

***JÁLÀBÍ* PRACTICE OF MUSLIM CLERICS AND THE
HERMENEUTICS OF PRAYER COMMODIFICATION IN
IBADAN, NIGERIA**

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the memories of my late father, MUDASIRU Salami Olasupo Akande JOGUNOSINMI of Jogunosinmi Dynasty, Oja'ba, Ibadan, and my late uncle Pa Abdul-Rahman Oyedokun Isatola (Baba Tailor) of Isatola Compound, Oppo Yeosa, Ibadan for their vision. May Almighty Allah forgive all their shortcomings and grant them admittance with eternal bliss in *Jannatul Firdaus (Ameen)*.

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ABSTRACT

Jálàbí, the Islamic petitionary prayer is deployed by Muslim clerics to render spiritual services to individuals and groups in a manner that forges a transactional relationship between the parties. Existing anthropological studies of everyday religious experiences have focused more on the dynamics of the “prayer economy” rather than the hermeneutics of such engagements, including *Jálàbí*. This study was, therefore, designed to explore the practices of *Jálàbí*, in Ibadan, a city with a considerably large Muslim population, with a view to determining the cultural meanings embedded in commodified prayers.

Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Cultural Hermeneutics and Kitiarsa Pattana’s Religious Commodification Theory were adopted as the framework, while the ethnographic design was used. Qualitative data were obtained through participant observation, interview of 86 informants randomly selected at locations of Islamic events, and in-depth interview of 10 *Oníjálàbí* clerics who were purposively selected based on their long years of experience in *Jálàbí*, practice, advanced age, and pedigree in the Ibadan Muslim community. Data were analysed using the ethnographic description.

Jálàbí practice in Ibadan was borne out of historical and pragmatic considerations that enabled the intervention of Islamic spirituality to contribute to the development of the city. The practice manifests in different religious functions and events such as naming ceremonies (*‘aqīqah*), *Fidāu* (funeral) prayers, *Walīmatu-khatmil Qur’ān* (*Qur’ān* graduation ceremonies), Islamic chieftaincy honours, and individual’s everyday quest for success and security. Meanings embedded in commodified petitionary prayers are engendered by the material forms through which *Oníjálàbí* operationalise (*istikhārah*, *Khatim Waqf*, *Ilmul Falaky* or *akosejaye*, and *Qira’āti Subhah*, among others) and the ethos of reciprocity and gratification that underlies the practice. *Jálàbí*, practice accords to prayer the same significance as food, which nourishes the human body and hence constitutes an item to be purchased with money. In *Jálàbí*, prayer is an important path to accessing Allah’s favour that requires monetary gratification for efficacy and prompt response. Moreover, the money given as *Sadaqah* (free-will alms), is a catalyst that not only facilitates easy access to connect with Allah but also acts as security and protection from evil attacks and other misfortunes. In naming ceremonies, monetary donations made by the congregation in exchange for petitionary prayers are meant to literally buy *barakah* (divine blessings) for the newborn baby. Money collected during *Qur’ān* graduation ceremonies (*Walīmatu-khatmil Qur’ān*) is interpreted in the context of fees paid for knowledge acquisition and a way of giving back to the clerics. *Jálàbí*, prayer intercessions are equated with traditional native medicines whose value and effectiveness are believed to be proportional to the amount expended.

The commodification involved in the petitionary prayer of the *Oníjálàbí* and their clients (religious consumers) goes beyond economic transactions in Ibadan, Nigeria. It also illustrates the spiritual values which people placed on prayers as human security and a weapon against earthly principalities in a precarious state.

Keywords: *Oníjálàbí*, Prayer commodification, Petitionary Prayers, human security, Ibadan

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GLOSSARY

<i>Halāl</i>	Permitted or permissible act
<i>Harām</i>	Forbidden or Not Permitted
<i>Ijmā</i>	Consensus
<i>Jihad</i>	Effort or Struggle (on behalf of Islam)
<i>Purdah (Eleha)</i>	Female seclusion
<i>Sunnah</i>	Legally binding precedent established by the rulings of the <i>Qu'rân</i> and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
<i>Surah</i>	Chapter of the <i>Qu'rân</i>
<i>Āyat</i>	Verse of the <i>Qu'rân</i>
<i>Tafsīr</i>	Exegesis of the <i>Qu'rân</i>
<i>Ulamā</i> (Sing: 'alim)	Islamic/Muslim Scholar
Ummah	Muslim Community
<i>Zakāt</i>	Religious alms, thus alms tax
<i>Sadaqah</i> (Arabic) or Sara (Yoruba)	Free-will Almsgiving
<i>Tauda</i>	Reciting Special Prayer in Arabic to an object or item.
<i>Alfa</i>	Muslim clerics/actors among the Yoruba people
<i>Shaykh/ Marabout</i>	French term from Arabic (<i>murābit</i>) applied to Muslim religious clerics, revered for their special powers.
<i>Báálè</i>	Community head among Yoruba, South-west, Nigeria
<i>Mógàjí</i>	Family head among Yoruba, South-west, Nigeria
<i>Istikhārah</i>	Special Prayer for seeking Allah's Guidance and blessing
<i>Salāt</i>	Five Daily Muslim Prayers
<i>Du'ā</i>	Muslim supplication prayer to seek Allah's favour.
<i>Tahajjud</i>	<i>Muslim Night Prayer</i>
<i>Àsàlátù</i>	Praise Worship
<i>Laylat al-Qadir</i>	The last ten days in the month of Ramadan, the "Night of Majesty"

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

In Islamic tradition, prayer is regarded as the expression of religious consciousness in which a Muslim puts himself into relation with God most simply and directly. Prayer is considered the greatest and most affirmative pillar of the religion. It takes at least two forms, the *Salāt*, which is a ritual prayer, and the *du'ā*, a formal or informal supplication (Yücel, 2010). *Salat* is one of the pillars of Islam, and a religious process that involves specific bodily movements and invocations. It is performed five times daily. On the other hand, *du'ā* is seen as “a form of the deep feeling humankind towards the creator for their needs” (Dogan, 1997) and asking God earnestly from the heart and in silence (Canan, 1993). The word *du'ā* refers to the act of “calling out” and applies to any invocation. In the *Qur'ân*, it is defined as a form of worship (10:106), a means of asking for aid (2:23), God’s call to humans (17:52), and praise to God (17: 101).

According to Yücel (2010), the characteristics common to the four definitions are the conceptualisation of *du'ā* as a form of communication between a person and God. Thus, it is more specifically used to refer to petitionary prayers or supplication (Katz, 2013). Muslim daily prayers are a kind of formal prayer that symbolises the meaning of true worship, integrating the Muslim into a rhythm of universal adoration. Islam makes a distinction between some types of prayer that are informal and private (Javaheri, 2006). Above all, prayer represents an attempt to communicate with the supernatural (Stack and Finke, 2000), as well as self and others (Ladd and Spilka, 2003; 2006).

In the Yoruba society, in southwest Nigeria, prayers are rituals that have embodied the cultural landscape of everyday life, with the intensity of ritual performance and social

application that has penetrated through and shaped its content and rites in alleviating human anxiety, and enhancing a sense of purpose, has grown significantly. Muslim clerics, in this regard, have played a huge social and cultural role in the Yoruba community, and still constitute part of the community actors, that are most familiar with the questions of human existence required to construct and deconstruct narratives of everyday life as a vital aspect of religion. Whereas the societal perception of Islamic prayers as highly efficacious and effective also prepared the ground for the proliferation and emergence of many highly influential Muslim clerics, as religious entrepreneurs all around Yoruba communities. It is also a truism among them that the individual is immersed in religious participation that starts before birth and continues after death, and "to live is to be caught up in a religious drama" (Mbiti, 1999). In other words, the individual is solely responsible and must choose to change his life. Thus, religion in this respect attempt to create the fulfillment of the self, positive thinking, the pursuit of happiness, and self-realisation with spirituality.

However, among the Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria, the act of deploying and rendering Islamic petitionary prayers (*du'ā*) to individuals and groups in a manner that forges transactional relationships between the parties is known as *Jálàbí*. The *du'ā* is more of instrumental prayer practice that provides a critical function that relates to an indigenous culture in which prayer life is quite natural. *Jálàbí* practice within this context connotes the attachment of spirituality to the lifeworld and is characterised by eliciting the help of the divine realms to assuage the existential threats and challenges confronting people in their everyday life. *Jálàbí* is therefore an assemblage of religious practices, beliefs, ideas, and interpretations of reality that can enact pragmatic change, which in the end, could bring about spiritual redemption on everyday matters, as people struggle to attain personhood, achieve success, and meaningfulness in life. Whereas some Nigerians and Yoruba people perceived the feeling of existential challenges and insecurity about their everyday life more than the dread of a disastrous world event.

The petitionary clerics, known as *Alfa Oníjálàbí* among the Yoruba ethnicity of southwest Nigeria render contractual religious services to individual members of the community. These services respond to and satisfy people's spiritual needs and address their everyday problems. The Muslim clerics in this category are seen as "locus of power" and with "a coterie of clients" who seek spiritual solutions to existential threats and other

mundane problems. Consequently, by rendering petitionary prayers, the *Oníjálàbí* fosters confidence and a sense of immunity from the fear of evils, poverty, misfortunes, and spiritual attacks that are deeply rooted among Nigerians and Africans. *Alfa Oníjálàbí* thus creates a modern religious consumer culture, through petitionary prayers, which helps them handle and reduce life anxieties, and worries rise and bring upon the fortunes of life.

Using petitionary prayers as a primal spirituality, the task of explaining the complexity of the world and finding meaning to existential questions becomes less difficult and it is a way of resisting the prevailing negative social order. This logically implies how religion continues to provide meaning and intertwine daily social, economic, and political activities. In other words, the Muslim clerics engage with religious practices and beliefs and push back against corrosive forces to create lives and livelihoods in the face of social and economic uncertainty (Haynes, 2013) as a moment of everyday life. Indeed, a core function of religious beliefs may be to provide existential security by addressing their concerns (Batson and Stocks, 2004). Accordingly, ‘having too little to eat, feeling unsafe from crime at home, being scared and afraid to lose one’s job, and having a bad state of health, among many others, demand careful consideration for patronising *Oníjálàbí*.

In the wake of a dramatic intersection and affinity between religious practices and everyday life, the logic of the capitalist free market has shaped the activities and engagement of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to carve a space. Petitionary prayer becomes a point of distinction, commodified so that religious consumers might be targeted and favoured. Undoubtedly, this could be described as an era principally characterised and branded by the hegemony of globalisation and neoliberalism. Without any doubt, one can argue that this Islamic practice is taking a more commodified form, in which clerics offer petitionary prayers as an instrument or product for public consumption in an ever-expanding spiritual marketplace. Indeed, it is a moment shaped by the ethos of reciprocity and gratification as the underlying tenet that initiates new forms of cultural production. Therefore, the commodification of prayers has gradually become the mediating connection between the *Oníjálàbí* and the religious consumers in the contemporary religious sphere which enables the religious consumers (clients) to soothe and assuage themselves in confronting everyday human predicaments and challenges. In other words, people’s patronage, and relationship with *Oníjálàbí* plays a crucial role in easing their life decisions and other misfortunes and

miseries. More significantly, as this relationship shapes people's worldview and perception of everyday life, it makes them ignore, even other instructions, claiming that it is only their *Jálàbí* cleric that has authority over their life decisions.

In multiple ways, the *Oníjálàbí* identified the most specific iteration of spiritual practices and its techniques of petitionary prayers to (re)invent culture that constitutes a creative, powerful, and imaginative gesture of coping and survival into a consumable commodity to take chance in situations of uncertainty. Given the demand for petitionary prayer as a solution to many life problems, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* adopts the maxim of “pay to pray” to create a clientelistic relationship with people that seek their services. The exchange system that is implied tallies with the Yoruba dictum “*ògùn tá fowó se, èyìn àrò ló'ngbé*”, meaning that a medicine that is not paid for is rarely valued. Seemingly, the commodification of Islamic spirituality makes sense within a neoliberal ethos, wherein there is emphasis upon financial gains and profit appears to have created an opportunity for them to build upon their Islamic and cultural capital. Thus, *Jálàbí* has to be understood within the context of evolving socio-economic situation, and reality which illustrates how this class of Muslim clerics, wields significantly more political and economic power in society.

Given how drastically the social landscape of Nigeria has been transformed over the years, *du'ā* as petitionary prayers and seeking of divine abundant blessings (*barakah*) has gradually pushed the *Oníjálàbí* to emerge as religious entrepreneur that offers spiritual commodities, which is reinforced by the ethos of reciprocity. This embodied practice is underlined by material exchange or monetary gratification, known as *Sadaqah* (alms dictated by free will) or *Ìtore-ànú* in the Yoruba lexicon, and *sara* among Hausa Muslims. *Sadaqah* is understood as the pathway that opens the portal to the invisible realm and facilitates the quick materialisation of people's prayer request. Thus, it is the material exchanges, and it is a value that opens the door for prayers to manifest in the physical world.

Building on this, the belief is that the higher and more valuable the *Sadaqah* is, the better and quicker the materialisation of the prayer. Although, the material exchange or monetary gratification is given to the cleric, the giver (religious consumer or client) does not expect the reward from the cleric, but from the Almighty Allah, who symbolically answers prayers. Therefore, *sadaqah* is thought to bridge the gap between the visible and invisible

world, as the power of the petitionary prayer signifies a state of thriving and flourishing material abundance for the mutual benefits of the parties.

Meanwhile, it was within the social space of commodification ethos that the material exchanges and gratifications gestures are considered as divine payback to the clerics, and thus a mode of “trading with Allah”. This latter momentum is an expression mostly used among the *Oníjálàbí* to stimulate people to shower larger gifts on them. The divine payback is, therefore, a strategic means of showing gratitude to the clerics, according to the dictate of free-will alms, spiritually perceived to shield givers and their families from evil attacks and assure them of divine abundant blessings from God. Significantly, this defining moment creates an embedded form of negotiated interactions and the contractual relationship between religious clerics and consumers. In other words, *Jálàbí* practices place prayers in the same realm as food that nourishes the human body and an item to be purchased guarantee security.

While neoliberalism as conceptualised in this study is an all-persuasive ideology that provides impetus to how *Oníjálàbí* commodified petitionary prayers, religious expressions, and symbolism to satisfy human desires. Thus, *Sadaqah* is not only the act of giving back to the religious cleric and trading with Allah but also acts as a catalyst that facilitates easy access to Allah’s favour and mercy and acts as protection from evil attacks and other misfortunes. In other words, *Sadaqah*, as material gratification represents the key that opens the portal to the invisible realm and facilitates the timely materialisation of the prayer. For *Alfa Oníjálàbí* on the other hand, despite the power of the prayer, its result would remain latent and un-manifested, when *Sadaqah* is not observed during petition prayer. Thus, it is both the path road and open door towards the transcendent realm that allows manifestation of prayer in the physical world. Therefore, the larger, and more valuable the gratification is, the bigger and quickest the result of the petitionary prayer. It thus functions to attract divine grace and mercy; reinforce by a prayer; redress a sin; or conjure a potential danger.

Similarly, the forms of exchange and gift-giving, which occur in *Jálàbí* practice can easily be misunderstood especially in the context of spatiotemporal configuration of a polity that is undergoing pervasive socio-economic restructuring. Rather, it should be seen largely as critical expression of appreciation, gratefulness, and gratification to the clerics in

an economic deprivation moment. The exchanges can also be seen as indicative of self-made, and deeply capitalist imaginaries. Schieke (2012) describes capitalism as a particular “mode of subjectivity and sociality”, a mode focused on benefits. In other words the everyday life, he argues, is increasingly dominated by the future, be it through promises concerning this world or the afterlife. It was in the context of “concern for the fine details of maximising reward” to a “more general vision of the human condition that privileges profit as a paradigmatic motivation and outcome of action”. Prayer commodification then seems to be a product of dynamics associated with neoliberalism, with Islam encouraging the intervention and interpenetration of spirituality as something that has “use-value and that can be exchanged in a distinct transaction” (Kopytoff, 2014). For Igor Kopytoff (2014), commodities must not only be produced materially as things but also culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing, which reveals a moral economy that stands behind the objective economy of visible transactions. Likewise, this further suggests that *Jálàbí* practice is a vital cultural phenomenon, which possesses symbolic interpretation and meanings that transcend beyond simple transactional value and repetitive performance through which people negotiate and seek divine intervention and protection on their social reality.

Drawing attention to the most specific and recent iteration of doctrinal forms and expressive modes through which *Jálàbí* is performed, which also validate the belief in the Islamic spirituality as a mechanism of world ordering and accessing the divine blessings (*Baraka*) in people’s lives, livelihood, well-being, and future. Critically, the point is that we cannot sufficiently grasp contemporary human lifeworld and social reality if we do not understand the culture and influence of religion and religious production of knowledge in managing society and people.

This study has explored cultural meanings embodied in *Jálàbí* practice and how this is portrayed as human security and means of soothing and assuaging existential realities that are intricately bound up in all sectors of everyday life. It thus reveals how religious practice continues to respond to modernity and change, within the condition of ‘epistemic anxiety’, as well as contribute to our understanding of both transactional elements of everyday activities of the Muslim clerics in a contemporary context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Existing anthropological studies on everyday religious experiences have focused extensively on the dynamics of the “prayer economy” (Last, 1988). These studies explore a process of commodification in which prayer takes the form of a paid-for experience (Last, 1988, Peel 2000, Agnew, 2003, Soares 2005, Abioje 2011). Interestingly, many of the previous explanations of prayer commodification have emphasised only the aspect of creative practices by which clerics engage in transactional exchanges with clients, ignoring the hermeneutics of such engagements, and therefore, obscure its potential multiple meaning-making. This study follows the post-hermeneutic framework, which could evaluate a neglected cultural side of *Jálàbí* practice, as the performance of the Muslim self (clerics).

Mahmood (2005), while describing the range of scholarly works in Islam, has captured what he describes as “a general tendency to analyse Islamic traditions in terms of the practical and conceptual resources they offer to its adherents, and the pragmatic as well as spiritual experience of closeness to God.” It is within this notion of petitionary prayer as a cultural practical and conceptual instrument that its commodification becomes particularly instructive. One, therefore, should be interested not just in the process or processes that produced petitionary prayers as a transactional exchange in which money and gratification play a crucial role but also in the meanings that are engendered by such acts.

Despite the pervasiveness of *Jálàbí* as a form of weapon and instrument against extant reality, this practice that reverberates through the cultural landscape in Nigeria and beyond has not received enough scholarly attention. For instance, beyond the face value of monetary exchanges, how else can the transactions between *Oníjálàbí* and their clients be interpreted? How do religious consumers make sense of the money given to *Oníjálàbí* in exchange for the services rendered? In which ways have the services of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* (re)defined folks’ interpretation of Islamic spiritual entrepreneurs’ commodification of *du’ā* have any effect on the traditional relationship that exists between clerics and the laity? It is these and other questions that are crucial to probing and understanding the spiritual values of petitionary prayers (*duā*: supplication) of *Oníjálàbí* that makes one think about their cultural and social productivity, within the narrative of spiritual insecurity in a context of widespread poverty, hardship, and violence that often obstruct human progress.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

This study aims to explore the practices of *Jálàbí* in Ibadan with a view to determine meanings embedded in commodified prayers. From this central aim, the following specific objectives are derived:

1. To examine the socio-historical trajectories of *Jálàbí* practice in Ibadan
2. To examine the *Jálàbí* performance in the context of the Islamic culture of *D'ā* and the embedded hermeneutics in the Yoruba culture of prayer
3. To probe into the way a notion of spiritual capital and human security is framed in commodification practices.
4. To explore the different ways in which everyday spiritual engagements of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* constitute human security to religious consumers (transactional exchange)

1.4 Significance of the Study

The theoretical relevance and premises of this study are in the field of social Anthropology, situated within the discourse of Islam and Muslim cultures in Nigeria. Among the three major religions practiced in the southwest part of the country, it is interesting to know that both traditional Yoruba religion and Christianity are well-developed studies of the field. However, Islam among Yoruba – half of whom are estimated to be Muslims – is curiously understudied. In other words, this study is designed to further enrich the literature on Islam from an African content, especially as it concerns the religion among the Yoruba, which is integral to the broader Muslim world, as a necessary move to understand the full complexity of religious practice in postcolonial Nigeria.

A critical look at the sociological and anthropological studies of Islam and Muslim cultures in Nigeria in the past few decades reveals that the research interests have focused on new religious movements in Islam, the therapeutic value of Islamic prayers, and the political features of Islam, ignoring issues of everyday cultural practices among Muslim clerics and adherents of the faith. The significance of this study, therefore, lies primarily in the contribution it will make to the anthropology of religion (Islam) in Nigeria.

This study sheds fresh light on the complex mediating roles that *Jálàbí* plays in the interpretation and understanding of what petitionary prayers mean in people's everyday lives

in contemporary Yoruba society. By directing its gaze at an issue bordering on inventive and creative practices within Islam, this work reinforces earlier conclusions about the dynamism and flexibility of Islamic practices to local conditions and cultural specificities. Within this framework, this study is also a departure from the limited inquiry of the political features of Islam and the radicalisation of Muslim youth to focus on the ways religious practitioners (*Onijálàbi*) ‘live’ religion and how their ways of ‘living’ religion shape and affect each other culturally and socially in the community. It also contributes to the recent body of research works on the anthropology of religion (Islam) by complicating approaches that emphasize the coherence and continuity of the Islam and Muslim cultures, as we focus on the material culture as an expression of contemporary context.

