported from the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: The best of people (are those that lived) in my generation, then those that followed them, and those that followed them (Al-Bukhari).

This *hadith* delineates three different categories of people covering the period when the Prophet was alive and was receiving revelations from Allah. He was thus the leader of the Muslim community. This was followed by the companions who shouldered the responsibility after the demise of the Prophet. It should be stated that the companions lived with the Prophet and learnt a lot from him. They therefore have a better understanding of the deeds of the Prophet than anyone who comes after them. The third generation was that of the *tabi'un* (successors). They were the students of the companions, from whom they learnt Islam. The people of these generations are therefore regarded as the *Salafu s-Salihun* (pious predecessors), while those who came after them are regarded as *Khalaf*. Salafism is therefore all about practicing Islam as it was practiced by those three generations. They are therefore regarded as Salafiyyah. They are also known as *Ahlus-Sunnah*, *Ahlul-Hadith*, and *Ahlul-Athari* (Yusuph), among others.

One of their distinct doctrines that differentiates them from other blocs of Sunni Muslims is related to the Qur'an. Apart from holding it in high esteem, they take to exoteric interpretation of its verses. They condemn esotericism in all ramifications. This, therefore, amounts to abuse of the Qur'an because it constitutes a disservice to the message of Islam. A reading through the story of Musa and Khidr mentioned above shows that verses of the Qur'an have meanings that go beyond the letters. It guides the esoteric meaning of the Qur'an that Q.57:3, which reads:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He is the First (nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Highest (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). And He is the All-Knower of everything. (Q.57:3)

This translation shows a great deal of deliberate mistranslation of the Qur'an just to disparage the word *Al-Batin*, which simply means hidden.

The *Salafiyyah* scholars equally disregard the spiritual importance of the Qur'an, stating that the glorious book is meant for reading and to act according to the instructions therein.<sup>64</sup> This



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is equally an abuse of the effectiveness of the Qur'an. They equally deny scientific interpretation of the Qur'an. They explain that Qur'an and science are not compatible and that science is subject to variation, fallibility, while the Qur'an is not.<sup>65</sup> Each of these constitutes an abuse of the Qur'an because they limit the messages and application of the Qur'an, thus its advantages and influence on humanity.

*Salafiyyah* scholars reject the scientific interpretation of the Qur'an because it gives theological Concerns. The Qur'an is a word of Allah that was revealed to the Prophet. It is therefore better left and preserved in its original form, as it was explained by the Prophet and his companions. Allowing the scientific interpretation may raise doctrinal issues, emanating wrong methodology that is completely alien to the spirit of the Qur'an. It will invariably cause misinterpretation or distortion of its true message or meaning of the Qur'an. It will even turn the Qur'an into a scientific textbook instead of a divine guidance that it is (Talbah, 2023).

Another reason for *Salafiyyah's* rejection of the scientific interpretation of the Qur'an is the limitations of Human Knowledge and its lack of objectivity. The Qur'an is revealed by the Knowing, whose objectivity is unique. They reject scientific interpretations because the theories thereof are not constant but evolving. A harmonization between the Qur'an and a scientific discovery may change over time. This may affect the meaning of the Qur'an, which has been attached to such a theory, thereby creating a doubt about the Qur'an (Talbah).

Also, the *Salafiyyah* authority interprets the Qur'an based on the theories and principles of the scholars of the early communities of Muslims who were not scientists. They explain the Qur'an in the light of the Qur'an and *hadith* of the Prophet, among other religious sources. They believe that what these scholars provided is comprehensive enough to navigate this world without relying on or dabbling in science. So, whatever interpretation process lacks credibility compared to the previous ones has the tendency to distort the Qur'an, and such should be rejected (Talbah).