Moreover, this study is also significant in terms of its focus. Existing studies on Islam in Nigeria, and especially among the Yoruba, have largely followed a historical approach. This work would also be significant on account of the ethnographic method that was adopted. This approach helps us to gain first-hand data on how the creative skills and inventive practices of Muslim clerics have redefined Muslim’s understanding of *du’ā* with its appealing influence as petitions made to Allah to mediate with the divine realm. Theoretically, the study propels the emerging literature on Islamic practice by delineating the diverse ways and methods Muslim clerics draw upon and interpret Arabic textual sources in their work.

Likewise, the study explores the way religion in everyday life is performance mediated. In essence, the study is a valuable contribution to the theoretical debates about the effect, embodiment, religion entrepreneurship, and the making of religions in public life in the contemporary Yoruba landscape. It also provides fresh insights and a rare window for understanding the relationship between modernity, capitalism, and the Islamic religious tradition within the constantly shifting cultural boundaries.

Mbiti (1975) once asserted that prayer is the most basic and widespread religious activity among African people and that it is in this dimension that the authenticity and range of African religious experience may be tested elsewhere. In most religions, apart from prayer being observed in a group, it is mostly seen as an individual concern. A major facet of prayer examined in existing studies has been its therapeutic value. In this study, research attention is devoted to how prayer is constituted into a commercial article solicited and paid

for by clients. This dimension of prayer and activities of Muslim clerics is novel and tends toward a commercialisation ethos. Similarly, this research is significant to the extent that it highlights the ability of religious groups to provide symbols and practices that transcend fixed notions of place and identities. In this case, it establishes a quest for spiritual satisfaction and the religious identity of the adherents. This is because ‘religion has been argued to be a coping mechanism in the face of a holistic environment’. The finding of this study would be useful for researchers who wish to gain deeper insights into a critical, but often neglected, aspect of being Yoruba.

Finally, this study is a major contribution to the discourse and study of the Anthropology of Islam in West Africa. The findings will be found useful by scholars in Cultural Studies, Humanities, Development Studies, Social Sciences, and African Studies. It will also be of great value to individuals and Islamic theologians, especially those interested in studying the changes in the religion that are often associated with the different cultural contexts in which the religion is practiced. Lastly, to scholars who are interested in intersubjective identities like historical memory, religion, and cultural values and beliefs and their relationship to peacebuilding, conflict resolution, human security, and development outcomes.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Three categories of clerics (*Alfa*) are recognised in the Islamic tradition of the Yoruba people. These are *Oníwàsí* (preachers), *Akómoníkéú* (teachers), and *Oníjálàbi* (petitionary). This study is, however, limited to the activities of *Oníjálàbi*. Islam is widely practiced in Yoruba land, and *Oníjálàbi*, as such, is found across major towns and villages. However, the study was conducted in Ibadan in Oyo State. The city is known to have large Muslim adherents and is marked by different forms of diversity.

The practice of people presenting gifts to religious clerics in exchange for prayers and blessings, which Last (1988) and Soares (2005) have aptly described as “the prayer economy” is well known and has been documented. While this work is located within the broad theme of prayer economy, it will, nevertheless, in terms of focus move away from the “big” Islamic leaders also known as *Shaykh* and *Shehu*, which Soares studied to concentrate on less-known clerics who either operate as individuals or as a group.

Commodification in this study will be applied in the context of monetary and non-monetary payments made and received in exchange for prayer.

As Agnew (2003) argued “the power of the commodification process lies in its ability to convert “all of life” itself into a “paid for experience”. In this study, commodification is implied in the interaction between *Oníjálàbi* and their clients as well as monetary exchange and non-monetary payments made and received as gratification. The meanings of every exchange transcend the economic transaction and illustrate the value which people placed on prayer as a human security and weapon against earthly principalities. However, prevailing economic hardships have led to conscious efforts of clerics to make a livelihood out of their spiritual capital and their emergence as religious entrepreneurs.

In this study, I do not propose to examine Islamic beliefs, doctrines, creeds, or traditions per se, rather I focus on the lived religion and practice that arise frequently and roll over into public spheres. Finally, there are two types of prayers in Islam as earlier enunciated in the study background. The focus of this study will be on *du'ā* which are petitionary prayers and supplications made to Allah.

1.6 The Study Area

Ibadan is the capital of Oyo State, and the centre of the political, cultural, and economic life of the Southwest people of Nigeria. Popularly regarded as being founded by refugees and freebooters during the internecine Yoruba wars of the nineteenth century. Ibadan is the third most populous city in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano, with an estimated population of about three million people (NPC, 2006). Its large population goes back to its early history of urbanisation when it emerged as the convergence point for people displaced by the 18th and 19th centuries Yoruba civil wars (Mabogunje, 1962). By the 1890s, it was the centre of an economic and military empire encompassing around one-third of the total area of Yorubaland and more than half the population (Udo, 1982). After World War II, the city served as the commercial nerve of the Cocoa Belt of Southwestern Nigeria and an important bulk-braking and marketing point in livestock and agricultural trade linking northern and southern Nigeria. In 1939, Ibadan became an administrative centre for British colonial rule and, later, regional and state headquarters (Waterman,

1999). At independence, Ibadan was the largest and the most populous city in Nigeria and the third in Africa after Cairo and Johannesburg. As of 1982, Ibadan spread across an area of about 130 square kilometers (Areola, 1982).

By the twentieth century, Ibadan had become a complex and cosmopolitan city, as a web of political events in the city also became deeper and more complicated. According to Mabogunje (1969), the political and cultural traditions of Ibadan distinguish it from other Yoruba Kingdoms. It was from the beginning a cosmopolitan centre, a 'frontier town' composed of Yoruba from many different subgroups. Immigrations of various non-Ibadan Yoruba and non-Yoruba peoples, particularly since the early 1930s, have contributed to the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of Ibadan. It is nonetheless still a Yoruba metropolis. At one time a city-state, the adoption of egalitarian and republican conduct of public affairs enhanced Ibadan's gradual growth into a mega-city blessed with a continuum of great descendants imbued with the heritage of prowess and excellence in chosen fields of human endeavour (Falola, 2013).

Over the early centuries of its existence, Ibadan rapidly attracted settlers in the form of merchants, and then scholars from the Sahara oases. Although the actual date for the arrival of Islam could not be ascertained, it has been put around 1830 when a few Muslims could be identified in the city. According to oral tradition, the religion was introduced by an Imam called *Gunnugun* or *Igun Olorun*. Notable among the early adherents were great scholars like Uthman Abubakr Basunu 1 and Ahmed Qifu, who both later became Chief Imams of Ibadan respectively (Abbas, 2003). According to the oral accounts, *Alfa* Ahmed Qifu came to Ibadan during the reign of Oluyedun, who was said to be a grandson of one of the Alaafin of Oyo, while Abubakr Uthman Basunu 1 arrived during the reign of Bashorun Oluyole. He was of Katsina extraction. Islam found favour with the local leaders of Ibadan and entrenched itself among them before the arrival of Christianity. Instead of this, *Jálàbí* like *Wá`àsí* (preaching), is a preeminent aspect of Islamic practice among the Yoruba, and its practice is essential in the city of Ibadan.

Ibadan is regarded as the Yoruba centre for Islamic knowledge (after Ilorin) that has impacted many other Yoruba towns and cities through the contributions of its religious scholars (*ulama'*) who served as teachers, admonishers, and petitioners. Flowing from the history of the city, the spread of Islam in Ibadan was influenced by the war situation, which

gave occasion for the service of *Alfas* for esoteric powers. It was within this historical trajectory that the very existence of *Alfa Oníjálàbi* can be situated. While as a cosmopolitan city, Ibadan embodies the contradictions of the Nigerian society, containing an assortment of Nigerians and other nationals from diverse social and economic classes, and enmeshed in the numerous challenges (hunger, security, infrastructure, employment, etc.), which typify an average Nigerian metropolis.

It is therefore not the only representative of the space of Islamic spirituality but also constitutes the appropriate setting for investigating issues connected with human security, well-being, and development, among other social challenges. Hence, the city of Ibadan became the lens through which we examine the localisation of meaning and transformation of culture and religious forms of interpretation in the maintenance of religious clientele. The city is regarded as the melting point of Yoruba culture. The indigenous districts (*Agbolé-ilé*: lineage compound) of the city provide the major source of patronage for the service of *Oníjálàbi*. The *Agbolé-ilé* is made up of close kin and relatives, and each *Agbolé-ilé* mostly has its own Mosque and Imams. This lineage-based system provides avenues for training young Muslims in the clerical lineage. Thus, in the cultural and social sphere, Ibadan was also regarded as the hub of Nigeria's intellectual productivity.

In this account, this ethnographic study contributes to our understanding of the religious sphere, particularly how the commodification of Islamic practice affects their overall human well-being and livelihood. It shows how Muslim clerics translate and live the experience of putting Islam to work. It achieves this goal by focusing on the trajectories of individual *Onijalabi* Muslim clerics, their strategies, spiritual engagements, and everyday activities, expansion of the geography of the Islamic ritual, and the meaning going to the sermon acquires within this context. Here in Ibadan, and elsewhere in Yoruba communities, the Islamic petitionary prayer recitations and patronage have become a vibrant space in which everyday spiritualities and religiosity is constituted through various plethora practices, doctrinals, and values to a broader religious consumer.

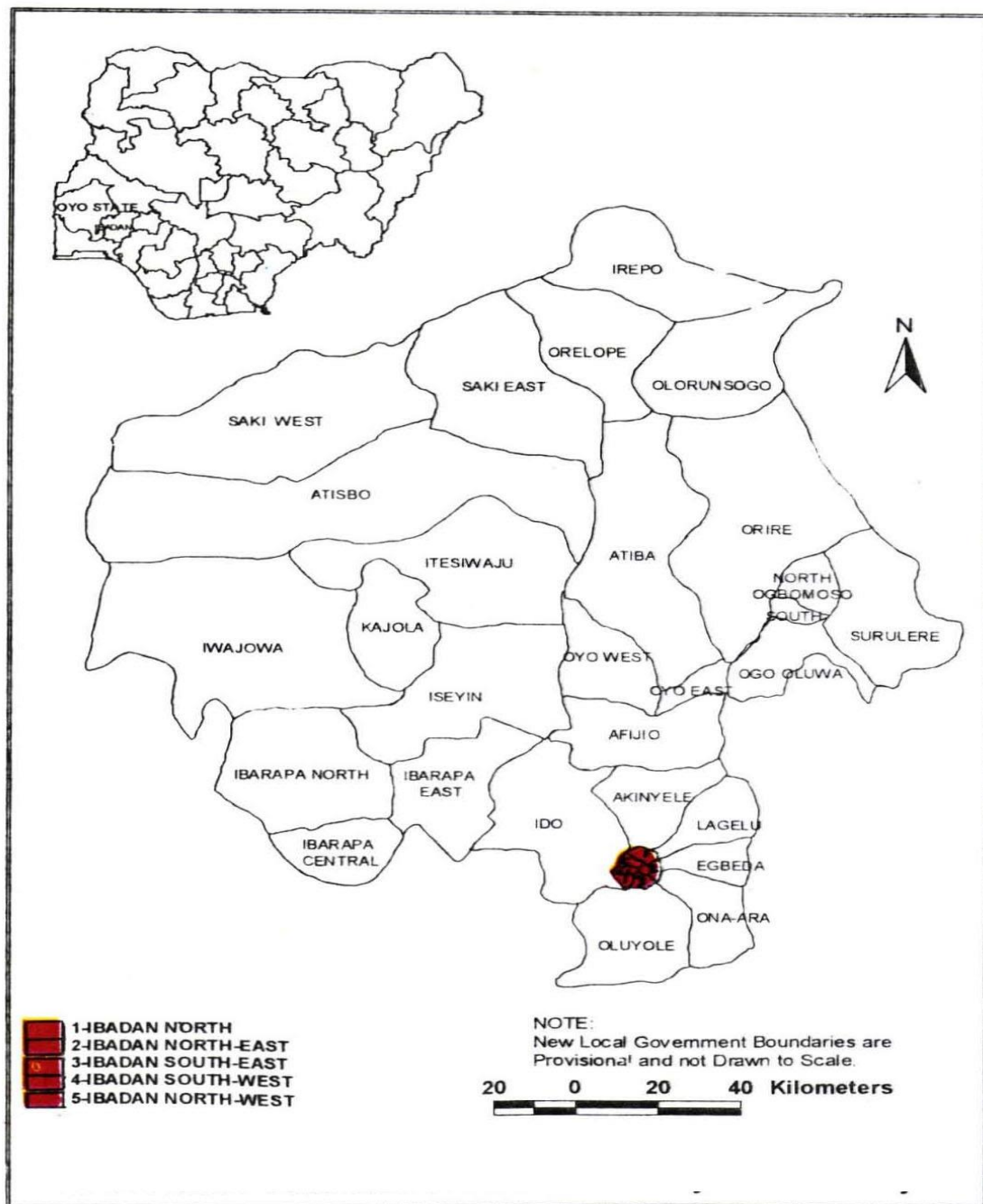


Figure 1.1: Map of Oyo State showing Ibadan Local Government Areas

Source: Google 2016

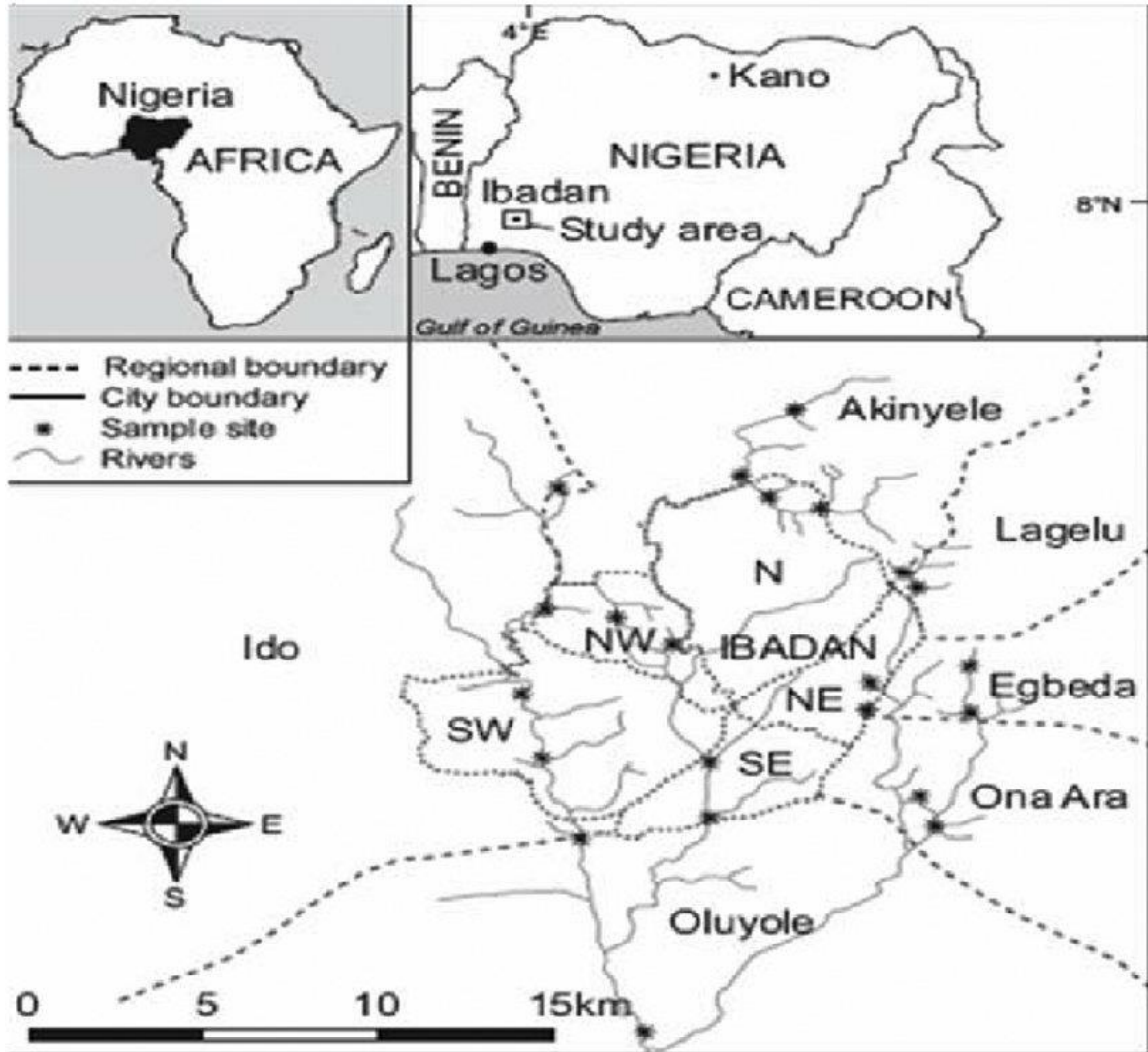


Figure 2.1: Map of Oyo State showing the Study Areas, Ibadan Metropolis

Source: Google 2018

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, we shall locate the study in a specific discursive formation and within a theoretical framework. The literature review shall cover relevant aspects of that framework to locate the gap(s) that this study is designed to fill. The review covers Islam in Yorubaland and particularly in Ibadan, the nature of Islamic prayer, the growth of Islamic organisations in Yoruba land, Islamic clerics and the prayer economy, symbolism: discursive tradition and Islamic modernity, and the commodification of prayer. The chapter also uncovers the theoretical rubrics under which the data that would be presented in chapter four would be discussed.

2.1.1 Islam in Yoruba Land

One of the most important events in African history was the spread of Islam to the continent from the seventh century onward, more so that the consequences of the spread of Islam and Arabic culture have remained significant until today. Not only is the entire North African region dominantly Islamic, but Islam also spread remarkably well in sub-Saharan Africa. Islam and Christianity are the two major universal religions in Africa. Islam was also the first religion to profoundly change many African societies, incorporating new ideas into their lifestyles and blending indigenous practices with Islamic ones (Falola, 2002).

It is very difficult to ascertain the actual date of the advent of Islam to Yoruba land since the coming was “unannounced and unplanned” According to Eades (1980), Yoruba people encountered Islam around the 14th and 15th centuries during the reign of Mansa Kankan Musa of Mali Empire. Moreover, the earliest Yoruba Muslims worshipped secretly

and privately (Gbadamosi, 1978). This was so because the traditional religion was regarded as the heritage left behind by the forbears and which should not be allowed to fade away. On the other hand, Islam was seen as a new faith brought entirely by unfamiliar people who hailed from distant places (Adelowo, 1981).

By the 16th century, Eade (1980) asserted that there was a mosque in Oyo that was used by Muslim foreign traders who visited the city frequently. Samuel Johnson also supported this assertion with shreds of evidence to suggest that Islam had been in Yoruba land as early as the 16th century AD. He noted that sometime around the 1550s, a Muslim Cleric, *Baba-Kewu* reprimanded the Alaafin of Oyo for killing some of his subjects owing to the death of his son and was then compelled to apologise before the people (Johnson, 1921, reprinted ed. 2001). Johnson's position was further corroborated by *Al-Aluri's* (1990) view that Islam had been practiced at Oyo-Ile and a mosque had been erected as far back as 1550 C.E. Likewise, about the event reported by Johnson, Awolalu (1979) opined that the action taken by the cleric must have been the result of a strong Muslim presence and influence. And for Awolalu, Islam was fully entrenched in Yoruba land and some Muslim communities were already established and flourishing by 1840.

Another very significant factor that contributed to the spread of Islam among Yoruba people was the conversion of many kings in Western Sudan to Islam. This is consequent upon the services rendered by Muslim clerics generally to kings and warlords, especially in Yoruba land. For instance, Uthman (2009) wrote concerning Yoruba warlords and their Muslim mentors. Among these were *Bashorun Ga* of Ibadan who was said to have had a Muslim spiritual mentor who came from Iwo, *Aare Latosa* who had Shaykh Bello as a spiritual mentor, and *Balogun Akere* of Ibadan had *Alfa Ishaq* as his spiritual adviser. These Muslim clerics rendered prayers for spiritual fortification, especially during wars (Uthman, 2009). Similarly, Sanneh (1980) asserted that the advent of Islam in many West African towns made the traditional rulers incorporate Muslim clerics into their traditional institutions, even as they gave them roles that suited their familiarity with the sacred Arabic scripts. The cleric using his knowledge of '*illm awfalak*' otherwise known as the science of magic (*Sihhr*) was able to offer spiritual power against malevolent spirits and enemies.

Al-Aluri (1965) has stressed that the Yoruba had encountered Islam during the time of Emperor Mansa Musa of Mali (d1337 C.E), possibly through the Malian traders and

ambassadors that were living in Oyo-Ile, the capital of Old Oyo Empire. He interpreted the Yoruba reference to Islam as “*esin Imale*” to mean “the religion of Malians” or “the religion that came from Mali.” Although this explanation is contested, it yet offered hints about the possible period that Islam had been around.

There are indications that Islam began to spread to the different strata of Yoruba society and mosques started to appear in places such as Iwo town in 1655; followed by Iseyin, in 1760; Lagos, in 1774; Saki, 1790; and Osogbo, 1889. In time, Islam spread to other towns, such as Oyo Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Ikirun, and Ede, even before Sokoto jihad. Islam gained ground in Yoruba land early enough and most possibly co-existed with the Yoruba traditional religion centuries before the coming of Europeans. This could be traced to some of the Islamic teachings that agree with Yoruba traditional religion and culture. For instance, the Yoruba traditional religion believes in the existence of a Supreme Being in the same manner as Islam.