A clear instance of Qur'anic misinterpretation by the *Salafiyyah* scholars is the Qur'an that is translated by two prominent *Salafiyyah* scholars in Yorubaland into the Yoruba language. The intent was to translate the Qur'an according to *Salafiyyah* doctrines, probably to spread and consolidate the Salafism in Yorubaland, hence the scholars are graduates of Saudi Arabia University. There are a lot of misinterpretations in it. Another scholar from Yorubaland carried out a review of that Qur'an and identified over a hundred errors in it. Some of the instances include Q.4:25 where الْمُحْصَنَاتِ (*omoluabi*) is translated as *adelebo*. Another instance is Q.12:24 where:

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ

*Dajudaju ohun wa ninu awon eru sin Wa ti A fomo*

This is, however, translated as *dajudaju ohun ni eni ti A sa lesa ninu awon awon erusin Wa* (Murtada, 2016). This is a clear case of mistranslation, which can clearly distort the meaning of the Qur'an. Another instance of glaring wrong translation is Q.13:17 where Qur'an says:

كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ

*Bayi ni Olohun nse apejuwe ododo ati iro*

This is, however, translated as *Bayi ni Olohun fi odod bori iro* (Murtada). Each of these instances, therefore, constitutes an abuse of the Qur'an because the intended meaning has been distorted.

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### vi. Abuse of the Qur'an among the Jalabi Practitioners

*Jalabi*, otherwise known as *Ise Alfa*, translates as clerical services (Aliyu). It is a clerical consultancy service that people approach the Mallam for spiritual assistance to solve various problems. The attempts to proffer solutions to those problems, coupled with limited knowledge of Islam and the desire to get rich, bring about different forms of manipulation of Quranic verses, believing that if Qur'an is manoeuvred, they are within the purview of Islam. This, therefore, spurred them to design different means of using the Qur'an. Bello (2022) describes Jalabi in the following words:

*Jalbu* etymologically means 'acquiring', but contextually, it has come to be associated with the acquisition and utilization of the skills to influence or manipulate the natural course of things positively or negatively. *Jalbu*, which in Yoruba local parlance is called *Jalabi*, has been the major vocation of traditional Muslim scholars and has conferred societal relevance over the years. It is also seen as the vocation whereby a scholar prepares charms, which are believed to possess supernatural power for protection against evil and for bringing good fortunes to traders, enhancement of luck, etc. In return for monetary gratification. Simply put, *jalbu* can be aptly described as spiritual consultancy and the practitioners as spiritual consultants. The activities of these individuals, also referred to as "spiritual counsellors", have not been captured locally by extant works (Bello, 2022).

The excerpt depicts the origin of the nomenclature, especially as it originates among the Yoruba Muslims as a vocational service. It Jalabi features different practices such as consultation, *hantu*, divination, and special prayer sessions, among others (Yusuph & Oniye, 2023). The practice is so prevalent among the Yoruba Muslims today. It was further strengthened with the availability of different works, such as *As-Shamsu 'l-Ma'rifī 'l-Kuburā* by Sheikh Ahmad Ali Al-Banūnī (d.1225CE) and the likes, from the Arab world, wherein various strange descriptions of the uses of Qur'an are contained. The Jalabi practitioners read the Qur'an upside-down, write the verse with different substances, many of which are *haram*, just as we explained above under abuse of the Qur'an by writing. Each of these features has generated debates among scholars of different generations, bordering on legitimacy.

The practitioners attached many strange practices to the Qur'an, which have been condemned by many scholars, especially of the Salafiyyah enclave. They used to collect different items such as rams, cows, goats, sheep, and cock among others for their services, especially those that are largely related to the Qur'an. For instance, they charge a cow for recitation of one Qur'an and sometimes depend on the number of times the Qur'an will be finished. In some instances, what is needed is not the whole item, but they demanded a complete cow. This is often justified with the story of Prophet Musa and the people of Israel, when they were commanded to strike part of the body with the whole (Q.2:82-83). Ustadh Abdusalam (2024), a popular radio presenter in Ilorin, argued in the light of this verse to establish the justification for Alfa making demands for a cow, whereas they may need only the head or any part of it. Another instance is the use of the Qur'an by Jalabi practitioners for fortunetelling. The clients are asked to open the Qur'an at random, and whatever page of the glorious book one opens brings the message of the day. They equally used



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the Qur'an to discover a thief. This is done by tying the key to the Qur'an in the middle while asking two men to hold it. A certain portion of the Qur'an will be read, and it is believed that whichever direction the Qur'an turns to indicates the thief.