However, there is an epistemological difference. While Yoruba traditional religion entails the worship of *Òrísá* as an intermediary, Islam opposes polytheistic practices. Secondly, both religions hold marriage as sacred and accept polygyny. However, in traditional religion, the number of wives is limitless while Islam limits it to a minimum of four at a time. Thirdly, morals, and values such as modesty and respect are part and parcel of both religions. Probably, because of harmony, tranquility, and co-existence between both religions for a long period, the Yoruba assumed both as ancestral religions, and this is echoed in one of the popular sayings, *Ayé la bá Ifá, Ayé la bá Ìmàlè; Òsán gangan ni Ìgbàgbó woló de*” which translates to “We met *Ifá* in the world, we met Islam in the world; It was late in the day that Christianity arrived” (Peel, 2000).

Peel (2000) in response to the above assertion remarked that it implied two distinct features of the religious situation among Yoruba people. First, it was a triangular encounter of religions in which the Christian Missionaries found themselves, and secondly, Christianity was an entirely novel addition to the Yoruba religious repertory when it was introduced in the 1840s. On the other hand, Islam and the traditional religion had interacted with each other for a long time. Peel also reckoned that *Ifá* divination, both in its form and procedures and in the traditions of its origins, shows the traces of early Muslim influence (Peel, 2000).

Islam, like Christianity, also benefited from the British's ending of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. As efforts were intensified to curb the slave trade from its source, freed slaves, a few of whom were Muslims before their enslavement, boarded commercial vessels from the Americas and Sierra Leone and settled in Badagry, Lagos, Abeokuta, and other places in Yoruba land. These men and women proved advantageous and significant to the development of Muslim communities in Lagos, Ijebu Ode, Ijebu Igbo, Iwo, Iseyin, Saki, Okeho, and Ilorin as in many other parts of Yoruba land (Gbadamosi, 1978). The attainment of this hitherto unseen developmental progress in education, Koranic education, the building of Mosques, and other community development projects, therefore contributed to why Islam was quickly revived in both urban and rural parts of Yoruba land (Gbadamosi, 1978).

Furthermore, the spread of Islam in Yoruba land is not limited to the direct link to trade. People such as theologians, scribes, astrologists, charm-makers, physicians, and other professionals also contributed immensely even though inadvertently. As Ryan (1979) pointed out, the *Ulama*, as Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic laws, who had no obvious connection with the trade may have been influential in bringing Islam to the Yoruba capital of Old Oyo by the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. He also shows that Muslim Hausa slaves of non-Muslim Yoruba extraction possibly helped to spread Islam in Yorubaland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries up till the eighteenth century. In recent times, Islam has become a dominant religion among the Yoruba people.

Islam fused civilisation with religion based on the language of its revelation, Arabic (Peel, 2000). Hence, there was an integral bond between Islam and its Arabic expression. Even though for centuries West African Islam existed in practice as a complex mix of Islamic and indigenous cultural traits, Arabic remained privileged as its medium of religious communication. This was why many Yoruba words are rooted in Arabic terms, this was also reflected in Stetan Reihmuths' careful study of Songhai loan words in Yoruba. The thirty-two (32) words so identified include some of the basic terms derived from the Yoruba Muslim lexicon, for instance, *Alufa* or *Alfa* for Muslim clerics or '*Mallam*' to use Hausa derived words are used currently in Nigeria English, and so on (Peel, 2000).

Other elements that entered Yoruba culture from Islamic sources were very directly connected with Islam itself. As Townsend rightly observed at Abeokuta in 1847 on the dress patterns of the people, "this dress is being put on as a religious peculiarity" and it is being

internalized as external identification (Peel, 2000). In 1861 Burton also mentioned another instance that testified to the proper and decent outfit for the Muslims in contrast to their pagan experience (Gbadamosi, 1978). According to him, “the best-looking dresses were decidedly the Muslims” whom he claimed were conspicuous for their decent dress.

Moreso, Oyeniya (2012) in a recent study on *Dress and Identity in Yorubaland* identified the significance of Islamic dress or Muslim style of dress as a very contributory factor to the growth of Yoruba society. For her, the cultural effect of Islam was manifested in the dress of the Yoruba. She opined that the reference to Islamic influence on Yoruba dress began to appear in the praise poetry of the *Aláàfin* of Oyo by 1750. Thus, the consideration of praise poetry of Yoruba Kings and Chiefs reveals the preponderance of the Arab-style dress ensemble, which helps to show their enthusiasm and acceptance of the Islamic culture in Yorubaland, as well as a status symbol among the Yoruba. Hence the common statement, ‘*Dàndógó kojá á bínú dá*’, meaning *Dàndógó* is not sewn in haste or protest or for the fun of it (Oyeniya, 2012). In recent times, many of these concepts and ideas are regarded as Yoruba culture. For instance, Crowther also adopted the term *malfaa* (Muslim cleric), not only for “Priest” throughout his translation of the Bible but for a Christian clergy or Pastor. Thus, many lexica of Yoruba Muslims diffused into the vocabulary of a still overwhelming non-Muslim (Peel, 2000).

The acceptance of Islam in Yoruba land was not attempted to destroy indigenous religion in the society. Although Yoruba people were polytheists, they acknowledge the existence of a supreme God who was usually referred to as *Olorun* and who was believed to be assisted by a pantheon of gods and spirits. Thus, the Muslim introduction to the worship of Allah must have seemed unobjectionable (Daramola, 2015). Interestingly, Stride and Ifeka, (1971) opined that the Muslim prayer, ritual, fasting, and the building of impressive Mosques are peculiar but distinguishing features of a new cult.

Furthermore, Daramola (2015) identified several positive but mainly non-religious factors that contributed to the acceptance of Islam among the Yoruba. These include the emergence of economic potency, military prowess, population movement most especially of the nomadic Fulani, the acceptance of the religion by most traditional rulers, and of course, the fratricidal wars in Yorubaland towards the end of the eighteenth century at the time Islam was becoming more powerful a religion among the people (Daramola, 2015). Latin

(1986) therefore identified as a push towards the ‘Yorubatisation of Islam’, the pattern of the practices of Islam among Yoruba during the twentieth century wherein the religion was developing with increasing domestication of the religion.

2.1.2 Islam in Ibadan

Islam has been a strong factor in Yoruba land since the end of the eighteenth century, and probably around 1829, Ibadan had among its inhabitants among many Muslim converts who were placed under an Imam called *Gunnugun*. They were, however, described as nominal Muslims who maintained to a large extent their pagan practices (El-Masri, 1967). In other words, their knowledge of Islam was meagre and imperfect. Islam perhaps was only practicing pure form as from the early 1830s when learned Muslim teachers came from Hausa land through Ilorin and started to preach in Ibadan (El-Masri, 1967). Notable among the first preachers were Ahmad Qifu and Uthman b. Abu Bakr. The first cleric came during the reign of Oluyedun within the first few years of the foundation of the town, and he was reputed to be a grandson of one of the *Alààfin* of Oyo. The other, Uthman B Abu Bakr, came during the period of ascendancy of Bashorun Oluyole. He was originally from Katsina and had settled in Borno. He left Borno with some of his people intending to go to one of the three towns, Ijebu Ode, Abeokuta, or Ibadan.

It was related that Bashorun Oluyole had been told by one of his Priests that a foreign Shaykh whose prayers were always answered, would come to Ibadan and that if he arrived, he (Oluyole) should accommodate him. Thus, when Uthman arrived, he was received very hospitably and lodged near Oluyole’s house. Uthman eventually became the first Imam of Ibadan in 1839, a post which he held till his death in 1871, when he was succeeded by Ahmad Qifu (El-Masri, 1967).

By 1871, Islam had gained many adherents in Ibadan, particularly through the proselytizing activities of itinerant Shaykhs who came from Ilorin – a town that had become the major centre for Islamic learning and spiritual guidance in the Yoruba country. This did not, however, mean the establishment of any official religious connections between the Fulani-dominated town of Ilorin. In most cases, the preachers came as private individuals to preach in Ibadan of their own volition (El-Masri, 1967). It was one of such missionaries

from Ilorin, Shaykh Abu Bakr b al Qasim, who laid the foundation of Islamic learning in Ibadan. He was himself a native of Ibadan whose father had settled during his trade at Ilorin, where Abu Bakr received a good training in Islamic education. So, well versed was he in all branches of Islamic learning that he was invited back to Ibadan by the Muslim community when Are Latosa was still the leading chief in Ibadan. Shaykh Abu Bakr b al Qasim settled at Oke Aremo in the north-east of the town and he started an Arabic school that was frequently attended by Muslim students from all parts of Yoruba country; he taught them Arabic grammar, philology, theology, Qur'ân studies, and prophetic traditions. It was, however, in the field of scholarship that he made his most notable contributions. He produced many distinguished scholars of repute (El-Masri, 1967).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Muslim clerics have acquired a position of significance in the Ibadan community. This was largely attributed to their close association with the war chiefs, who patronized them because they believed in the efficacy of their prayers and talismans to give protection in times of war. This development led to the Imamate becoming a post of prestige, keenly contested by the leading Muslim leaders (El-Masri, 1967).

In recent times, as the Muslim faithful grew in numbers, augmented by the visiting traders and their local contacts, in every significant community there emerged a *Jumu'at* or Central Mosque for the Friday congregational prayer, located close to the Olubadan's palace at *Oja'ba* area of Ibadan (*Oja'ba*: Meaning: Iba Oluyole's market). It was also observed that virtually all indigenous compounds or quarters (*Agbolé*) in the core area of town have a Mosque that belongs to that compound or named after the compound's dynasty and each of these Mosques have *Imams* and *Alfas* that oversees both social and religious affairs of the compound, as people often consult them from time to time for spiritual services and guidance.

Similarly, not far from the palace, clustered the quarters or compounds of those *Alfas* with the greatest reputation among their peers for Arabic learning and as the descendants of the pioneer clerics who had migrated to Ibadan. Nowadays, these classes of clerics are referred to as the *Mogaji* of their respective compounds and they constitute the Ibadan Imam-in-Council. There are eleven (11) religious *Mogajis* that represent various compounds or quarters of the earlier *Alfas* in Ibadan who were the first clerics to preach or proselytise

Islam in the town. In other words, they constituted *Imams* and *Alfas* for each of the quarters or compound under the authority of the Chief Imam of Ibadanland as the general commander.

Underpinning this religious practice, they maintained Koranic schools within their respective domains where Muslim children learn about Islam and Arabic after attending Western schools during the day. And the pattern of the learning is mostly learning by heart of passages of the *Qur'ân* while some of the students may later move on to learn the advance Arabic after completing the basic elementary learning with the *Walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ân* ceremony (Fieldwork, 2015). Certainly, there is a considerable range and diversity of Muslim religious leaders (clerics; *Alfas*) and many become clerics by birth, achievements, knowledge, or combination of all. In an actual sense, these clerics often attract large followers and are extraordinary men. These are truly exceptional clerics and are often referred to as *Waliy* (Saint).

The term *Waliy* refers to a 'friend of God' having special power and knowledge emanating from God. In this sense, people often equate power as it relates to their religious leaders with forces in its spiritual and material sense, suggesting authority in its Weberian formulation. Ultimately, "Power emanates from God who favour certain persons, making them more knowledgeable and more powerful than others." This power and influence are associated with the Islamic mystical practice, which is considered a gift from God. For this obvious reason, *Alfas* are highly respected, revered, as well as feared and individual consultation with religious clerics is more of worldly nature, including the pursuit of wealth, power, social prestige, progeny, and good health. In this respect, Ibadan Chiefs often draw attention to most of the Muslim clerics that came to the town to preach, purposely for their Islamic mystical power and services they could render for the town and the people. The Muslim clerics, thus serve as an ascetic spiritual guide to the society at large. Besides, Islam usually forms a community (*Ummah*) which unites the Muslim faithfuls in a single entity, which is both religious and political in context. The Ibadan Muslim community is currently headed by a prominent Ibadan son, Alhaji Chief Mustapha Adebayo Oyero. (Fieldwork, 2017).

2.1.3 The Concept of Prayer in Islam

Prayer is considered the soul of every religion. In other words, take prayer out of the world, and it is all over with religion because it is with the prayer that man has the consciousness of God and an inner sense of piety (Sidiqi, 2009). Prayer is, therefore, considered the first, the highest, and the most solemn phenomenon and the manifestation of religion. How prayer is offered and the words which are recited in it explain the true nature of the prayer which is the expression of man's contact with the Lord (Sidiqi, 2009).

For Muslims, prayer is that which continuously marks the passing of time. Each day opens with prayer, is punctuated throughout by prayer, and ends in prayer. In Muslim society or community, it does not take long for a non-praying visitor to perceive how the rhythm of daily life is marked by the *Adhan*, the call to prayer. Therefore, there is no other aspect of Islamic practices that has been broadcast across the world than prayer. This is probably due to the beauty and grandeur that one perceives when witnessing massive numbers of people moving in graceful unison to the melodious sound of Qur'ān recitation (Cornell, 2006).

According to Cornell (2006), prayer extends Muslim religious practice into the community. It is considered best to pray in congregation whenever possible, that is, it is incumbent upon all-male to pray together, and women are permitted to pray in the Mosque too, but they also reserve the right to pray at home, if they prefer to do so. Thus, Islamic formal prayer is the same around the world. This implied that a Muslim could join in prayer from Denmark, in Indonesia or Detroit in the United States and move right into the flow of prayer without missing a beat.

Nevertheless, what constitutes prayer in Islam can be categorised into two distinct folds: *Salat* and *du'ā*. The five daily obligatory prayers referred to as *Salat* in the Arabic language are an act of worship, specific and unique to Islam both in its form and spirit. While the English word, prayer, conveys a general meaning of supplication or invocation, *Salat* proves to be an act of worship to the Supreme Creator Allah and is expressed in a specific and well-defined physical act embodying the spirit. This act of worship is ordained upon all Muslims as a duty and is the second pillar of Islam. The prescribed five daily prayers are mandatory for all individuals to post-puberty as commanded in the Holy Book thus: "Verily, *Salat* is an obligation on the believers to be

observed at its appointed time” (Qur’ān 4:103). Any attempt to add or delete, modify or even try to interpret the procedure otherwise is considered an innovation and is strongly abhorred, to say the least. It is this divine and pure nature of Islamic worship that lends it the distinction of being a unique spiritually enriching experience. Likewise, voluntary prayers over the above are highly encouraged and are recommended as a means of turning to the ne help at times of personal grief and distress (Sayeed and Prakash, 2013). Both scholars also assert that *Salat* as the second pillar of Islam is performed by all Muslims across the globe in the same manner and measure. The steps and specific supplications are demonstrated as exemplified by the Holy Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as mentioned in the following Hadith.

Pray as you have seen me praying and when it is the time for the prayer one of you should pronounce the *Adhan* and the oldest of you should lead the prayer (Sahih Bukhari-Book 11: Call to prayers; Hadith 604).

In another context, Akkach (2005) describes the Islamic prayer as an act of worship performed toward a liturgical centre, the *Ka’bah*, which unlike the Church’s altar lies beyond the boundaries of all Mosques except for the one that contains the *Ka’bah*. The Prophet further teaches: “Adore God as though you do see Him, for if you do not see Him, He does see you.” Thus viewed, the Islamic prayer is not primarily a pictorial experience or a visually oriented act. In the Islamic prayer “seeing” takes on a different meaning, especially when viewed from the Sufi perspective. Islamic prayer requires no tangible object, such as an icon or a statue to induce a sense of divine presence and serve as a support for worship (Akkach, 2005).

By and large, prayer is simply a bodily performance associated with the recitations, requiring especially in communal prayer, an acute auditory engagement (Akkach, 2005). Basically, from the moment theythel to prayer is heard, Muslims engage in aural-oral correspondence, repeating certain phrases, and acting in certain ways. Thus Hienz (2008) has argued that the *Salat* is regarded as a complex assembly of ritual movements and recitations, all of which are rooted in a tradition whose purpose is to allow the pertinent Muslim to display his or her submission to God. In other words, the actions in *Salat* are an outward display of faith. While the minutia may vary depending on several factors, such as the sect of Islam that one belongs to or the time of the year or day, there is a core set of ritual actions common to most Muslim practices of *Salat* (Hienz, 2008).

Aside from *Salat*, Islam also laid much emphasis on *du`â* as ritual practice. Soysaldi (1996) sees the word *du`â* literally to mean “to call upon, to lead someone to something, to invite someone, or to grieve after a deceased person”. It has also been defined in several ways in the Qur’an: as a form of worship (Qur’ân 10:106), a means of asking for aid (Qur’an 2:23), God’s call to humans (Qur’ân 17:52), and praise to God (Qur’ân 17:101). The characteristic common to all the four definitions above is that *du`â* is a form of communication between a person and God.

In another context, Nursi (1994) observed that there are three types of *du`â*. The first is the request with one’s condition, such as acting through causes to get the desired effect. If a student wishes to pass an examination, his or her act of studying leads to passing, thus making the act of studying an active form of *du`â*. The second type is to desire from the heart, and the third is the direct verbal request arising from the desperate need at that time (Nursi, 1994). Another scholar, Canan, defines *Du`â* as a symbol of servitude from the servant to God, and a mark of God’s mercy to his servant (Canan, 1993). Nursi further argued that *du`â* is a “mighty mystery of worship; indeed, it is like the spirit of worship”, to ask God for that which they cannot grasp with their power and will (1994).

Likewise, Gulen sees *du`â* as asking God for something which the human cannot attain by his or her power (Dogan, 1997). Cilaci on his part states that the *du`â* flow “from the younger to the older, from the bottom to the top, from an inferior to a superior” (1964). The first part of the definition applies to human-human relations and not human-God relations. On his part, Kayiklik views *du`â* as removing the obstacles between oneself and God, allowing them to reunite (1994). Bowen (1993) also identified four distinct types of *du`â* in his study of the Gayo Society: spells requests, recitation, and prayer. For him, to be successful means that the four categories of *du`â* must be accompanied by mental and physical actions. In other words, spells, prayers, requests, and recitations are effective only if they are uttered with the right intent (Arabic: *niyyah*) and with sufficient concentration (Arabic: *Ma`rfat*, gnosis).

Kartz (2013) argues that the word *du`â* is more specifically used to designate petitionary prayer or supplication, that is, appeals for divine aid or favour. It is defined in classical sources as “seeking from God the good things He possesses and imploring to Him with requests” or “the servant’s petitionary God for help and appealing to Him for aid.

When my servants ask you (Muhammad) concerning Me, I am indeed close; I answer the prayer of every supplicant when he calls Me” Qur’ân: 2 Verse 186 and “Call on me, I will answer you (Qu’rân 40:60)

The above-quoted verse of the Qur’ân represents human supplication and the intimate responsiveness of God as a fundamental part of the human-divine relationship. The value of *du`â* is also emphasised in this *hadith*; the Prophet is reported to have declared that “supplication is the marrow of prayer (*ar-du`a mukhkh al ibadah*)” that is, it is essential or choicest part. Although *du`â* may be a spontaneous personal cry, the scholars and clerics emphasis the merits of prayers drawn directly from the Qur’ân from the words of the Prophet. Popular manuals, therefore, offer recommended *du`â* texts to be performed in conjunction with routine daily activities and mundane personal concerns, as well as for more fraught or perilous circumstances (Kartz, 2013).

In another vein, Brenner (1983) opined that Prayer can be spoken publicly or privately but they differ linguistically. Public prayer is entirely in Arabic language while private prayer could be in one’s local language. Thus, it is about the pragmatic effect cum healing in responding to human requests (Brenner, 1983). For Crowther, *Àdúrà* or *du`â* is simply an ‘individual petition prayer’, which could be achieved through a private consultation with *Alfas* (Peel, 2000). This is because Muslims place heavy stress on the pragmatic or utilitarianimplicationstion of the Islamic rituals. It follows that the exploration of the social consequences of a particular religion has been through their ethical as well as the cultural impact on the development of the society as this tends to emerge in the long term. This succinctly implied the public and pragmatic faces of Islam in Yoruba society, such that, *Alfas* were often consulted to stop excessive rain in the community or stop epidemics, or abnormal asphenomenamenon (Gbadamosi, 1978). Thus, in most cases, the *Aw* were usually consulted and engaged in a very similar spirit as *Babalawo*, and other religious specialists were patronized before (Peel, 2000).

Over the years, Muslim theologians have at times engaged in an intense discussion about whether petitionary prayer is compatible with Islamic orthodoxy and what value should be ascribed to it. Many are of the view that since God knows everything, no prayer can alter His almighty will (Troll, 2012). Nevertheless, there is agreement among Muslims

that *du'a* is pleasing to God and therefore desirable (Troll, 2012). Likewise, there are specific ritual prayers for occasions, such as prayer for rain, at the time of a natural disaster, and at the time of bereavement. Voluntary ritual prayers (*nawafil*) are performed during the *Ramadan* and *Tahajjud* at the night (Quran 17:79, Troll, 2012).

Overall, *du'â* of the Muslim clerics was (is) considered a central and efficacious means of addressing predicaments and catastrophes, whether communal or personal. A famous example is recounted in the introduction to a manual on the Prophet's sayings about prayer composed by the scholar Ibn al Jazari (d. 833/1429) whom he beseeched to pray for him and the Muslims.

So, he raised his noble hands as I watched, and he prayed and then passed them over his noble face. This happened on the eve of Thursday, and on the eve of Sunday the enemy fled, and God gave relief to me and the Muslim by means of the Baraka of what is in this book (Kartz, 2013).