### vii. Abuse of the Qur'an by the Muslim Societies

One of the prominent features of Islam in Yorubaland is the Muslim Societies. These are conglomerates of Muslims of a particular locality forming a group to jointly carry out religious activities. They are equally known as *Alasalatu*. They spread across the nooks and crannies of the Muslim communities in Yorubaland. The prominent ones among them include Ansar ud-Deen Society of Nigeria (AUD), Jam'iyyatu Nasirullahi Al-Fatih (NASFAT), and Anasarul-Islam Society of Nigeria. Nawairudeen Society of Nigeria, Al-Fatih 'l-Quareeb Islamic Society of Nigeria. Islahudeen Society of Nigeria and many more. Each of these societies used to meet on every Sunday for their *Asalatu* activities, which include recitation of different forms of *adhkar*, lectures, charity activities, and counselling, among others. They provide an avenue for average Muslims to uplift their spiritual standards. They are therefore held in high esteem by Muslims in Yorubaland. In fact, an account of Islam in Yorubaland without a particular reference to them is far from perfect. Muslim societies have recorded many landmark achievements both in the private and public lives of Muslims. They are the key players in the education, economic, social, political, and spiritual development of the Muslims in the land. They are the first to establish a school around 1920 to curb the influence of Christianity, which used education for proselytization (Oloyede). At the point of their weekly *Asalatu* and other activities, they recite the Qur'an in congregation while many of them are not in a state of purity. Many without ablution, while many cannot pronounce the letters and words of the Qur'an appropriately. The prayer books, which contained verses of the Qur'an, are roughly handled by many of the members and, in some instances, kept in unclean places. They reduced many verses of the Qur'an to song and at times accompanied it with drum and other musical instruments.

### viii. Abuse of the Qur'an by Yoruba Muslim Musicians

The Yoruba Muslims are noted for their Islamic songs. These are songs that are thought to be composed for preaching and showcasing the beauty of the religion, but, out of ignorance of the musicians, they ran afoul of many Islamic rules. The Yoruba Muslim musicians could be divided into three. Namely, those who have rudimentary knowledge of Islam and are not found wanting in their music career. Some of them include, but are not limited to, Ayeloyun, Apaonle Anabi, Wasiu Kayode Sodi, Ibrahim Labaika, Saoti Arewa, and Abdullahi Akinbode, who later became the Chief Missioner of NASFAT before founding his own organization, Jama'at Ahlullahi in Lagos. Some of these musicians have *Idaddiyyah*, *Thanawiyyah*, Diploma, and even a Degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies. However, in recent times, there is a new tune among the Madrasah as some students of Markaz Agege released some musical lines revealing the distortion of the Qur'an. They sing :

هو نور الله حتما

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ أَدَمَ

فيه كل شيء علما

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مَرْكَزِ

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كان مصباحا ونجما

هو نور فوق نور

Has there ever come to you the story of (Sheikh) Adam  
Who was indeed the light of Allah.

Has there ever come to you the news of Markaz  
Where lies everything (called) knowledge and scholarship  
It is indeed light upon light  
It is also a lamp and a star.

The stanza is coined from different verses of the Qur'an to praise the Markaz. Some of the verses include Q20:9, An-Naziyah, 14 Musa, Adhariyyah, and 24 Ibrahim's visitors. Buruj 17 Junud, Al-Ghashiyyah and Q.24:35 of the Glorious Qur'an.