Benjamin Koen (2005) in his study of music and prayer in healing posited that there are two categories of prayers: Preventive and Curative. For him, the preventive prayer refers to the daily ritualised prayer, *Salat* that forms a regular part of daily worship and constitutes a central aspect of healthy living. Curative prayer, on the other hand, involved a specialized written prayer – amulet, often used to treat a specific disease. This is deemed more curative in nature, being mystical, and involving the *Baraka* (spiritual power) of God. Some Islamists (Graham, 1983; Denny, 1985) claim that the distinctive characteristic of Islam is precisely the concern for correctness in ritual practice (orthopraxy) based on conformity to the historical precedent of the Prophet. But local understandings of ritual are as much shaped by social and cultural context as by scriptural disputations (Bowen, 1989). A proper anthropological approach to prayer must study its links to other beliefs and practices in particular Islamic societies as well as its place in Islamic doctrine (Eickelman, 1982).

At the same time, in the context of Arabic language, Islam means submission to God and to be a Muslim in this context implies total submission to the will of God and adherence to His law (*Sharia*) including the five pillars of Islam. However, in this part of the world, Muslims hold in high esteem a very strong relationship with their religious leaders. As such, this also implies faithful are not only expected to submit to God and His law, but one is also expected to follow a religious leader who often acts as a spiritual guide for ordinary

Muslims (Soares, 2005). Most adults are expected to have a good relationship with the religious leader from time to time for spiritual consultation and assistants.

Therefore, considering the centrality of petitionary prayers to everyday reality among Yoruba people, as well as its importance in politics and economics, its neglect by academic researchers is remarkable. These practices are even more important because they are a local expression of Islam that is not confined to Nigeria but also West Africa. This practice to a large extent reinforces the spiritual or esoteric values of prayers among Muslim faithful as well as non-Muslims and as a source of religious meaning and inspiration to people living in specific times and places. Thus El- Masri posited that Muslim clerics occupy a position of significance in the national life of the Yoruba town. This they attribute largely to the close association in the nineteenth century of these Muslim leaders with the war chiefs, who patronised them because of the belief in the efficacy of their prayers and talismans to give protection in times of war (El- Masri, 1967).

2.1.4 The Growth of Islamic Organisations in Yorubaland

Although the religion of Islam is practiced worldwide by people of all races and in nations with varied languages, histories, and cultural backgrounds. In Nigeria, however, almost everMuslimms subscribe to *Sunni* Islam, within the purview of the Maliki School of thought with some belonging to the *Qadiriyyah tariqah* or Brotherhood, and later its rival, *Tijaniyyah tariqah* (Mustapha and Bunza, 2014; Eades, 1980). However, a small but growing *Shi'ite* minority exists in some parts of the country. Thus, these are the main brotherhood, though *Qadiriyyah* is the longest established, the *Tijaniyyah* has grown more rapidly in recent years (Eades,1980).

In the contemporary period, the Islamic doctrinal landscape has been further fragmented into a myriad of competing organisations or playing complementary roles in advancing the cause of Islam, and groups, including different groups of *Sufis*, *Salafists*, *Shi'ite*, Islamic Women Organizations, and the host of others, (Mustapha and Bunza, 2014). This process of the fragmentation of Muslim identities has resulted in the individualisation of religious affiliation and heightened competition for fellowship in a 'prayer economy' led by the '*Ulama*' (Mustapha and Bunza, 2014). According to them, the formation of an association to advance the cause of the religion is not new in the history of Islam, such that

different sects, ideologies, and schools of thought have emerged within the religion throughout Islamic history.

Historically, Islam has been characterised by the pluralism of its expression in specific geographical, historical, and social contexts. Thus, this raised the question of competing for doctrinal claims of different contemporary Muslim groups in Nigeria. In this context, there has been a tendency to fragmentation and individualisation of Islamic identities over time. However, Adida (2014) asserts that sects in Islam have not come out as denominations. They do not operate as autonomous bodies rather they all go to the same Mosque and observe prayers (*Salat*) the same way.

Masquelier (2009) also noted that 'Islam has become a medium for the expression of ideological, political, and even socio-economic cleavages. In other words, the dwindling economic opportunities and growing marginalization, and feelings of disempowerment fueled competition for Islamic visions of the society to the moral order with many gravitating to the belief that the economic problems are rooted in immorality and that the widespread moral reforms must be instituted before the debilitating effects of poverty and underdevelopment can be reversed' (Masquelier, 2009). Often, they preach individualism, conservatism, and the rational utilization of resources (Mustapha, 2014). In other words, this 'reorientation from the communal to an individualistic mode of religiosity seems to be an orientation of capitalist social relation' (Mustapha, 2014).

Oloyede (2014) also categorised all Muslim organisations in Nigeria that have contributed to the advancement of Islam in the past 100 years into six major types. These are the root, the umbrella, the professional, the personalised, the ideological, and the independent non-aligned. Even though many Yoruba Muslims belong majorly to the Sunni Muslim fold, there existed among them several smaller groups that are generally considered part of the larger Muslim Community. These groups are differentiated along ethnic or doctrinal grounds. Interestingly, Yoruba Muslims established these ethnically specific Islamic groups to face decisively the challenge of the time and specifically, education and establishment of Muslim schools.

According to Reichmuth (1996), Islam in Yorubaland was frequently seen as an element of *Òlájú* (civility), that represented a way of life that promised both personal dignity and economic welfare, as well as being closer to communal life. This also correspondsto

the continuous growth of Islam in Yorubaland and the important role played by Muslim clerics, traders, and titled chiefs in many Yoruba towns.

Significantly, earlier than other Muslim groups, the Muslims in Lagos started to take part in the competition for commercial and public employment. The new situation made them aware of their disadvantaged educational position vis-a-vis the Christians who controlled most of the schools. This awareness, combined with a growing reformist tendency among younger educated Muslims, finally led to the establishment of associations that were to provide Western education for Muslim children. In other words, the need to combine a Muslim education with an equally sound education along Western lines gave rise to an interesting development in the Muslim Community (Reichmuth, 1996).

From the 1920s and 1930s, they spread widely among Yoruba Muslim Communities and gave them a quite distinct character even among other Muslim groups in Nigeria. Several models can be traced for these educational associations of the Yoruba Muslims which gradually developed into full-fledged religious communities. The first of such associations was the establishment of the Ahmadiyya Movement, which originated in India in the 19th century and has become well established along the West African continent (Fisher, 1973; Eades, 1980). It was established in Nigeria in 1916 and has taken the lead in the development of Muslim Western education and raising the status of Muslim Women.

On the other hand, Reichmuth (1996) also observes that one of the oldest and certainly the largest of the associations of the Yoruba Muslims is the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria founded in Lagos in the year 1923. Its development from a small group of educated young men in Lagos to a large national body with branches in most parts of the country and has deeply affected the position of the Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria before and after independence. For him, the impetus has helped them to solve their educational dilemma of combining 'Western' and Islamic forms of learning as well as gaining access to elite positions and handling their Yoruba and Islamic allegiances over a different period (Reichmuth, 1996).

However, Ansar-ud-deen Society was introduced to Ibadan by prominent sons of the town in 1937 and its first Central Mosque was located at Salvation Army Road, Oke-Padre the foundation stone of which was jointly laid by Oba Alhaji Salawu Aminu and Oba Alhaji Sikiru Adetona, Olubadan of Ibadanland and Awujale of Ijebuland respectively in 1971 and

the society has grown to have many more mosques, branches, divisions, in different part of the Ibadan today. While the organization pays particular attention to bWesterntern and Islamic education, and it can boast of many public primary and secondary schools as well as six private monurseriessery and primary schools. Also, the society offered Arabic and Islamic knowledge to the people within the communities as well as members of the society (KII: Dr. Imam Bashir Olanrewaju, Fieldwork 2017).

Oloyede (2014) argued further that of all the Islamic organisations established within this period, some stand out for their roles in public space particularly in the education sector of the economy and rose partly in reaction to the activities and challenges of Christian missionaries. They are the Ahmadiyya (with its three factions of the Jamaat, Movement and later Anwarul Islam), Ansar-ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Ansr-ul Islam, Nawaruddeen Society, Akhbaruddeen Society, and the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSS). The appropriateness and commitment to their set aims and objectives at that critical period was a major relief to the Muslims particularly in South-Western Nigeria (Oloyede, 2014). Through the concerted efforts of these Muslim organisations, Muslim children who were being denied access to Western education were free and were able to enroll in the conventional schools which were being rwit granranted from the public fund.

Recently, Soares (2009) describes *NASFAT* as 'a Yoruba Muslim organization that arguably formed Yoruba Muslim nationalism'. Today, *NASFAT* is widely considered as a dynamic and influential Muslim organisation because it consists mainly of Yoruba professional elites as its core members. Also, the like of Ansar-ud-deen, Ahmadiyyah, Nawarudeen, and Nurudeen Societies, among many others that are particularly noted for their Missionary zeal in spreading access to Western education and health services. Ideologically, these organizations are an open society where members can come from any other organization or tendency within Islam, provided one is ready to uphold the teaching of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, and observe basic rules of non-discrimination against other Muslims.

Other notable groups are the Islahudeen Society of Nigeria, the Lanase group, the Bamidele group, the Dawah Front of Nigeria, the Muslim Congress, and its female wing, Al-Muminat, the Companion, the Islamic Movement for Africa, the Islamic Da'wah group and a host of others, who are gaining large followership (Uthman, 2009). Their tactics

include holding *Asalatu* (eulogies of the Prophet) and *Dhikr* (Litanies in adoration and praise of Allah) sessions on Sundays or Fridays, and holding overnight sessions (Uthman, 2009). Other Islamic organizations include Al- Fathu Qareeb Muslim Organisation (established 1999), Jamaatul Ar-Risalatil Islamiyyah of Nigeria (A.K.A. Islamic Message Group of Nigeria, IMGN) (established 2000), the Islamic Platform Society of Nigeria (established 2007), Aqibat Lil Mutaqeen Society of Nigeria (established 1999), the Fadlullah Society of Nigeria (established 2006), and the Ahbadud-Dinil Islamiy Society of Nigeria, established in 2002 (Obadare, 2016). Likewise, these groups and organisations run mosques, schools, and social activities. Apart from their ethnic particularity, they are also noted for allow the ing active involvement and participation of the women’s folds in their activities and programmes (Soares, 2009).

In recent times, the proliferation of different Islamic groups by individuals was accompanied by the rise of the ethical self as the guide to religious conduct. In other words, at the doctrinal level, some scholars often cited the verse below as justification for their action.

Those that hide the clear proof and guidance.
We have revealed after We had proclaimed.
them in the Scriptures shall be cursed by God.
Qur’ān verse (2; 159).

Invariably, many saw their self-chosen group as that, which would be saved. This also implied that they were being driven by competition for followership within the ‘*Ulama* and *Ummah*,’ even as the fellowship was critical for the prestige of the individual Muslim leader or the economic and political influence of the individual clerics within the ‘prayer economy’ (Mustapha, 2014). Conversely, a cleric or leader’s hold on his followers may be enhanced by his access to political and economic elites within the society.

Mustapha (2014) argues further that the sacred and mundane motives were frequently interwoven into personal quests which result in networks of religious scholars in constant flux. These networks are instruments of clerical collective action, shaped by their response to the structural strains within the society, their interpretation of Islamic texts in the context of these strains, and their mobilisation strategies for establishing fellowship. More than that, Adeleye (1971) observes that doctrinal interpretation amounted to a difference in ideological

positions with important social ramifications. And that sartorial and fashion styles involving beards, turbans, gowns, and similar accouterments and signifiers were further used to highlight group boundaries.

Nonetheless, most Muslims in Ibadan belong to the orthodox group, and it is very significant to note that the ‘deviant’ form of Islam, such as *Shi’ah* has not found their ways southwards (El- Masri, 1967). Today, in the southwest, like other places in Nigeria and beyond, where different sects of Islam are found, there are large bodies of ‘neutral’ Muslims who are wary of the turmoil unleashed by sectarianism but shun any sectarian affiliation (Mustapha, 2014). The foresight and forthrightness engendering the formation of these Islamic organisations, and the zeal and commitment with whichst and present leaders champion the cause of Islam are worthy of emulation.

2.1.5 Islamic Clerics and the Prayer Economy

Islam is undoubtedly one of the world religions that are not bereft of clerics dedicated to its propagation. Indeed, the religion of Islam has thrown up clerics of many ideas and ideals. The activities of these clerics have attracted the attention of several scholars over the years. Indeed, the arrival and development of Islam in Yorubaland owe greatly to their activities, especially in the areas of preaching, education, and literary production (Sulaiman, 2013). Clerics, no doubt wield significant power within Islam, especially the preeminent scholars often called the *Ulama* (literally, ‘learned ones’) who interpret the Qu’rân and expound Islamic doctrine for people. In other words, these individuals have an enormous effect on what Muslims believe or hold to be true in its entirety (Nielsen, 2014).

As with Christian and Jewish clergy, the traditional roles of Muslim clerics in society are to lead prayers, deliver sermons, conduct religious ceremonies, and provide religious and spiritual guidance (Haddad & Lummis, 1987). Thus, they were often referred to as men of religion. Oyelade (2014) also argues that clerics are the central figures of religion. Yoruba clerics, known as *Alfa*, perform functions covering prayer, teaching, control, fortune-telling, healing, and mediation between Muslims and the larger society of the non-Muslims (Ryan, 1979).

Moreover, Bottcher (2004) opined that Muslim clerics are the core of the Islamic public sphere and are traditionally well-trained with extensive authoritative knowledge of

the Qur'ān and the sunnah. In other words, the '*ulama*'s' principal goal has been to teach Islam and to disseminate religious information to Muslims and non-Muslims. They also serve as the source of social as well as emotional support (Narwawy & Khamis, 2009) that is unmatched by any other member. Therefore, the '*ulama*' are considered '*marja*'-i-taqlid' or source of practices whose authoritative guidance is followed in matters of Islamic polity, law, economics, and culture (Hamid, 1996).

According to Doi (1961), "the doors of the prophethood are closed in Islam after Muhammad (SAW), the last and the seal of the prophethood. But the '*Ulama*' and the taught one will be there to interpret the divine message as they are called 'the successors of the Prophet.'" In Islam, however, there is no ordained clergy, but there are authoritative religious specialists in the '*ulama*' (Gaffney, 1994). Similarly, the '*ulama*', who are mostly male, are considered the 'religious elite' in the Islamic public sphere. Thus, they enjoy a "de facto hegemony of religious debate or matter" in the discourse of Islam (Roy, 2005).

Consequently, Hourani (1993) describes the '*ulama*' as the 'Doctor of Religion' that are accorded a high degree of respect, because they play several important roles extending beyond the religious sphere. Simply put, they are the guardians of Islamic morality and law and of the Arabic language and culture which go with them. Thus, the '*ulama*' are not only judges, teachers, and officials; they were often consulted for mundane affairs, and they served in a sense as leaders of the indigenous opinion (Hourani, 1993). Lapidus (2002) asserts that "in every Islamic society the clerics (*ulama*) were the teachers, exemplars, and leaders of Muslim communities, such that the High ranking "*ulam* usually sserve as state functionaries, as well as a spiritual counsellor for the common people in Yorubaland and beyond.

In like manner, among the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria, Muslim clerics and scholars are often referred to as *Alfa*. This nomenclature '*Alfa*' is used to refer to the category of Muslims who have acquired Qur'ānic and Arabic education and maybe teach other people, especially children. They also engage in missionary activities, including preaching and evangelization, thus *Alfa Oníwàsí*. But with the advent of Islam in Yoruba land, Muslim scholars, using the content of the Qur'ānic exegesis, the recommended prophetic prayers (S.A.W.) formulae and other items derivable from what is popularly known as *nákàlí*, soon assumed the roles of the Yoruba traditional medicine men by providing

solutions to people's problems, be it for physical, psychological, or spiritual well-being. The Muslim clerics in this regard are referred to as *Alfa*. Likewise, Yoruba people often called ordinary Muslim faithful who might not be a scholar, teacher, or preacher but because of their strict adherence to the teachings of Islam like keeping the beard and putting on the turban is also labelled *Alfa* (Balogun, 2011).

Although the term *Alfa* which the Yoruba Muslims call their clerics and scholars was neither of Yoruba nor Hausa origin in the first instance, but it seems to be of Arabic origin as the various suggestions were given by scholars on its likely etymological origin which source from the Arabic language. According to Doi (1961) who cited four of such suggestions viz: *Al-fātihah* (the opening chapter of the Qur'ān frequently recited by the *Alfas*); *al-fāhim* (for their profound understanding of Islam); *Alf* (a thousand because they used to commit to memory, a thousand *Aḥādīth* of the Prophet); and *Alif* (the first letter of the Arabic Alphabet). The enhancement of the concept of the common good by the Muslim clerics (*Ulama*) essentially increased their role in the society and the public sphere. In other words, Muslim clerics moved to the social landscape from the role of side cast to that of main protagonists, all drawn along the religious line (Lapidus, 2002). Clerics' presence was felt in this shared social space (Saul, 2006). Therefore, charms and other notable clerical services made Muslim clerics desirable elements in the modern society (Saul, 1996). In other words, across West African states or towns, people consulted Muslim clerics for prayers and spiritual-related services that would enhance human well-being.

In a similar manner, Owusu-Ansah (2000) posits that Islam was put to many uses in various parts of Africa. These, according to him included the provision of amulets for war, medicine, and cures for bed-wetting, smallpox, impotence, infertility, leprosy, and ulcers, to mention but a few. This demonstrates the African deployment of religious symbolism to generate spiritual power. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) also observed that African Heads of States do patronize the service of Muslim clerics that dispense charms and amulets for protection against their enemies, and that explained the relationship between political figures and custodians of spiritual power in West African landscape.

In the above context, the advent of Islam in many West African towns made the traditional rulers incorporate the Muslim clerics into their institutions and giving them a

role, which suited their familiarity with the sacred Arabic scripts. The clerics use their knowledge (*ilm awfaq*) of the science of magic and were able to give medicine power against malevolent spirits and enemies. Thus, the sacred powers and creative skills of the clerics were tapped to foster a bo human and society's well-being, and most often embraced Islam to meet their mundane existential needs (Sanneh, 1976).

The Muslim clerics in this respect skillfully and creatively use their religious prestige to acquire wealth and influence as individuals and communal through people that seek their spiritual patronage. That is, they reinforced the dependence of these clients by fostering spiritual chains. This has also led to increasing competition amongst the clergy for influence and relevance, and increased commercialization of spirthe itual and ritual realm, leading to a political economy of religious practices which some scholars have termed the 'prayer economy'.

Quadri (2006) was of the view that there are many ways in which religion has been exploited or commercialized by adherents of a different religion (to unjustifiably enrich themselves). Abioje (2011) aptly described those clergies that aimed to commercialize religion to earn living as "merchant of religion". Murray Last (1988) in his classical study could be assumed to have first used the notion of 'prayer economy' to describe the rather complex but pervasive practice in Kano, Northern Nigeria in which a considerable sum of money is given to Islamic scholars for prayers, blessings, and Islamic medicine. For him, people usually make such transactions to ensure political and financial success and by implication build a base for success. According to him, this practice was necessitated by the oil boom of the 1970s which made unprecedented capital available for that transaction to the Kano economy at that time (Last, 1988).

Consequently, Soares (2005) following Murray Last (1988) idea of the 'prayer economy' also buttressed his view ta hat certain process of commodification emerges, when thean re is exchange of blessings and prayers as a commodity, the proliferation of personal and impersonal Islamic religious commodities occurred in the process. For him, such processes of commodification have helped to transform the relations between the religious leaders and followers and have resulted in a religious economy that has come to be like a market (Soares, 2005). Moreover, the relationship is thought to have facilitated the personalisation of religious authority in certain Muslim religious leaders represented as

saints, to whom many ordinary and elite persons have tusuccorr succour (Soares, 2005). In other words, the prayer economy operates through the circulation of capital – economic, political, and spiritual or symbolic – which particular social actors can convert from one domain to another.

Peel (2000) also asserts that very little is known about what went on inside Muslim gatherings than their public appearances and the interface with non-Muslims. This he said placed heavy stress on the pragmatic or ‘magical side of Islamic ritual. In a way, the private consultation of *Alfas* reflects the public and pragmatic faces of Islam, especially among the Yoruba people. Thus, they offer specifically Islamic means to meet them, and in response, seek to set up a pattern of reciprocal exchange between the holy men and the client. In essence, community leaders often, regard the purchase of the spiritual commodity from the *Alfas* as a necessary item of public consumption.

In recent times, it is obvious most Muslims and non-Muslims alike visit and engage the services of Muslim clerics daily (Fieldwork, 2017). The list of their clients and spiritual seekers, includes prosperous merchants, high-ranking government officials, politicians, and even African heads of State and, their kin. The religious clerics attract these clients, offering spiritual and political guardian and, blessings with petitionary prayers. The religious clerics, according to Esposito (1999) have therefore become privatised figures effectively free-floating sanctifiers in a religious economy that has come to be more like a market. Thus, many of the Muslim clerics were driven by competition for fellowship within the ‘*ummah*’ (community) and such a fellowship was critical for the prestige of the individual towards achieving social, economic, and political influence of the clients or conconsumersthin the society in a ‘prayer economy’. The prayer economy, as defined by Soares, is an economy of religious practice in which substantial gifts are exchanged for blessings, prayers, and intercession with God (Soares, 2005).

Against all odds, the role of religion in the contemporary globalised world is changing rapidly, and growing prosperity has led to new forms of religious expression, across the globe. Thus, patterns of Islamic behaviour have changed dramatically over the years, and Islam has been a much greater presence in social, cultural, and political life than it had been in the past. The number of mosques and the size of their congregations have increased sharply, as having popularity of Islamic dress and the use of Islamic symbols and language

in the public domain and spaces in recent times (Fealy, 2008). As such the Muslim clerics (religious entrepreneur) have found this innovative practice to popularise their religious practices. Thus, Islam is widely penetrating far more deeply into people's lives than ever before, and Muslims are expressing their faiths in a multitude of ways that are seldom examined by scholars (Fealy, 2008). This religious expression has taken a commodified form, such that Muslims and non-Muslims are selectively consuming 'Islamic products' from an expanding spiritual marketplace.

From the beginning, Islam has been based upon the city as shown by the Qur'anic legislation which is primarily urban. It is urban Islam that preserves and transmits itself in its most distinctive sense (Trimingham, 2006). For Parinder (1959) Islam is an urban civilization and diffuses its influence most easily in the centre of commerce and industry. And this appeal of Islam to the townsmen and traders helps to explain the rapid spread of Islam among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria.

Again, in the African context, this transmission is through actual contact at the markets in the towns and by the wayside, through Qur'anic schools set up. However, Islam is a universal religion, and its ultimate effect upon tribal cultures is a gradual disintegration and gradual transformation of the whole society upon which it impinges, but the process is such that the disintegration and reintegration seem natural since they are both the reverse and observe of one process. The new cultures give immediate values without displacing the old. It is like tribal life on a wider pattern without territorial and legislative barriers (Trimingham, 2006).

Essentially, the society sees Muslim clerics as people that possess influence, powers, charms, and protective amulets that can heal, treat illness, avert disaster by adopting the established Islamic methodology, which is an integral part of religious practice. Converts to the religion appreciate such methods and readily employ them because they work with automatic precision which they associate with their traditional magical rites. Trimingham, (2006) further posits that the method by which this is done is both the acceptance of a new inner re-creative principle whereby the new religious symbols give a new context and driving points to religious life and secondly, through the encroaching demands of Islamic law.

It should be noted that the real core value of Yoruba life is their religion and social structure as embedded in their belief system, and they have succeeded in adapting their religious beliefs to meet their needs while at the same time, retaining their cultural identity (Sadiku, 1996). As such the acceptance of Islam in Yorubaland was facilitated by the notion that religion did not intend to destroy the indigenous religion of the Yoruba people. Although Yoruba people were polytheists, they acknowledge the existence of a supreme being, usually referred to as the God of the sky and who was believed to be assisted by a pantheon of gods and spirits. The introduction of Muslimim's worship of Allah must have seemed unobjectionable. In other words, the traditional cults recognised its ritual as worship, which could be interpreted by the uninitiated in terms of local occult practices. For instance, Strides and Ifeka (1971) opined that the Muslim prayer, ritual, fasting, and in due course the building of impressive Mosques are peculiar but distinguish pictures of a new cult.

As noted by many scholarly works, conversion to Islam usually starts with the ruling elites or traditional rulers, and it remained superficial, providing the people with new ceremonies in addition to, but not in place of, their traditional ones. Thus, the conversion was motivated by prestige, since the ruling class was Muslim, and the promise of protection from slavery, wars, and patronage of the mobility of peasants and craftsmen (Mbiti, 1976) was the order of the day.

Essentially, one of the major tasks of the Muslim clerics during this period was their engagement in the propagation of the Islamic faith to those who were not aware of the religion in different parts of the Yoruba communities and in this respect, evangelisation of Islamic ideas, ideal, and practices were the first great jobs the itinerant Muslim clerics who introduced Islam to this part of the world did. To achieve this, they frequently utilized *Da'wah* as the instrument and strategy in the Yoruba community. The concept of *Da'wah* is most synonymous with the Christian Evangelism, though the interpretation of the word transcends utopian application. Thus, to evangelise is to try to persuade other people to share an enthusiasm for specific beliefs and ideas either religious or otherwise. In Islam however, one of the major tasks of the Muslim clerics (*Alfas*) is to engage in the propagation of the Islamic faith. Thus, it is like disobedience to holy order for a Muslim cleric not to participate in the *Da'wah* activities.

Likewise, obedience to the order may be performed by giving money, knowledge, power, strength, and influence to its realization and promotion. In the consciousness of this order of *Da'wah*, the early Muslim clerics engaged themselves in the spread of the faith across the globe within the limit of their knowledge, wealth, strength, and power. Today, Islam is a religion with wide acceptability throughout the AfriAfricantinent. Its spread has always been linked with warfare, welfare, and trade along with series of *Da'wah* efforts (Daramola, 2015).

Islam undoubtedly achieved a degree of practical adjustment to Yoruba norms and cultural values, which prompted many Christians to even refer to Islam as being a more genuinely African religion than other examples. Thus, the entailment of the practicality of Islam gave rise to clerical performance and was aided by the fashioning of certain cultural strategies as the method for prayer economy and spiritual enhancement of the people and the society at large (Peel, 2000). Therefore, miracle effects by the Muslim clerics, such as the escape from the oppressive rulers, successful prayer for rain, or clairvoyance, are commonplace in the earliest time of Islam (Sanneh, 1976), perhaps, the Muslim clerics were seen as persons knowledgeable of the esoteric science and are considered as a “locus of spiritual power” endowed with divine grace (*Baraka*).

Over time, however, Muslim clerics became entangled in the daily affairs of their host societies. Sometimes the Muslims converted local rulers and chiefs, and the conversion of these elites' class led to the building of mosques, instituted public prayer, patronised Muslim clerics, and celebrated Muslim festivals. Thus, Islam remained a class and communal religion of certain mercantile and religious groups and a royal cult that had only unlimited impact on the masses of the host communities (Lapidus, 2014).

In essence, the Muslim clerics' families are highly respected, and economically and politically powerful in the community. A very significant aspect of the political and economic power of these clerics is intimately tied to the mystical notion of *Baraka*: divine grace and or blessing. *Baraka* is obtained through kinship, teachers, and exemplary behaviour. It is often associated with knowledge, a strong personality, wealth, and power. (Cruise O Brien & Coulon, 1998; Soares, 2005). It also encompasses the capacity to give blessings that protect against a wide variety of misfortunes (Bop, 2005).

Critically, the place of Muslim clerics and their importance to Islam as a world religion must be reflected on the ground that 'local specificity' is the key to understanding the very significance of the local. Like followers of all religions, Muslims in the contemporary religious landscape must relate to the locality, and the transcendent on different levels the society (Stauth & Schieke, 2008). Thus, the localised expressions of Islam have also become a subject of study among many scholars interested in the Muslim world. Therefore, the commodification of prayer, by Yoruba Muslim clerics could be seen as an unchanging essence behind a changing appearance. There is no doubt that where people are educated and socialised, they would in turn, educate and socialise the next generations. Thus, there is continuity in human history. But how continuity takes place, and how it is imagined by people for remembering and reconstructing the past, requires closer examination (Stauth & Schieke, 2008).

Beyond that, Sounaye (2016) further posits that there is significant literature on contemporary Islam, which shows that the wedding of religiosity and entrepreneurship is not specific to West Africa (Fowchard, Mary and Otayek 2005; Leblane, 2012), rather, it seems to be a major trend in the Muslim world (Hirschkind, 2006; Osella & Osella, 2010; Rudnycky, 2009), where socio-economic and cultural processes are deeply reshaping Muslim 'moral lives, interactions, and self-perception. Hence, these religious figures seek to have an impact on their society by affecting individual lifestyles and, more importantly, by infusing their communities with religious' ideas and norms. Relying on these strategies and models of actions has been the novelty in this social context.

2.1.6 Symbolism: Discursive Tradition and Islamic Modernity

Religious symbols are often referred to as codes, which can be compared with the technical and functional codes used in everyday life. Using the resources of the religious' tradition, religious symbols perform important psychological and social functions for groups and communities: things get done, ideas are thought, individual actions defined the social groups formed. Hence each of the major practices in Islam may thus be regarded as a discursive practice, always like other practices in the tradition (Tayob, 1999). While symbols are more than social strategies, they also point to the metaphysical beings or presence that a particular religious' tradition posits. They refer to and draw strength from

their connectedness with absolutes. In this respect, the symbols of Islam are first placed in historical content. Secondly, its symbols are in discursive practices within these historical contexts.

For Asad (1986), the notion of an Islamic symbol is part of a discourse. This understanding of symbols expands the Geertzian conception of the symbolic map by focusing on acts and statements as strategies and patterns within groups. Tayob (1992) argued further for the religious location and relation of a symbol within a tradition. Thus, religious evaluations and analyses have often been accused of ignoring the historical location of symbols and rituals. Rituals, beliefs, and practices are often thought of as immutable symbols, which escape the positive and deleterious effects of history.

Bourdieu (1969) also posits that symbols, rituals, and myths are not simply “dispositions that generate and structure practices and representations but are themselves structured by such things as material conditions characteristic of a class condition”. For Asad (1986), the anthropological study of Islam as the primary object “should be approached as the discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledge”. In Asad’s view, a tradition consists of discourses. These discourses relate conceptually to a *past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a *future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned, through a *present* (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions) (Asad, 1986).

It is regarded as a unique manner of studying religion, and they could be placed within a single continuum of symbolic, expressive, and sacred codes as one extreme and technical, functionally, and profane code at the other. Therefore, Asad sees rites and symbols in religions as “disciplinary practices of which actors are aware, and with which they practice their religion. Hence, he placed religious symbols in their social space; the discursive practices of Islam included its legal, theological, and experimental strategies, which had to be brought into the discussion of specifically Islamic societies, communities, and practices (Tayob, 1999).

Jálàbí, practice is a localised prayer practice that has become an integral part of Muslim life in Yoruba communities and elsewhere in West Africa. In other words, it is a form of Muslim religiosity that emerged in tandem with new models of personhood and public life, and new patterns of consumption, thereby further contributing to the plurality of religious expression (Masquelier, 2009). As a discourse, *Jalabi* practice was introduced as socio-cultural beliefs and spiritual satisfaction by the *Onijálàbí* who offers a petitionary prayer for the people and community.

Mahmood (2005) identifies the tendency to analyse Islamic traditions in terms of the practical and conceptual resources they offer and provide to its adherents, and in that respect emphasises pragmatism as a spiritual impetus for the social engagement of the *Alfa Onijálàbí*. This form of discourse arguably constitutes one of the key drivers in determining the characters of Islam in Africa and its holy men that lays out the structures from which the faith deploys itself (Diouf & Leichtmen, 2009).

In all, the notion of “discursive tradition” of Islam connotes seeing *Jálàbí*, practices as historically evolving discourse through which the foundational texts (Qur’ān and Hadith collections) and other related narrations and experiences are reinterpreted to respond to the conditions of a changing world. Thus, *Jálàbí* from this perspective indicates a malleable practice. It also entails the existence of immutable guiding principles, its forms and substantial are still routinely reinterpreted to enable the boundaries of the forbidden (*haram*) and permissible (*halal*) that are at the heart of Islam to accommodate ‘Muslim communities’ shifting contexts of engagement with social realities. Likewise, this concept and notion allow scholars to consider how Muslims discursively engage with and reflect on the past to articulate meaningful formulations of problems and possibilities of the present without appealing to reject traditions or invent new ones (Asad, 1986).

2.1.7 The Emergence of *Jálàbí* Practice and the Popular Culture in Islam

Generally, the spread of Islam in Yoruba land was closely associated with clerics who performed miracles and offered the hope of intercession with God in return for conversion, most specifically of the *Obas* and the chiefs in Yoruba towns. In other words, Islam was a factor of change in society, such that people moved from overbeing overwhelmingly rural and religiously traditional to being increasingly urban and majority Muslims. While various

Islamic institutions have contributed to this process, one of such crucial institutions, according to Ross (2005) in particular have created urban networks, the clerical lineages of the early modern period. It should be noted that the Muslim clerics were virtually the only literate group in West African society at that time. Therefore, literacy and religious scholarship distinguished them as a group and determined their social and political functions. For instance, they served at royal courts as secretaries, yard keepers, consultants, diplomatic as Judges even though the structures of the states were traditional rather than Islamic.

In this way, they rendered petitionary prayers and spiritual service to the population, and particularly to the traditional rulers, elites, warrior castes which though often openly hostile to Islam at initial stages but later considered the charms and spiritual commodities to be the most efficacious means of protection in welfare (Ross, 2005). Thus, they were seen as an important elite group in society (Sanneh, 1976; Ross, 2005). In other words, the “popular” in Islam refers to the common everyday activities of people by leading a Muslim life as prescribed by the Qur’ān. On the other hand, Islam as a “practical” religion refers to “how ordinary people (peasants, proletarians, merchants as well as mystics and scholars) order and articulate categories, symbols and the relations between them in the pursuit of comprehensive, expressing and formulating social practice and experience” (Ellen, 1988).

And as Ryan (1979) posited that Islam among Yoruba people emerged essentially from Quarantine first as a clerical style of worship and petitionary prayer that was seen to be of great benefit to a King or a nation in distress. Thus, the first apprehension of Islam among them was the pragmatic of its practice: its prayer worked, especially when made in the context of the peculiar ritual worship of Muslims. It was not the ideal Islam of egalitarian worship that attracted West Africa at first, rather they perceived Islam on the efficacy of its prayer of the gifted holy men who could write and heal, and make amulets for others (Ryan, 1979, Peel, 2000) or those wishing to access power in its various forms. It is therefore of great value to point out that the leadership of the traditional community as represented by the traditional ruler (*Oba*) characteristically hunted for a Muslim scholar with charm, magical power, amulet or Qur’ānic medicine, intending to support himself with such protective and preventive powers from the Qur’ān, the efficacy of which has been widely

attested to Balogun (1980) who presents a clear picture of the give-and-take relationship between Islam and Yoruba traditional setting when he writes:

The arrival of the Muslim scholar, especially one credited with mystic power, was usually significant. Because of his fame, the Muslim leader could not keep away from the local ruler indefinitely. Both the ruler and the Muslim scholar had good reasons to be friends. The ruler saw the Muslim scholar as a mystic who could use his mystic powers to solve some pressing problems, to cause rain to fall during a drought, to make him win his wars and thereby enhance his prestige, and to offer special prayers for protection against witchcraft or nullify the evil effect of witchcraft if its spell had already been cast (Balogun, 1980).

Coinciding with the wave of urbanisation and economic liberalisation efforts, the commodification of religious sphere with the exchange of blessing and prayer as commodities intensified and proliferated. The Muslim clerics (*Marabout, Alfa Oníjálàbí*) thus became more and more 'free-floating sanctifiers (Saores, 2005), aggressive entrepreneurs, avidly looking for clientele in West Africa's centersentres. Unconstrained by social control, urban centred, where people struggling in a highly competitive environment for jobs, spoand uses, accommodation - presented unparalleled opportunities for the patronage of the Muslim clerics (*Alfa*) to offer spiritual empowerment, protection, and divine services to the needy (Gemmeke, 2008).

The centrality of Islamic petitionary prayer to the everyday life of the people, as well as its importance to socio-religious reality is therefore highly remarkable. These practices are germane as it reflects a local expression of Islam that is not confined to a specific domain or audience, perhaps, they enjoy the patronage of clientele that includes non-Muslims spiritual seekers, to embrace religion and imbue public life with notion of religious essence.

In the increasingly competitive society, where the possibilities for the social rise are constrained, spiritual or prayer patronage gradually emerges as the path road to success, and Oníjálàbí are being consulted for spiritual rejuvenation and redemption of mundane human affadailyasis and they attend to a large clientele of religious consumers, both men, and women for their ability to affect things in this world. While this is an expression of the increasing visibility of Islam and Islamic practices that aimed at enhancing individindividualuality and piety among the Yoruba people in Nigeria, this is also what I

called *Jálàbí* practice or what Last (1988) and Soares (2005) refer to as prayer economy or what Weber (2009) expressed as a religious independent entrepreneur. Thus, creating context- context-specificif- evint value of a religious practice that is intrinsically spiritual in meaning.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The importance of theoretical framework in research cannot be over-emphasised. Nachmias and Nachmias (1981) state that a theory is a logical deductive statement consisting of a set of interrelated concepts from which testable propositions can be derived. And in their submission, White and Clark (1990) conceive a theory as “a set of proposed explanations logically or systematically related to each other that seek to explain or predict a phenomenon”. It is in this regard that this research utilises both the theory of Religious Commodification and Cultural Hermeneutics to account for the data that are presented in this study.

2.2.1 Theory of Religious Commodification

Commodification could be described as the process of converting or transforming an object, human, social or cultural value into market value. It denotes a manifold but specific array of processes and strategies in religious markets. In other words, it is connected with a re-enchanting of modern life by ascribing meanings to products like the enhancement of self-realization or having blessings powers. As a concept, it is an element of discursive change in a wider social and cultural milieu. Religious commodification on the other hand is a process of recontextualization of religious symbols, language, and ideals from their original contexts to the consumer culture (Ornella, 2013). In practical term, the commodification of religion simply means the transformation of the use-value of religion as a way of life and the sources of normative value which are based on religious beliefs into commodities that have exchange value (York, 2001).

However, the symbolic interrelation between religious faiths/institutions and market economy has always loomed large in the sociology of human religious experience. To some extent, religious commodification exists everywhere as it forms a crucial part of complicated

human religious' ventures. Indeed, the rise and fall of faith are inseparable from its marketable qualities and entrepreneurial leadership. Therefore, the emergence of religious commodification at the turn of the dispensation offers an alternative way and method for the study of religion that speak critically about the complex tension and fragmentation of modern/postmodern social life. It also reflects how an academic discipline deals with the global explosion of religious faiths and movements at both conceptual and phenomenal levels (Kitiarsa, 2008).

In a way, religions reinvent themselves to compete for attention and affiliation from “consumers “in the “spiritual marketplace” (Roof, 1999; see also Einstein, 2007). In short, religious commodification, while spurring production and consumption of marketized religious goods, has unveiled some widespread trends of refashioning pieties and inspiring prosperity. It strongly re-affirms the “continuing significance of religion in the mn society (Dillon, 2003).

One obvious way to understand religious commodification is to take it as a complex historical and cultural process. Ward (2006), for instance, argues that ‘what we believe, and practices produce, reinforce, and modify are historically and culturally embedded. As part of human religious experience, it has become part of major everyday life and ways of expressing human religiosity which has gradually structured and organized our religio-cultural world. Religious commodification thus connotes the fact that religious leadership and community had to commodify religious practice and other spiritual materials and commodity readily available in the spiritual marketplace in responding to religious demand of the consumers. In other words, the religious sphere cannot prosper without money and other strong material foundations. Although the birth and expansion of all faiths have involved certain forms and degrees of religious commodification from the very beginning, the “growing worldliness of religion” (Moore, 1994) has been more evident and produced socioeconomic and cultural impacts (Berger, 1999; Berger et al. 2008; Twitchell, 2007).

In the *New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology*, edited by Turner (2010), Kitiarsa defines religious commodification as an emerging multifaceted and multidimensional marketised process which turns religious faith, traditions, or practices into consumables and marketable commodities. It is also considered as complex historical and cultural constructions that are produced in specific cultural contexts and thus, requires an

understanding of cultural frameworks to unlock their symbolic and socio-economic significance. For Kitiarsa (2008), commodifying processes are high incentives and specifically embedded in the local-global trajectories of the market economy and post-modern religious explosions. Accordingly, it implies that prayer, and religious practice is turning into consumable and marketable goods, bringing them into various scales and modes of a market transaction. It is an interactive and iterative relationship between religion and the market, simultaneously involving both market force, commodifying religion and religious institution taking part in the marketplace and consuming culture (Kitiarsa, 2010).

In this respect, Weller (2008) also noted that our everyday life is no further secularised, but the ways we bless and embrace our endeavours in life with showers of prayers, amulets, or worship to achieve well-being, good health, wealth, and decent life, have become what Agnew (2003) described as “paid-for-experience” for people. This ultimately made Turner (2008) to suggest that “religion must be sold along with other cultural products, Roof (2009) also posits further that consumer/congregation’s loyalty cannot be taken for granted. Pattana Kitiarsa (2008) sees the idea of religious commodification as a rising conception and methodological orientation and a viable field for sociological and anthropological reflections. The interest was making religion itself into a commodity and more as an object that is rendered and approached as ‘sacred’ worlds of religion and commerce (Sinha, 2011). Thus, ‘religious’ and ‘market’ forces are indeed brought into proximity in the process of commodification and consumption of religious commodities.

In other words, religious commodification simply refers to the process that converts religious symbols and practices into commodities, objects of consumption readily available in the “supermarket of religion (Ornella, 2013). As a process, Ornella, (2013) argues that it could work on several levels. The two most obvious are the (often commercial) offers of blessings, prayers, etc., through the purchase of religious artifacts, books, figures, etc. The second important and obvious level is the attachment of religious values to consumer products (Ornella, 2013).

More significantly, the most direct sociological explanation for religious entrepreneurship is in terms of religious capital. Iannaccone (1990) and more recently Stark and Finke (2000) define this as the “degree of mastery and attachment to a particular

religious' culture" Consuming religious goods and products can enhance attachment to a particular culture, and they can reflect mastery of that culture (Park & Baker, 2007). However, in the capitalist contexts, value is not only about economic cost, but it is also about the social life and significance of a community. Thus, a value can differ by how much sense a commodity makes to a consuming public; how many markets it circulates through, and how much excitement it generates.

In global capitalist contexts, the process of commodification is not just about creating a market of things; it is about creating a desire *for* things (Bielo, 2015) and people find many ways to integrate commodity consumption into their religious life. Religious commodification is also viewed as the process by which the social-economic market is being utilized by religious ideology (D'Alisera, 2001). This process, therefore, turns petitionary prayer to commodity; with religion becoming something that can be bought and sold.

This study aligns with Kitiarsa Pattana position that religious commodification constitutes crucial dimensions in contemporary religious-cultural forms. It thus position religion as a good through which its spiritual function become a commodity that is consumable by the people (2008). Commodification has thus turned the key symbols and potent artefacts of religions into economic goods and objects of religious desire in the market of faiths. Religious commodification operates in the market that has rapidly manifested itself in a burgeoning 'symbolic economy' of spectacular monuments and global economies of Charisma (Kitiarsa, 2008).