In the second category is the class of the Yoruba Muslim musicians who do not have adequate and requisite knowledge of Islam. Many of them have mixed their music with Fuji, which is originally a Yoruba Music version. They openly overran and violated the rules of Islam, especially the free mixing of the opposite sex who are crew members. The third is the category of Muslims who are singers, like Fuji, Rege, hip hop, and the like, but wanted to prove their being Muslims or their knowledge of Islam, thereby abusing the Qur'an by inserting verses of the Qur'an into their songs. Some of the instances are Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister in his record "Precautions", where he sings:

*Isa Sama'u Kubura, a i gbin alubosa ko wu efo...*

There are many instances where the Yoruba Muslims abuse the Qur'ān in their activities, such as adapting the meaning of the Qur'ānic text to their local language. An instance is: *Idha As-Sama' kuburay: oB.O. ti aba gbin ni ama kere* (you will reap what you sow). This is an adaptation from Q.82:1, 81:1. إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ. (Yakeen, 2009) Another one is *Walikariatu* (you face the consequences alone) from الْقَارِعَةُ Q.101:1. In another instance, the verse of the Qur'ān is mixed with the song.

Anot. Her instance is that of Saheed Osupa, "Barabation", where he sings:

*Qala Rabuka Lil Malaikatun, Ini Jahilun Fil-Ardi Khalifata*

From this song, he has distorted Q.2:30, where Allah spoke to a group of angels. Apart from grammatical errors and violations of vocalisation rules, Osupa removed *Wa idhi* but started from *Qala*.

There is also Sayi Vibes, whose original name is Abdul-Mujib. In his album entitled: *Kunfayakun*. He sings that ...*Ikotun, Egbe, Agege won ki fe fogo*

*Onye ma yebo, Omape Ori e ofero*  
*Faya Kun, Kun Faya kun*

The *kun fayakun*, which is the title of the album, is a verse of the Qur'an, and it appears in the Glorious Book in about eight (8) places. It has no relevance whatsoever to the song, but he made it the title to prove that he is a Muslim who reads the Qur'an. And most importantly, to pull markets in his favour, he is aware that Muslims are the most song listeners among the Yoruba and the

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majority of his fans. In another album, he also proved his being a Muslim with a vast knowledge of the Qur'an, when he states:

*Fawajada Abdan,  
Osapa lodo Kodgan  
Ya Muhyia, Ya Lateef*

The first line is a verse of the Qur'an from *Surah Kahf* Q.18:65. It has no relevance or meaning to where and how he used it. The same goes for when he reads Alif Lam Min from the Qur'an in his song, just because of the rhyme and rhythm. He sings:

*Alif Lam Min  
Oje Ma samin  
Funmi Lowo Iya Jamin...*

There is also Olamide, who also sings on his album titled *Sometimes*

*Rabbana Atina Fiduniyyah Hasanat..... Wa qina Hasaba Nah  
Mioseni Gbana  
Audhu billahi Mina Shaytan Rajim  
Eruiku ti Gberu Sara bi eni ti olo Jim*

The *Na* and *Jim* are indications that what interests him was the rhythm and the rhyme of those verses with the song he wants to put across. There are many other instances of such from Sayi Vibes and other Yoruba Musicians who are Yoruba.

## **7. Conclusion**

The study demonstrates that Qur'anic abuse among Yoruba Muslims is neither random nor accidental; it is a by-product of historical hybridity, inadequate Islamic literacy, entrenched cultural expectations, and the unchecked authority of clerics who blend spiritual consultancy with commercialised ritualism. From *hantu* writing and formulaic divinations to misinterpretations by Sufi esoterics, Salafi literalists, *Jalabi* practitioners, and even popular musicians, the sanctity of the Qur'an is compromised in ways that distort its message and weaken its spiritual function. The challenge is therefore systemic. Correcting these abuses requires a multidimensional response: strengthening Qur'anic education at the community level, enforcing methodological discipline in interpretation, curbing the commercialisation of devotional practices, re-orienting Muslim societies toward knowledge-based worship, and confronting cultural practices that masquerade as Islamic. Ultimately, safeguarding the Qur'an demands that Yoruba Muslims reposition the text as a guide for transformation rather than a tool for magic, commerce, or entertainment. Restoring textual integrity is not only a theological obligation but a strategic imperative for the future of Islam in Yorubaland.

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