In this study, our community is the *du'ā* which consists of petitionary prayers, spiritual commodities, products, and shower of *barakah* (abundant blessings) that people seek, and the targeted populations are the burgeoning religious consumers. Hence, my interest is in how religious practice and human well-being, or security interactions and interpretations of social, spiritual, and material understandings are linked and connected, between the *Onījálàbí* and the religious consumers, who are in search of the meaning of life in a spiritual marketplace. In the light of this theory, petitionary prayer as an Islamic ritual performance is meant to establish and re-establish a unified social order, primarily for spiritual functioning, alleviating anxiety, distress, fear, doubt, and sorrow as well as total well-being of the religious consumers in a spiritual marketplace. In a different way, this study explores religious commodification as the form of exchange and gifts-giving that occur between the

cleric and the religious consumer, within the logic of gratification that open door to the divine realm.

The theory of religious commodification conspicuously poses a challenge to the secularization or modernity assumption about the religion. In other words, the theory of religious commodification, encourages the growth and proliferation of religious practices, in this case, the spiritual capital of the *Oníjálàbí* continue to strengthen and enhances religious consumer well-being and soothe their existential problems. It also points to show that the symbiotic interaction between religious practice and the market economy is a product social and cultural milieu from which it emerges. Certainly, a public sphere in which Islam is everywhere is illustrative of a phenomenon whereby Islam can be seen to have entered more deeply into the lives of Yoruba people in more commodified ways than ever before.

Thus, an investigation into religious commodification has challenge theories of secularization in modern society demonstrating that far from a wholesale decline in public belief in God and religious membership, certain modern and rational societies continue to embrace religion and imbue public life with the notion of religious symbolism (Izharuddin, 2017). However, as Ariel Heryanto (2011) rightly posits that religion's relevance in an increasingly secularised world is maintained through its willingness to enter 'dangerous liaisons with the logic of the capitalist market'. Whereas a strict believer in the secularization theory would have argued that the success of religious institutions would depend on the degree to which they adapted to (Beger, 1999).

Fealy (2008) argues and identifies the increasing presence of Islam in the spiritual marketplace as it encourages the incorporation of spiritual values into the everyday practices of Muslims. Therefore, the development of the Muslim public conducive to the rise of religious commodification as a distinct attribute of 'Islamic modernity'. Islamic modernity is seen as a political and cultural sensibility whereby modernity is employed alongside a commitment to Islam as a project of modernity. The concept of Islamic modernity departs from the view that positions modernity and Islam as mutually exclusive and in opposition to each other. Rather, Islamic modernity develops its approximations to the Western notion of modernity (Gole, 2000). In actual sense, not only are Muslim public a product of Islamic modernity, but the former relies heavily on the sensibilities of Islamic modernity to develop as a site for continuing contestations, not least the contest of Islamic relations in the public

and private sphere or enterprise. It, therefore, engages critically and creatively with Western ideas of modernity, destabilising fixed ideas about Islam versus the modern 'West', the secular and religious sphere, and the private and public domains (Gole, 2002).

In all, the logic of the free market emphasis upon financial gain and profit appears to have created an opportunity for the *Oníjálàbí* to build upon their Islamic and cultural capital to develop new mechanism that could have a positive net benefit for them. Apparently, like African Independent Church (AIC) pastors, the *Oníjálàbí* offer a celebrative religion practice and engage in prodigious use of ritual performance to the public. The appropriation of spiritual languages (Arabic) as a revelatory medium is an instructive cultural and force as a fabric of everyday life. The argument in this respect is that the practice evolved as a form of charismatic religiosity by Yoruba, in Yorubaland and purposely for the Yoruba people themselves, as a charismatic spirituality that defines their response to contemporary problems and issues.

Therefore, *Jálàbí* practice is therefore, a demonstration of African deployment of religious symbolism and imaginations to generate spiritual power. Given the decline economic crisis, punitive structural adjustment systems, and the effect of existential challenges in a precarious society, people will continue to turn to *Oníjálàbí* who do provide and rendered petitionary prayers (*du'ā*) that help them make sense of the misery and hopeless situations.

2.2.2 Cultural Hermeneutics Theory

The universality of hermeneutics is one of the most important points emphasised by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his analysis of social phenomenon, but the reality they said come to us interpreted based on perspectives derived from human worldview, which seemingly help us to see and interpret the world from a definite point of view. Culture shapes and designs the world we live in and our place in it. People's identity, lifestyle, and practices are formed within the context of a specific and contextual culture, and individuals and societies examine themselves through a particular interpretation of their actions, values, surroundings, and functions.

However, considering recent developments in the religious sphere, sociologists and anthropologists see the need to broaden the meaning and understanding of religious practices further. Thus, this study adopts the cultural hermeneutics as a theory to explore the interpretation and understanding of cultural meanings and methods embedded in commodified prayer. Therefore, cultural hermeneutics as a theoretical approach makes social-cultural contexts of *Jálàbí* practice the subject of interpretation. The theory aims to assesses tradition and worldviews, cultures, and everyday life experiences; to examine the cultural conditioning from which meanings about exchanges are produced.

Arguably, in the context of secularisation, globalisation, and pluralisation, 'hermeneutics' emerged as a relevant theory to address the ever-widening gap and the lack of understanding between religious practice and contemporary lifestyle (Lombart and Pollefeyt, 2004). Contextually, hermeneutics is considered as the interpretation and understanding of social events through analysis of their meanings for the human participants in the events. In essence, the *hermeneutic* approach, as adopted in this study holds that the most basic fact of social life is the meaning of an action. Social life is constituted by social actions, and actions are meaningful to the actors and the other social participants. Moreover, subsequent actions are oriented towards the meanings of prior actions; so, understanding the later action requires that we have an interpretation of the meanings that various participants assign to their actions and those of others (see Dilthey, 1989; Weber, 1949; Ricoeur, 1976; Gadamer, 1977). It also emphasizes the importance of both context and form as its central principle; as such it is only possible to know the meaning of an act or statement within the context of the discourse or worldview from which it originates.

Significantly, hermeneutics in sociological context is largely linked to Hans-Georg Gadamer's perspective and orientation. Thus, interpretation is central to everyday human activity. Every day human beings must interpret texts, situations, feelings, and people. This is because the interpretation of meaning is at the centre of social inquiry (Little, 2008). In Gadamer's words, "understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well"; it is a "fusion of horizons" of the past and present, objective, and subjective. At the same time, Gadamer (1977) wants to steer clear of "anything goes" relativism. For him, understanding is a process that invites and even demands a plurality of interpretations, but not at the expense of giving up criteria that distinguish the right ones

from wrong ones. Therefore, understanding, essentially historical and human grounded "facticity," is always a kind of "self-understanding."

Furthermore, it is "the primordial ontological character of human life itself', not so much a deviation from objective scientific knowledge as its necessary foundation. In essence, what defines the act or event of understanding for both Heidegger and Gadamer is that it has a fore structure, that is, that when we understand something, we do so in a way that is shaped by a set of prior commitments to a way of life, and specific expectations about the object of understanding.

For this study, the theory of cultural hermeneutics provides insight into the importance of understanding and interpretation in the analysis of *Jálàbí* practice, starting from religious (con)text, the relationship between the sacred and the profane, as well as temporality and spatiality, in the construction of the social order. People, on the one hand, request for religious practices that feeds into their personal and spiritual lives. The religious cleric on the other hand, attempts to interpret the lived religious experience of religious consumers within the context of Islamic spirituality that aligns with their contextual societal ethos as embodied practice. Therefore, the rise and increase in religious merchandise as lived religious experience today was necessitated by the pragmatic and utilitarian consideration that enabled the interaction of Islamic spirituality to be linked with people's everyday lifeworld. It has also given us a definite picture of the meaning of prayer in the life of the people.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter is mainly concerned with the methodology of the fieldwork and the methodology of the study' engagement with data from the field. The research was, therefore, ethnographic in content and style and relied on thick descriptions and rich contextual accounts constructed through key Informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and field observations. The chapter also offers the limitations of the dissertation.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted ethnographic designs to explore the *Jálàbí* practice and the meanings that it has for clerics and their clients (religious consumers). According to Van Maanen (1995), "Ethnography claims are granted by many if not most of its readers a kind of documentary status on the basis that someone goes 'out there', draws close people, and events, and then writes about what is learned *in situ*." The ethnographic design adopted in this study offers insight into the *Jálàbí* practice through the very eyes of actors (Muslim clerics), thus enabling an insider's perspective. This study is concerned with the *Jálàbí* practice as an Islamic popular culture of prayer, it also constitutes what van Maanen (1995) describes as micro ethnography.

This methodology, therefore, enabled the researcher to observe the everyday lived and religious experience in contemporary religious changes in Yorubaland by engaging in and contextualising the discussions in local and global discourses. Since our everyday life is no further secularised, but the ways, we bless and embrace our life endeavours with showers of petitionary prayers, production of spiritual commodities (*amulets*), or worship wishing to achieve good health, wealth, and decent life, have become common 'paid-for-experience'

(Agnew, 2003). Thus, the study demonstrates how aspect of Islamic spirituality is commodified as a commodity for human consumption through the ethnographic analysis.

3.2 The Study Population

The population of this study consisted of Muslim clerics and every adult in the city of Ibadan. This encompasses males and females, particularly those in the age range of people that seek spiritual solutions to life problems. Although the subject of inquiry pertains to Islam as a religion, the study population nevertheless includes non-Muslims who also patronize the Muslim clerics for their spiritual needs.

3.3 Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique and simple random sampling were adopted to select informants for this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to focus on key informants, in-depth interview informants, and the locales of data collection. However, simple randomization allowed for the inclusion of larger bodies of informants in the study.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Broadly speaking, this work is considered as micro-ethnography, that is, an ethnography that does not take as its subject the study of an entire culture but instead grasps at a smaller unit of study. This does not lessen the necessity and intensity of fieldwork. Thus, much of the data to be discussed in this work were elicited through fieldwork, which was conducted between March 2016 and February 2017, with occasional supplementary visit to the field in 2018 and 2019.

Following the research design adopted in this research, multiple methods were used for data collection. These are participant observation, key-informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and life history. Each method so utilised was meant to complement and build upon other methods. Apart from yielding enormous data, the combination of these methods allowed for objective validation of data. Photographs are used to depict certain prayer sessions and other spiritual engagements of the Muslim clerics witnessed during the fieldwork exercise and other scenes as a reflection of the authenticity of the study. It is

important to state that many of the informants refused to be captured in photographs for personal reasons, such as privacy and fear of the unknown

3.4.1 Participant Observation

Essentially, this method was very crucial to ethnographic study, and it was the primary technique used for this research work. During this study, I observed the activities of *Oníjálàbí* at different locations within the city of Ibadan. I paid close attention to both private and public prayer sessions where I gained useful insights into the nature of exchanges that represent prayer commodification and its interpretations. Also, I took on a variety of roles in the period of the study and I shared in the life experience and activities of those under study. In the process, I gained a better understanding of how religious exchanges and interactions took place in local contexts, and the strategies of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* in accessing “religious markets”.

During fieldwork, I was involved in several activities that relate to the research subject, and as well as paid attention to every event and detail that occurred on the field. I equally asked critical questions about what I observed. While engaging in an immersion process, I did not fail to be aware of my role as a researcher. Honestly, using observation, I was able to notice and identified certain techniques and practices which seem that many of them do engage in but often refute during interviews sessions, especially the use of incision (*gbéré*) which I noticed even with some of the *Alfa* during this study.

Observing and participating in *Jálàbí* activities during the fieldwork affords me the opportunity of eliciting on-the-spot data and recording every moment of significant happenings in the field. Thus, it was the integral research tools that went more beyond mere observation, but through which I gained a deeper insight into the practices, engagements, and activities of the *Oníjálàbí* on daily basis at different locations. I pay close attention to both private and public prayer sessions where I gained useful insights into the nature of exchanges that represent prayer commodification. This has also complemented interview sessions. This was because regular attendance at these events enabled the collection of data and observation of practices that I did not elicit. Likewise, I also observed the patterns of how the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* attends to his clients as they came for consultations. And it was very amazing that some of the *Alfa* allowed me to discuss freely with some of the clients to share

their personal experiences in this discourse. The general framework for the themes observed during the fieldwork includes the following:

1. The nature of problems for which prayers are solicited from *Alfa Oníjálàbí*
2. The monetary and non-monetary negotiations between the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* and the clients.
3. The extent to which Qur’ān and the Hadith are referenced in *the Oníjálàbí* practice; and
4. The socio-demographic characteristics of the clients of *Alfa Oníjálàbí*

My observations were recorded in the form of field notes. Photographs were also deployed to capture the important sphere of everyday life of the research process. A digital camera was used to record some of the significant moments of encounter and activities in the field.

3.4.2 Key Informant interviews

The study derived bulk of its data from interviews conducted with Muslim clerics and their clients. I established early contacts with key informants through Alfa Lateef Alabere, a renowned *Jálàbí* practitioner who was my host when I first came to the field, and later through a network of friends and clerics whom I was introduced to through their friends and relations. Subsequently, I scheduled interview with them in their respective offices or homes. The open-ended interviews offered deeper understanding of the issues embedded in *Jálàbí* practice among the Yoruba Muslim clerics in Ibadan.

In all, I conducted interviews with ten (14) key informants, (10) six *Oníjálàbí*, and (4) four other Muslim faithful who are vast and acquainted with Islamic spirituality. They were purposively sampled because of their experience in the *Jálàbí* practice and their vast experience and advanced age. Moreover, their parents were also famous Muslim clerics. In other words, my key informants were born and brought up in the practice. Like one of them said during an interview, “*Owó àti óúnje Jálàbí ni wón fi tówa dàgabà*”. Meaning: Our parents used their earnings from *Jálàbí* (religious enterprise) to take care of us till we grow up.

The following *Alfas* were interviewed and served as key informants during this study. There were two Muslim religious Mogaji, who are members of the Imam- Ibadan-in-Council.

1. Alfa Ustadh Muhsin Abdul-Salam Arizukuna, Agbowo, Ibadan
2. Alhaji Imam Zakariya Balogun, Branch Missioner, Ansar-ud-deen Society, Odo-Ona, Ibadan
3. Imam Abdul-Qaudri Adetunji Ayede (Mogaji Ayede), Aduloju Area, Ibadan
4. Alhaji Imam M.A Bada, Oluyole Estate, Ibadan
5. Alfa Hassan Aminu Onisiriyen, Mogaji Onisiriyen compound, Oritamerin, Ibadan
6. Imam Dr. Bashir Olanrewaju Eleshinmeta, Oke-Ado, Ibadan
7. Alfa Alhaji Lafeef Alabere, Oja'ba Area, Ibadan
8. Alfa Ismail Showumi Basmallah, Alabata, Ibadan
9. Alhaji Ibrahim Uthman, Ajibode, Ibadan
10. *Alfa* Shehu Abdul-Quadir Alabidun, Oja'ba Area, Ibadan

Other key informants included:

- Alhaji Chief Nurein Adebayo Akanbi, (Arole), the clan head of Iba Oluyole dynasty (Arole Ile Iba Oluyole), Oja'ba, Ibadan. He has been the heir of the family since the reign of late Oba Yinusa Arapasowu as Olubadan of Ibadanland. The Iba Oluyole was the first Chief (Baale) in Ibadan, and he gave Ibadan a fearful reputation since then.
- Alhaji Kamarudeen Salami Osundina, an elder, who was the acting family head (Mogaji) of Osundina family, Isale Osi, Area, Ibadan.
- Oloye Pa Abdul-Waheed Oyewo Aare Latoosa, who is the patriarch of Latoosa dynasty.
- Alhaji Muftau Makinde, aged 92 years, who is a maternal descendant of the popular Eleshinmeta clerical lineage of Eleshinmeta compound, Oja'ba, Ibadan,

The above people served as my major key informants for this study.

These are set of adult men, who are over 70 years old. They are very familiar with events that occurred when they were still young in Ibadan, most specifically those related to this research work. They are also vast in history, culture, and tradition of the people and Ibadan

city. Interviewees or informants in the *Jálàbí* practice were regarded as primary sources and my contact with them was established through a snowballing technique initiated with the help of the three-research assistants in the field.

Meetings were arranged on the phone, by text messaging and through face-to-face contacts. The interview questions were general, covering historic trajectories and the emergence of *Oníjálàbí*, the nature and impact of the *Jálàbí*, the compatibility of *Jálàbí* with Islamic cultures of prayer, and the pattern and trend of the commodification of the petitionary prayer and other Islamic practices. The interviews were majorly conversation with a purpose, as no specific format was adopted for the interview sessions. It is important to note that the key informant interviews also flowed from my immersion in the *Oníjálàbí* practice. This allowed me to relate to the experiences of the people I interviewed.

The interviews comprised several tapes recorded (ranging from 45 to 180 minutes), as well as several weekly non taped, informal interviews in the field (from 4 to 10 interviews per week). I carried out interviews in both English and Yoruba languages. I crafted most of my questions based on the direction of the discussion and used them to clarify and expand on emergent issues.

3.4.3 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were carried out among 86 purposively selected informants. Each interview lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. Interviews centered on offering insights into the ethos of *Jálàbí* practice, the role of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* as a spiritual advisor on petitionary prayer practice in Ibadan. The interview format was semi-structured, being that the participants' knowledge of the subject was seen as advanced. Informants were selected from a cross-section of Muslim community that include Chief *Imams*, *Imams*, *Alfas*, *Sheikh*, Islamic scholars, (including their family members) academia, civil and public servants, Islamic-title holders, traditional-title holders, Clan heads, (*Mógàjí*) Muslim Community leaders, Missioners and leaders and some members of selected Muslim organisations, such as, *Ansar-ud-deen society*, *NASFAT*, *QUAREEB* Family, *Ahmadiyyah*, *Tabligh Jammah*, *Tijaniyyah* and *Quadirriyyah* groups, ordinary Muslims and non-Muslims were also interviewed, as religious consumers who could seek spiritual services. .

The Interview questions were also open-ended, and this logically enabled informant to respond in ways they deemed fit. Most of the questions were clarification, confirmation, and explanation in nature. For example, prompting questions such as, “What effects do soliciting petitionary prayers with money have on Islamic ideal of *du’ā* as it were used to provoke deeper responses on Islamic culture of prayers and its sanctity amidst the activities of *Alfa Oníjálàbí*. Generally, the interview questions cover every aspect of the research objectives.

3.4.4 Life History

Data for this study were also obtained through the life history method. The life history of a person tells us about the life he or she has lived. Thus, it is considered as a complete narrative of one’s entire experience, which highlights the most important aspects. The life history of some selected accomplished and successful *Alfa Oníjálàbí* provided details of the individual’s experiences and familiarity which largely add impetus to the data gathered for the study. Thus, we focused on individual clerics rather than the group, which provides specific insight into the nature of their social status individually. It was triangulated with other data collection methods such as interviews to confirm and to place the research construct in the context of other events. In all, I spent considerable time with Alhaji Quadri Adetunji Ayede, Alhaji Z.B Balogun, and Ustadh Muhsin Arizukuna who had lived and had been in *Jálàbí* practice in Ibadan for over three decades and had become quite established cleric in the community. The major informants that featured in the study also had their life histories recorded and presented.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were organised under different themes that reflect the objectives of the study, and the procedure of interpretive analysis was utilised. This involves staying close to the data and interpreting it from an empathic understanding. The interpretive analysis involves a backward and forwards movement between description and interpretation, foreground and background, part, and whole (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Besides, as an anthropologist with interest in religion, I use interpretive, symbolic, cultural, historical, and reflective approaches, among others to analyse the material and data obtained from the field. The

interpretive analysis was employed to achieve a thick description of transactional exchange in a spiritual infrastructure, as well as the processes, characteristics, and forms of those exchanges.

3.6 Limitations of the Methodology

As with many scholarly studies, this research is subject to some limitations. This study was restricted to the activities of a class of Muslim clerics that specialised in rendering spiritual services to people for a price in Ibadan, mostly outside the usual religious space and settings. This is partly justified because, so little has been researched about Islam in Ibadan; partly because for all its neglect by anthropologists and cultural studies; Ibadan is a crucial melting point and the hub for Islamic learning. However, it was challenging to limit religious practice to spiritual patronage as a social construct. Even more challenging, though, is the possibility that a certain segment of the Muslim communities hardly recognises *Jálàbí* as being in tandem with the orthodox Islamic practices.

Secondly, spiritual patronage was largely considered as a very sensitive discourse by the *Ulama* and in some ways, there was reluctance from some of the informants to speak about the trajectories of *Jálàbí* and were always unwilling to comment or discuss it in the public. Many others do not see themselves, either to be called patron or client. Rather they perceive the research and researcher intruding into their private affairs and enterprise, which they considered to be secretive.

The study does not claim an overall representation of Islamic religious commodification in Yoruba landscape in terms of the full coverage of the geographical area and religio-cultural traditions, rather it randomly presents a selection of religious commodification practices among Muslim clerics in Ibadan. Finally, my limited working knowledge of Arabic, the most important language of Islamic education, partly hindered this research in exploring areas that might have better enhance this work. Textual analysis of the texts used in teaching was limited, even though some of these were explored in parts of this work.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Chapter Overview

In what is to follow, I first sketch, in an “ethnographic presentation”, relevant aspects of the landscape that formed the background for my ethnographic field research in Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria on how *Oníjálàbí* commodified petitionary prayers (*du’ā*) and other everyday religious activities as commodity for consumption in a spiritual marketplace, and their emergence as a religious entrepreneur in a society pervaded by neoliberal ethos. In other words, this chapter of the dissertation presents the results of data obtained from the fieldwork and discussion of the findings emanating from the data collected through in-depth interview, key Informant interviews, participant’s observations as well as life histories of some selected Muslim clerics.

4.1 Data Presentation

The data presentation is organised along the research objectives. In other words, I present data that chronicle the socio-historical trajectories of *Jálàbí* practice, the *Jálàbí* performance in the context of Islamic culture of *du’ā* and the embedded hermeneutics in the Yoruba culture of prayer, the way a notion of spiritual capital and human security are framed in commodification practices, the different ways in which everyday spiritual engagements of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* constitute element of human security to religious consumer (transactional exchange), and the extent to which people’s transactional relationship with *Alfa Oníjálàbí* influence their understanding of *du’ā*. Following the data presentations are the analysis and discussion.

4.1.1 Socio-Historical Trajectories of *Jálàbí* Practice in Ibadan

The practice of *Jálàbí* in Ibadan is embedded in the early history of the city. Before the arrival of Islam and Muslim clerics in Ibadan, the city was always bedeviled by unpleasant and violent attacks and outbreak of war that often ravaged the city. However, during the reign of Iba Oluyole, the people made attempt to find a permanent solution to the menace. The *Báálè* and his Council agreed to consult the *Ifà* through the Chief Priest (*Olúwo*) of the town. The occasion was also meant to ask the *Ifà* oracle about the future of the town, how prosperous the people and the inhabitants would be. This was practically the practice in many Yoruba societies before the advent of Islam and Christianity. The Yoruba people would hardly do anything without first consulting the *Ifà* oracle. At the instance of all community leaders, the *Ifà* priest conducted the divination event in an opening manner, and the sign of the *odú* called *Ósè Mejí* was revealed. According to my informants, the *Ósè Mejí*, as it was revealed, simply means ‘victory success, overcoming’. This was declared as a good omen for the town. Thus, *Ósè Mejí* became the guardian *odù* of the Ibadan to date. More significantly, the *Ifà* Priest also prophesied and predicted the visit of a Muslim cleric who would be of help to the town’s future with prayer fortification. And the community leaders gladly obeyed of the *Ifà* priest instruction accordingly.

Within a few weeks of the divination, a Muslim cleric, Imam Uthman Basunu by name, arrived and he was well received with enthusiasm and heartwarming reception. Decent and good accommodation facility was offered to him and his entourage (other *Alfas* that came with him). Imam Uthman Basunu, reported to have come from the Northern part of Nigeria. He was said to be one of the itinerant’s Muslim clerics preaching across various Yoruba cities and had particularly left Borno with the intention of moving from Ibadan to Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode for further propagation of Islam. Imam Basunu was consequently approached as advised by the *Ifà* priest to bless and pray for the success of the town, and the people, especially on the preservation of the growing population of the town and avert any future calamities and danger.

The visitor, who later became Imam, Shaykh *Alfa* Uthman Basunu in response to the demand of the Baale and the people of Ibadan, organised many other *Alfas* to render a petitionary prayer for the peace and reassurance of the well-being of the town. One of the many prayer rituals was to invoke God through *istikhārah* prayers. It was a special prayer

aimed at seeking divine guidance from God when people and society face difficult options in life. Obviously, the outcome of the *istikhārah* guided them to the next phase of action, which was a forty-one-day special prayer retreat in seclusion (*Khawla*) to seek and beseech Allah's *barakah* (divine blessings) for the town and the people. The Muslim clerics thereafter requested that the *Báálé* Oluyole fetch some ritual materials, principal among them were pigeons (*Eyelé* that should be caged, fed, and preserved within the territory where the prayer retreat was conducted. The pigeons were then well fed. This act drew many other pigeons to the place and their population soared as the prayer retreat continued (See Plates 3 and 4).

At the end of the forty-one days (41) petitionary prayer retreat, *Shaykh* Basunu called for an open prayer session. *Alfa* Basunu prayed (*Tauda*) on the pigeons and proclaimed that Ibadan would expand and prosper to wherever each of the pigeons flew. The event appeared to be mystical to the people, especially the high-rank Ibadan chiefs, and indeed encouraged many of them to publicly accept Islam and even mobilised their subjects and family members to embrace the religion. Consequently, Ibadan made spectacular conquests and progress under the leadership of Bashorun Oluyole with an attendant increase in the population of the city.

It was understandably that throughout this petitionary prayer retreat, which was conducted in seclusion, the Muslim clerics were treated well and lavished to a sumptuous feast everyday. They were also offered money and material gifts after the event in appreciation of their effort and the service rendered to the community. The *Báálè* and other Ibadan Chiefs believed that it was expedient for them to pay for the petitionary prayer rites, with reasonable material and monetary gifts, and make the clerics happy.

Thus, the experience and significance of this religious rite, which was previously performed by the *Ifà* priest (*Olúwo*) provided impetus for the sweeping support and religious patronage of the Muslim clerics by the people, especially the ruling elites in this part of the world. As such a permanent space was provided for the Muslim clerics where they could conduct their religious services and activities without hindrance from anybody within the town and later became closer to the palace authority and the Chiefs, who often invite them to their respective domains for petitionary prayers from time to time. Thus, they were gradually

insitutionalised into the city governance' system (KII: Alhaji Chief Kamarudeen Osundina; Fieldwork, December 2017).

Again, many families were so impressed, encouraged and they have cultivated the culture of inviting Muslim clerics to their homes and business places for petitionary prayers on a regular basis; weekly, monthly or annually, and the cleics often use the occasion to appeal and invoke Allah's protection, divine blessings, and well-being on the famiy. For instance, the narrative by the head of the Iba Oluyole family, Alhaji Chief Nureni Akanbi, provided further stimulus to this assertion:

Here at Iba Oluyole family compound, we frequently organised special petitionary prayer sessions on a annual basis, where we gather and invite many Muslim clerics, including the Chief Imam of Ibadanland to hold prayers for all the descendants of Iba Oluyole family for good things of life, security and success in all our endeavours.

The gathering always features and involves all our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of Iba Oluyole. The few members of the family who are not Muslim by faith are also in attendance because the prayer is very important to us as a family.

They would pray for us to overcome our socio-economic challenges and future endeavour. It is when our family members are spiritually fortified, that they will be safe, peaceful, and prosperous. We believe the success of the individual, is a success of the entire family.

He stated further that during the special prayer which often lasted for five hours or more, the Muslim clerics would carefully recite the selected invocation from the Qur'ān. Thus, petitionary prayer is the key to success, he said.

(KII: Fieldwork December 2017).



Plate 4.1: Special spot where the Pigeons were fed.

Source: Fieldwork 2017

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Plate 4.2: Water Concrete Pot for the Pigeons.

Source: Fieldwork 2017

From the threshold of this early period, the Ibadan chiefs began to adopt the Islamic rites into public performance as well as engage the ritual services of the Muslim clerics for spiritual assistance and include them in their entourage during their social outings and other engagements. The effectiveness and efficacy of their petitionary prayers and spiritual capital was acclaimed, even as these commodities were sometimes sown on traditional war uniforms or hanged on the body as means of strengthen protection. Thus, it was the beginning of the open support and religious patronage of the Muslim clerics by the rulers of the city. This also led to the provision of permanent religious space for the Muslim clerics where they conducted their religious services without hindrance from anybody within the town.

In another narrative, which further enhance *Jálàbí* culture could be traced to the era of *Báálè* Opeagbe, whose reign seemingly short, was very eventful. Opeagbe embraced Islam and his closeness to Muslim clerics, who were prominent in running the affair of the city made his reign to witness progress, greater peace, and calmness. He was their patron. Opeagbe gave tremendous support to Islam and Muslim clerics, which boosted their public visibility. Their petitionary prayers were seen as helping to restore hope, peace, and peaceful co-existence. In acknowledgement of his contribution to the development of the city of Ibadan, the people compose a praise poetry in his honour:

L'ayè Ope Agbe Ósúpà Lá bà ni lode.

Meaning: During the reign of Oba Ope Agbe, we stayed until moonlight appeared.

The success of Ibadan in warfare and the stability of the young city was also attributed to the spiritual prowess of Islamic clerics. One of the key informants said:

I can tell you authoritatively, that our forefathers discovered the spiritual power and influence of these Muslim clerics to be second to none and it was accepted because of its effectiveness and productive for them. It is instructive that our popular slogan, titled "*Ogun ò kó wa rí*" was also engineered as a result of the reliability on the meditative initiatives of the Muslim clerics who provided the spiritual commodities for them from time to time (KII: Alhaji Chief Kamarudeen Salami Osundina, Fieldwork, 2017).

It was said that the city of Ibadan was unstable and confronted with all sorts of turbulence and disorder before the reign of Opeagbe as Báálé. He hailed from Oke Kure, Oke Eleta Area, Ibadan. Life and property were not safe, and people could not walk the streets without fear of being assaulted and beaten. Incidents of robbery were rife, and women were incessantly raped. Besides, many were captured and sold into slavery. However, *Báálé* Opeagbe's tenure brought stability and restore hope. Having become closer to the Muslim clerics as their patron, they agreed to offer and render Islamic petitionary prayers periodically for the benefit of the community. He was so delighted and elated at the activities of the itinerant Muslim clerics. The new sense of security which people enjoyed in the city boosted the evangelization message of Islam and encouraged many to also embrace the religion.

In view of his ardent passion and affection for Islam, influenced by the remarkable spiritual intervention by the Muslim clerics, *Báálé* Opeagbe, was lobbied by one of his reliable chiefs and close associate, named Chief Osundina, who got the Báálé's approval to release an expansive land for the construction of a bigger Central Mosque that would be befitting enough to accommodate the growing population of the Muslim faithful, especially for the increasing number of attendees at the Friday congregational prayer. This new Moasque is located at the heart of the city, called *Oja'ba* Area, Ibadan. While the construction of the new central Mosque was judiciously approved, and the work began on the site immediately.

Little wonder, *Báálé* Opeagbe's immense gesture and contribution to religious sphere was well acknowledged in a popular praise poetry composed for him:

Bábà Ògunjumobi, Bábà Umar, Óbíírítí a jì f'ẹran jẹun bì Qmọ ode,
 Ò k'òlè kan árá ò ko jù sí òkànkàn.
 K'ó lé kan àrà ó kọ jú rẹ sí òkánkán. Ó kólé kan ó kọjú rẹ sí Teúre.
 Ó k ó' lé kan ràbìtì, ó ní kí gbogbo omo kéwú ó maa f'ọjú kan ara won.

Meaning:

Ogunjobi's father, Umar's father
 A powerful fellow who eats meat like a hunter's son,
 He built a wonder house well-suited:
 He built another facing Teure:

He built a round house and asked the Qur'ānic students to meet themselves to learn the Qur'ān there.

(KII: Alhaji Chief Kamarudeen Salami Osundina Fieldwork, 2017).

Many other prominent Ibadan chiefs and warlords openly embraced and got converted to Islam simply out of being awestruck by the wondrous 'work' of Muslim clerics through rendering of petitionary prayers and other spiritual services. They played a very important role in propagating Islam among the new converts in Ibadan. One of such prominent personalities was Chief Osundina, a kindhearted man that rose to the status of Osi Balogun of Ibadanland, during the reign of *Báálé* Opeagbe. He was known to be the first chief to publicly embrace Islam wholeheartedly. His compound is situated around Isale Osi, an area named after him (See Plate 5). Osundina also adopted Muhammad as his new name. He became the second in command to the Balogun Ibikunle of Ibadan during the reign of Baale Olugbode. Osundina also founded one of the largest indigenous compounds with about 200 houses and 20 lineages enclave together. The compound is popularly referred to as *Òdè Nlá* (*Big house*). The gated wall at the entrance of the compound is depicted by the plate 4.

Indeed, Chief Osundina could not be underestimated nor underated when mobilisation for war and winning strategies were the issues at stake. Having accepted Islam, he was also an admirer of Muslim outfits and attires, such that he was renowned for going to battles dressed in visibly Islamic outfit and laced it with the Muslim turban. This also prompt Ibadan people to compose and sang in his praise:

Osundina, òsì ònà ilú
Osundina, a'sàlùwàlá ni bi ofa ti ro'jo ogun
Osundina, àgbà Mùsùlùmí tí wé lówàní re k'ogun lójú

Meaning:

Osundina, the second in command of Ibadan
Osundina, one who performs ablution under a hail of war arrow.
A devout Muslim elder who goes to warfront in turban outfit

Arguably, he often wore the Muslim outfit and attire as spiritual symbolism to strengthen and fortify his body, and to escape injure or death during the war period.

Source: Family audiotape that was sold to the researcher during fieldwork



Plate 4.3: The main entrance gate to Osundina Compound, Ibadan.
Source: Fieldwork 2017

From this point forward, as people continue to embrace and showing more interest in Islam, the Osundina dynasty was one of the family that public supported Muslim clerics in the city of Ibadan, they also built a very gigantic Mosque located directly opposite of the family compound at Isale Osi area, Ibadan. It is one of the oldest Mosques in Nigeria. According to oral history, the Mosque is regarded as the first Central Mosque where Muslims performed the Friday congregational prayer. This Mosque, according to Chief Kamardeen Osundina, was established and built around 1810 (See Plate 6). At this Monumental Mosque, prayers were led by the first Chief Imam of the city.

Quite passionate, inter alia, Islamic practices were further entrenched in the city during the time and reign of the Yoruba legendary, *Ààre* Iyanda Obadoke Asubiaro Latoosa, an Ibadan warlord of sustenance, who later emerged as Yoruba Generalissimo. After his conversion to Islam, he was re-named Muhammad (Momodu, as Yoruba people often pronounce it). His status enabled the new religion to gain more adherents that included thousands of his slaves. He had a very cordial relationship with Muslim clerics who fervently prayed and offered him “spiritual commodities” each time he went to battles. He retained and held in high esteem the service of one *Alfa* Bello, a cleric and merchant migrant from Iseyin as his personal cleric (*Alfa*) and spiritual adviser.

Having been greatly influenced by the wonders and miracles of Islamic spirituality, one event further cemented the relationship between *Ààre* Latoosa and Muslim clerics. *Ààre* Latoosa was childless for a very long time despite having the opportunity to marry many wives as a warlord. His childlessness had persisted, even with sacrifices offered to the gods of his fathers and ancestors of the land. But soon after embracing Islam, he got solution to his fertility challenge through petitionary prayers and spiritual fortification by Muslim clerics. His wife got pregnant and gave birth to a boy child, who they named Sanusi. This made Aare Latoosa to become more convinced about his new faith. He thus reinforced Islam in Ibadan by giving out parcel of lands as *Eīd* praying ground where Muslims performed the two annual Muslim festivals. He diligently observed *Salat* even at warfronts. At such times, he would gather his slaves together to mount barricade and a security defense so that he could perform his *Salat* (obligatory five daily prayers) at its stipulated time, even at the war front. *Ààre* Latoosa also encouraged all his slaves to pray too, and sometimes forced them to do so.



Plate 4. 4: Osundina Apanpa Central Mosque, Isale Osi area, Ibadan.

The first Central Mosque in Ibadan where Friday prayer was first performed.

Built in 1810

Nonetheless, because of his public support and acceptance of Islam, he also built a mosque within his compound at Oke Aare, Ibadan, as a reflection of his newly found faith, Islam, which has subsequently been upgraded to the status of a Central Mosque at Oke-Are, Ibadan. In recent times, the family of *Shaykh* Bello Ahmad Rufai, the religious adviser to *Ààre* Latoosa, maintained the Oke-Aare Central Mosque where they conducted *Tafseer* during the month of Ramadan and some other religious obligations. Over the years, the family has expanded and is distinguished for producing many *Alfas* that served in various capacities and places in Ibadan. Prominent among them were the late Chief Imam of Ibadan, *Shaykh* Bello Ahmad Rufai, Oke-Are, including Dr. Ahmad Rufai, who currently the Mogaji Agba of Ibadan and as well as the current Chief Imam of the Oyo State government house Central Mosque, Alhaji Bello Rufai. The success of *Ààre* Latoosa in many of the battles he fought was largely attributed to the prayer fortification and spiritual assistance offered by his Muslim clerics whom he took as “locus of spiritual power”. His experiences also influenced many people to openly embrace Islam with many chiefs and their families, including slaves converting to Islam in large numbers (KII: Alhaji Chief Kamarudeen Salami Osundina, October 2018).

A form of spiritual indulgence of *Ààre* Latoosa was to have one of his Muslim clerics close associates, *Alfa* Sanusi Onisirinyan, of the Onisirinyan compound, Oritamerin Area, to eulogise Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) in Arabic language. A favourite eulogy was the lyrics code called *Qasidah*, which he often recited a thousand times before *Ààre* Latoosa would venture to the battlefield. The *Qasidah* was borrowed from Islamic verses and portrayed as inspiring, with spiritual effects on Aare Latoosa whenever it was sung. According to one of my key informants, *Alfa* Sanusi Onisirinyan, this praise poetry was greatly admired by *Ààre* Latoosa. And he often associates his victories at the war front to it.

The conversion and patronage of *Alfas* for spiritual fortification by notable and prominent Ibadan Chiefs and warriors was accompanied by the building of mosques of different sizes, with varied architectural designs in different parts of the town. And many of them constructed mosques in their respective compounds (*Agbolé*) as a mark of honour for the Muslim clerics and to be in close touch for their spiritual benefit. Such mosques were called *Ratibi* where residents gathered to pray five times daily. In fact, they were named after each family or its head name.



Plate :4.5: The modern structure and front view of Onisiriniyan Mosque, Oritamerin area, Ibadan; the first Mosque with roofing sheet and Islamic Centre in Ibadan

Source: Fieldwork 2017

In all, the Mosques provides a unique forum where Muslims shared ideas of community and brotherhood, as they converged five times daily or weekly as one community and family without any discrimination.

There was also this story I heard of an encounter between Yoruba traditional religion practitioners and Muslim clerics during the fieldwork. The event was considered pivotal to the role of Muslim clerics and their prayers in the development of the city of Ibadan. According to the narrative, when the acrimony between traditional worshippers and Muslim clerics had reached a climax and the situation became so tense, the minority Muslim community in Ibadan then was forbidden from public practice and worship. It was said that adherents of Islam were not allowed to make *adhan* (call to pray) openly, and those in defiance of this order could be beheaded. The situation became embarrassing to the ‘*Ulama*’, and the late Chief Imam *Shaykh* Uthman Basunu was compelled to find a workable solution. He quickly averted it by convoking a special prayer session at the same Central Mosque and thereafter instructed the *Muazzen* (caller to prayer) to resume his duty. According to the story, upon the sound of *Adhan*, (Muslim call to pray) all traditional shrines went up in flame immediately. This occurrence emboldened the Muslim community and empowered them to make the publicly call for prayer without further fear of molestation. It also helped the Muslim *ummah* to earn more freedom and, respect while influencing many other people to accept Islam as a religion (Imam M. Hamzat Basunu, Interview, Fieldwork, 2017).

Apart from offering petitionary prayers and providing spiritual support to chiefs and warriors, the activities and engagements of the Muslim clerics were also found invaluable at moments of great social crisis and difficulties. One of such situations was when the city of Ibadan witnessed and experienced drought, and the Olubadan-in-council had to consult and lobby the Muslim clerics (*Ulama*) to intervene by offering petitionary prayers to soothing the effect of such incidence for the overall benefit of the entire Ibadan community. The Olubadan as the Paramount ruler of the city would give a directed to the Chief Imam of Ibadan who then mobilised many other well-known *Alfas* to join him in offering and conducting such special petitionary prayer to seek Allah’s mercy for rain. One of my key informants, Imam Z. B Balogun, shared his experience of such special prayer sessions.

I participated in this special prayer session called *Salatul-Istisqâ* (prayer for rain) on three different occasions: 1953, 1967, and 1982 in Ibadan. On each of the occasions, I followed my *Alfa* (teacher), who was a member of the League of *Imams* and *Alfas* of Ibadan. Different class of Muslim clerics were gathered to offer the special rainfall prayer. The Muslim clerics in their large numbers from all the nooks and crannies of Ibadan usually gathered at the Ibadan Central Praying Ground, *Yidi* (Arabic: *Eīd*), located at the Agodi Gate Area, Ibadan.

During the special petitionary prayer session, the Chief *Imam* led other Muslim clerics, who usually attended such sessions with their followers (including Qur'an school students: *Omokéwú*). At the event, many prayer texts and formulae were deployed by the clerics to appeal and to solicit Allah's Mercy against non-availability of rainfall. The prayer session consists of two *rak`ahs* (units of prayer) observable during any time except those times in which it is not desirable to pray. In the first *rak`ah*, the *Imam* recites the opening chapter of the Qur'an known as *Surat Al-Fatihah* like other usual prayer and thereafter recites *Surat Al-A`la* (the 78th chapter of the Qur'an). The second *rak`ah* follows with the recitation of *Surat Al-Ghashiyah* (the 88th chapter of the Qur'ān) after *Surat Al-Fatihah* and ends with salutation. The Chief Imam then delivers a *khutbah* (special selected Qur'ān recitations) after the *Salutation*. Immediately after reciting the *khutbah*, the clerics turned their outer garments around, each person placing his left side on his right side and his right side on his left, facing the *qiblah* (direction of the *Ka`bah* which Muslims faced during their daily prayers), supplicate to Allah, and raise their hands while doing so. Imam Balogun continued:

Honestly, on all the three occasions in which I participated, by Allah's permission, it usually started raining on our way before we reached our house, and most times as we leave the *Eid* ground, it rains and floods everywhere
(KII: Alhaji Imam Balogun, Fieldwork, 2017).

There was another account related by an informant, Imam Hamzat Oyebamiji, who hailed from *Ìsàlè Osi*, Ibadan, where the first Friday congregational Mosque was built (see plate 6:4:1:1). He also witnessed a case of salt scarcity, which prompted the Olubadan to call on the League of *Imams* and *Alfas* for special prayers. According to Imam Oyebamiji, the *Ulama* did as directed, and salt became available within a short period.

Subsequently, practical daily work, pragmatic exposition of the Muslim clerics, and the petitionary prayers have become popular and were adopted by many successful Ibadan Chiefs, not only as religious identity but also for political purposes.

(Imam M.H Oyebamiji, Fieldwork, 2017)

Over time, certain Islamic rites became insitutionalised ritual performance and habitual practice among Ibadan traditional chiefs and authority, such narrative includes, whenever *Báálè* or *Oba* feel insecure, the next thing was for him to seek the spiritual guides of the Muslim clerics, headed by the Chief *Imam* of the city. This obviously led to the celebration of annual *Hijrah* festival on the 10th of Muharram (New Islamic Calendar). During the event, according to informants, Muslim clerics and the growing Muslim community would gather at *Oja'ba* Palace of Olubadan and turned up gaily dressed to witnessed how the Muslim clerics would render petitionary prayers to mark the beginning of another Islamic calendar year. They would pray for the well-being of the *Oba* and the Chiefs as well as securing the people and the town. The event was tagged *Ggbígbóòhùn - Tírà* (Listening to the voice of Qur'ân scripture). Some of my informants believed *gbígbóòhùn tírà* was a replacement of the annual *Ifá* divination even though the former entailed the use of revered text of the holy Qur'ân to predict events: the good, the dangers, and the blessings of the 'new year'.

In most instances, the chief *Imam* as the spiritual head of the city (the leading cleric: *Alfa*) would use the last verse to be recited (*Tauda*) to explain and analyse the situations of events for the year and where necessary the *Oba* would arrange and pay or arranged for ritual materials that would be required for the spiritual prayer. This period was also referred to by people as the "*Káyókáyó*" festival. This religious festival, according to informants started during the reign of *Oba Abass Alesinloye*, who was regarded as the first *Oba alade* (the first King of Ibadan with beaded crown). It was, however, stopped during the reign of *Oba Isaac Akinyele* who arguably happened to be the first Christian *Oba* in the history of Ibadan. A major component of the festival was that sumptuous and rich feasts would be provided for all the Muslim clerics that participated in this religious ritual. The special feasts were also served to the gathering at the end of the ritual. For the Muslim clerics, the feast symbolized an aspect of the *Sadaqah* (*Sara*) and often arouse their interest

and motivate the *Alfas* after performing the prayer ritual (KII: Imam Dr. Olanrewaju, Fieldwork, 2018).

The above accounts and narratives significantly point to how Islam made its pathway to Ibadan, and Yoruba communities through the spiritual intervention of the Muslim clerics who rendered petitionary prayers and other spiritual related services to the public as weapon and welfare against extant reality and for the benefit of the community. At this early beginning, capitalistic motive was clearly absent in the engagements of Muslim clerics who then were more concerned about human and societal well-being. This cherished realisation influenced many a people, especially the Chiefs and warriors to openly identify with the Muslim clerics and depend essentially on their prayer fortification as path to accessing divine blessings (*barakah*) for themselves and their families. The conversion of many notable personalities such as chiefs, elites and community leaders also encouraged the conversion of the ordinary people in the society. To a large extent, the Muslim clerics created moments of joy and ecstasy as reflected in the diverse petitionary prayers and spiritual commodities that were deployed to punctuate their existential challenges and foster peaceful atmosphere for the people and the community.

Yet, in the early period of Islamic propagation in Ibadan, traditional rulers served as patrons of Muslim clerics, and they encouraged the clerics to settle down close to the city centre. The third feature of the spatial triangulation was the market. Ibadan Chiefs apparently wanted the Muslim clerics to live close to them to share from the *barakah* (divine abundance blessings) of every holy man, and as security against evil, and assurance of posterity for the community. This orientation and alliance created a close relationship between Muslim clerics and Ibadan traditional political institutions which led to the emergence of some clerics as '*Alfa Oba*', a status that allowed them to serve in the King's court as counsellor and religious advisor, hence the proverbial expression in Ibadan: "*Alfa ni baba Oba*", which literally translates to "*Alfa* is the 'father' of the king." This expression suggests the diverse and rich contributions of Muslim clerics in the making of Ibadan, as they played conspicuous roles, next to *Olúwo*. From the examples given in this section, the petitionary prayers, blessings, and spiritual services offered by the clerics were greatly perceived to have contributed to the sustenance and the growth in population of the of

Ibadan since the period of Bashorun (Iba) Oluyole as Baale (KII: Alhaji Chief Nurein Akanbi, Fieldwork 2017).

From the foregoing scintillating narratives, these socio-historical trajectories provide valuable insightful accounts of how Yoruba societies have been a site for the development of rich Islamic practices and by extension, an occasion for understanding religious dynamic and tolerance. While this strand of religious practice has gradually developed from a missionary import that valued puritans and a strong belief in the life after death to its more recent version that focus more on human success and wealth in this life. It also reinforces how spiritual values interconnects with the civil authority and Muslim community that redefines the transformation of religious practices into everyday enterprise, and influence the presence of Islamic culture and the building of many Mosques across the societies. Also, the massive visibility of the *Oníjálàbí* is influenced by contemporary human life that relied heavily on the appropriation of spiritual capital as part of religious infrastructure, with which individuals' access to spiritual realms to ensure their security, survival, and livelihood in a precarious state.

4.1.2 *Jálàbí* and Islamic Culture of *Du'ā*: The Epistemological Premises

The *Oníjálàbí* took seriously the knowledge and insights from the cosmology of the Islamic tradition and the local environment as performative of its epistemologies premise. This also created the intricate relationship between *Jálàbí* and *du'ā* which can be teased out from the life history accounts and narrative of a prominent Muslim cleric and scholar in Ibadan, Ustadh Muhsin Abdul Salam Arzukuna, a direct great-grandchild of the famous *Shaykh* Abdul-Kareem Abdul-Salam Arzukuna. Perhaps, seeking and rendering of petitionary prayers and spiritual fortification remains an integral part of everyday engagement of the Muslim cleric. Feasibly, his father's lineage operates a large, well treasured Islamic educational institution that offers both elementary and advance studies to students who often come from far places to studies. On my first visit to him at his Lateef Adisa Memorial Arabic and Islamic Institute, (*Ilé-Ńlá*) Barika, Agbowo, Ibadan. It took me time to see him because he was attending to several Islamic students (Ileraners) and those who were seeking spiritual fortification and guidance to their personal problems. I was received by two of his

assistants who were learning and observing the act of *Jálàbí* practice. While waiting to see Ustadh Arizukuna I listened to the conversation of the two *Alfas*. They were engrossed in a discussion about different petitionary prayer formulae and litanies contained in a book (Yoruba: *tírà*), which they were reciting. The conversation focused on the petitionary prayers litanies for the treatment of *Ako jèdíjèdí* – (hemorrhoids) commonly known as chronic pile. For the two apprentices, many people in Nigeria suffered chronic pile, which they thought could be treated using a litany written in Arabic language. As if they knew that I was listening, one boastfully said:

When *hantu* is prepared with the Qur’ānic chapter like *Suratul Yasin* written on a big white plate and not the usual black slate and washed off with pure honey (not water), by Allah’s grace (*Isha’ Allah*), and it is presented to a client to drink. The person would not witness or experience such a problem again. He is completely cured and healthy with *hantu* fortification.

Suddenly, I picked interest in the conversation on the treatment of ailments using “*hantu*” when Ustadh Muhsin Abdul-Salam Arzukuna invited me into his office. The office was a little bit spacious, a sparsely decorated room, where one by one, he was listened to people’s requests and narrative. He had his early education at the Elementary School at Ayeye Area, Ibadan. He combined western schooling with religious studies at his father’s Arabic and Islamic school, which was in the Arzukuna compound. Being a clerical lineage, the entire Arzukuna family usually had Qur’ānic studies around a bonfire every night after dinner. His father or any other learned person in the compound often led at the regular sessions. The older Arzukuna, like many other Muslim clerics (*Alfas*) had the intention to build a strong spiritual foundation for his children through these Qur’ānic studies and teaching. The Ustadh said further the following concerning his father’s interest in the Qur’ānic education:

He wanted many of us to become erudite and eminent Islamic scholar and cleric, just like him. He was a deeply religious man who was suspicious of Western Education which he believed could corrupt the impressionable minds of young people. My father, like many other Muslim clerics of his time was averse to acquiring western education and he never wanted me to attend the school at all. Because of the perceived unfavourable influence of Western education and culture on the Muslim children.

Following his father's wish, Ustadh Arzukuna enrolled and attended the famous *Kharashi* Memorial Arabic School, Oke Odo, Ibadan, founded and established through the effort of the renowned and foremost Islamic scholar of high repute in 1945, *Shaykh* Alhaji *Kharashi Muhammad Thanni* (May Allah be Pleased with his souls). This centre of learning is one of the foremost Arabic Institutes in Nigera, and it is an equivalent of a secondary school education curriculum. There he obtained the *Thannwiyah* (Secondary School Certificate). The curriculum focused largely on the Qur'ān, theology, Islamic jurisprudence, hadith (prophetic sayings), religious hermeneutics, preaching, and the history of world religions. After graduation from the school, he was appointed an Arabic teacher by a Mosque at the Challenge Area with a monthly stipend of ₦140. He spent just a year on the job and returned to the family compound.

In little time, the young Islamic teacher was again hired by another *Modrassah* at the Eleyele Area through the effort of one of his father's clients, Alhaja Sherifat, who had requested the service of the younger Arzukuna to impart knowledge of Islam to their children who were in dire need of a good Arabic teacher. As the Ustadh narrated, he took up the job with a commitment to spend only a year after he had been promised good remuneration and accommodation. Yet, through the intervention of another Alhaja, he moved to Agbowo, looking for better work and educational opportunities, he then took up teaching appointment at L.A. Adisa Memorial Arabic and Islamic Institute, Agbowo, Ibadan in October 1995, where he subsequently settled down to establish his own Arabic institutute.

After many years of teaching in his new community, he was motivated and encouraged by people around him to pursue further studies, and to gain knowledge in western education. Ustadh Arzukuna enrolled at Mufutau Lanihun College of Education for a National Certificate of Education (NCE) programme in Arabic and Islamic studies, and thereafter, gained admission to University of Ado-Ekiti, through a Sandwich degree programme and graduated in 2008 with B. Ed degree in Islamic Studies.

The early life of Ustadh Arzukuna was characterised by financial challenges. The salaries he received from his employers were not adequate to cater for his needs, but he enjoyed goodwill from a network of people around him. In 1997, he was made the Chief Imam of Ladson Quarry Central Mosque, Office area, Ibadan, a company owned by the L.A. Adisa family. Unfortunately, his employer died in July 1997, but the children retained

Arzukuna's service. He married while he was in the employment of Ladson Quarry and moved to a rented apartment. According to him, both his marriage ceremony and the subsequent naming ceremony of his first child were highly successful due to the assistance he received from people around him. He was also able to pay the house rent from the monthly stipend he received.

During his teaching, he built a good name and reputation for his capability in Arabic and Islamic education. Part of the rewards he obtained from people included financial and material support, especially during the construction of his house project. Today, Ustadh Arzukuna now lives in his personal house at the Apete area, Ibadan where he also established another Arabic institute school, Abdul-Kareem Abdul-Salam Arizukuna Basic Qur'an studies Centre, which he named after his father. On daily basis, he oscillates between the Apete school and his office at Agbowo. On his daily schedule, he said:

Many students from different parts of Ibadan who had heard of his reputation, and fame in religious knowledge and creativity often flocked and congregated, at the institute, including adults, men and women.

In fact, I taught at Apete in the morning between 8:00 am and 12:00 noon daily; thereafter I would go to Agbowo to attend to people and students before the afternoon Arabic class between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. As I was teaching the Arabic students, people were already waiting to see me for spiritual consultation and appointments. I also received invitations as guest speaker to different religious occasions and functions, as well as organising *Tafseer* lectures on Sunday's evening at the Agbowo institute which is opened for the public.

During the interaction I had with him, he presented and displayed all credentials obtained so far. He showed me many arrays of Arabic texts and litanies (*tirà*) that he consults while attending to his clients; these include manuals and formulae of various religious collections, not well bounded or packaged in well-printed forms. Like many other clerics I met during my fieldwork, Ustadh Mushin took great pride in the bookcases that were in his office space. A glance at the various prayer formulae and litanies, bound in a book format, mostly inherited from his father and teachers, one would see a highly complex hermeneutical science that was fastened with many rules and complicated techniques. This library collection, according to him validate him as a learned person that symbolised his capacity and authorisation as a cleric.

On another day that I had an interview appointment with him, I met two young ladies and an old woman seated at the waiting room of the consultation office. The three seemed to form a single party. Unlike our first encounter when I waited for long to see him, the Ustadh appeared a few minutes after and exchanged pleasantries with us. He addressed me, as though I was also a client, like the other people that were in the visitor's room. Perhaps to make me see him at work, he attended to the other group first. The elderly woman opened from what I observed had brought the two ladies to the *Alfa* for spiritual consultation. She opened the conversation even as I listened to her, narrating the life challenges that necessitated a spiritual intervention for one of the two young ladies:

Alfa, this is my daughter's friend. Both lived together under the same roof as students during their university days. She has been facing marital challenges for some time now and she has had three attempts at marriage, but they all failed. Although she is a Christian, she has been very close to us since she and my daughter met at the university. Unfortunately, she lost her mother about six years ago. Today, they are not students anymore, as they finished their education eight years ago and participated in the NYSC scheme the same year.

Prompted by the *Alfa*, the lady narrated her emotion-laden story that brought about her seeking spiritual help. Aged 35, all her friends were married but she faced the challenge of getting married for about ten years. According to her, it was not a case of not getting suitors but of not being able to tie any of the proposal down as she constantly suffered heartbreaks on flimsy grounds. She recounted three instances. The first attempt involved a man that promised her marriage while she was yet an undergraduate. Things took a different turn after the man had required her to get pregnant as a condition for marriage. Interestingly, she got pregnant thereafter and was surprised the man was furious and even denied having sex with her. She was frustrated, and eventually had a miscarriage. That marked the end of the relationship.

Barely a year later, she got into another relationship with a young man who happened to be a Muslim. The affairs lasted two years and, in the process, she learned some basic Islamic practices, hoping that she would have to convert to Islam before her marriage to him. Things also took a different turn after a visit to the family. She later got to know that the fiancée's family refused to approve of the relationship on account of her Christian faith. They

were afraid she could convert the young man and the children to Christianity. The relationship, like the previous one, was thus aborted.

The third experience, for her, was more devastating, and the lady thought she was confused at this stage. She started another affair with a man, a police officer, who she met during a teaching practice (TP) programme. To emphasise the depth of the relationship, she narrated how the man travelled all the way from the south to visit her in the northern State of Gombe, where she was posted for the mandatory National Youth Service Corps. The visit convinced her of the man's readiness to marry her, and that made her to accept his proposal, more so that there she was not in any relationship. Few months into the relationship, an introduction ceremony between the two families was arranged, with the understanding that the wedding ceremony would be held after she must have completed the NYSC programme.

She got pregnant for the man and that facilitated the introduction ceremony. Unfortunately, she lost the pregnancy after the ceremony and other attempts to be pregnant failed. This left the man unhappy. The lady ends her story thus:

Two months later, he told me to return to my father's house since I could not get another pregnant for him again. It was like hell for me to return to my father's house again and I wept profusely and that was why my friend suggested that I should come and stay in Ibadan. We are here for your spiritual assistance as well.

Ustadh Mushin let out a deep breath after listening to the lady's story and then set out to work. He asked after her mother and the lady, in her response, said she was late. The *Ustadh* thought the lady's mother ought to know about her daughter's problem as a mother. He then applied some techniques of *Istikhārah* being deployed in *Jálàbí* practice and announced in a tone of finality that the lady was inflicted with '*Àmúbó oko*' (bad stigma) when she was ten years old, and that her mother was aware. He promised to free her of the bondage and fortify her for a good life. According to the Ustadh, without that done, she would continue to move from one man to another for the rest of her life. And she will continue to be frustrated and impotent to nurse a dating to marriage level. The *Alfa* catalogued the spiritual activities he would embark on once the lady showed the readiness to pay for his services. She agreed to all the terms and conditions given to her (Fieldwork 2017).

I returned to the Ustadh in December 2019 to inquire about this young lady and learned that the spiritual services she sought yielded positive result. According to the Ustadh, the lady got married soon after the prayer intercession and already had a baby girl. She was also said to be carrying another pregnancy as at that the time I made the inquiry (Fieldwork 2019). Nevertheless, his prominence and fame continue to be recognised by the people in the community, as number of his spiritual patronage increased.

Although charisma is considered a key component of Islamic education, this alone does not guarantee piety, yet piety can hardly be achieved without knowledge. But then the discourses of knowledge continue to be a pivotal element that is strongly linked to Islam, as its epistemological premises includes a ranges of Islamic expressions which provides the starting point for the myriads of petitionary prayer formulae as embodiment of *Jálàbí* practices.

At the same time, according to Muqaddam Hakeem, a young Muslim cleric and teacher attached to Ike-Oluwa Mosque, Agbowo, Ibadan, and many other informantss in this study, argue that it is significant that the social processes of knowledge acquisition and transmission adopted and deployed by most *Alfas* vary and depend essentially on the individual training and the trainers' knowledge. The revelation of the Islamic texts passes through a series of literacy process that makes the knowledge to be more open to everyone who studies them quite well under the tutelage of a recognised religious leader of repute. Besides, there were consensuses among my informants that there are two intertwine ways of knowledge acquisition and transmission as embodiment and symbolism of *Jálàbí* practice which must be understood within the context of an established Islamic system of knowing.

The above narrative consequently provides different answers to the questions such as 'what does it meant to know? How is knowledge constituted? and how can it be attained?'. Indeed, the response to it, are not always formulated in an explicit assertion, but it requires a search for them in actual knowledge practice and modalities of knowing which are:

The first category focused on the acquired knowledge. This is otherwise referred to as *Ilm Kasbi*. According to most Muslim clerics, it is the normal way of knowing that is embedded in the Islamic practice to worship God as a Muslim faithful. It is a basic requirement for all Muslims to know how to worship, especially in observing the five daily

prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadan. In other words, an average Muslim is expected to know the basic Islamic rudiments of his or her religious rites to be able to observe certain practices very well. For instance, every Muslim is expected to know certain portions of the Qur'ān by note.

The second category is about the doctrinal knowledge, which is aptly referred to as mystic, intuitive, or divine knowledge. It is generally acclaimed as the spiritual and is reflected in the truth, aimed at knowing God Almighty, who imparts knowledge through illumination (*Ilm Wahbi or Ilm Laduni*). In essence, this is the knowledge required before the *Alfa* can engage in the *Jálàbí* practice, and it is called esoteric knowledge in Islam. This type of knowledge is secretive in the sense that is often concentrated in the hand of a few well-known Islamic clerics, who must have passed through many years of training and re-training, possibly under different religious leaders in different places. Thus, the secret of a practice or tradition played an important role in defining the spirituality and identity of the Muslim clerics. In other words, the devotional strategies that develop piety in the individual Muslim clerics are learned through text and acted based on their creative skills. This charisma is believed to have the intercessory powers that enable the clerics to intercede or intervene in the mundane and spiritual affairs of their clients as spiritual seekers, who are believed to be less endowed with such knowledge. As such, they develop a sort of spiritual values to create spaces in which tactical forms of identity and belonging combine to accommodate the super-diversity of forks' lives.

Through one of my frequent visitation, conversations, and interviews with *Oníjálàbí*, who elucidated their expertise in divine and mystical matters as being an acquired 'spiritual knowledge'. Who was assertive thus:

For me, mastering this knowledge equates to a fearless approach to life, where freedom and the power of religious practice are used as instrument to protect and secure the people as spiritual seeker from evil threats. This definition of mastering spiritual knowledge was voiced and reverberated by some other *Oníjálàbí* I interviewed.

In a sense, we see *Oníjálàbí* as individuals whose stock of knowledge and life experiences help them and for others to negotiate social, cultural, and religious identities amid the tensions in the society.

Fundamentally, before one can engage in *Jálàbí* practice effectively as a religious entrepreneur, certain conditions must be fulfilled and met. My informants in this respect identified three cultural modalities of knowing in *Jálàbí*, avers as following:

Firstly, there must be chain of transmission process, which is stretched over long period of time and training in the study of Qur'anic knowledge and its exegesis, known as esoteric science. This, according to informants, involves advanced studies of the Qur'ân and Arabic language after the initial completion of the basic elementary study of the Qur'ân, that revolved around person-to person style of knowledge transmission. Parents mostly send their children to a local Arabic school in their community, often called *Ilé-Kewú* at a very tender age in the afternoon after returning from the normal western type of education' schools. There is always nearby *Alfa* from whom these children can learn the basic Qur'ân which is in the Arabic language. Usually, the *Ilé-Kewú* also known as *Madrasah* is mostly situated close to their homes and it is operated on free-fee study approach. The acquisition of knowledge for *Jálàbí* is far above this level. While the more esoteric the knowledge acquired, the more powerful the individual who possesses it becomes.

In specific term, the culture of chain of transmission paradigm finds its most intricate expression in the sciences of Hadith and Fiqh, with good understanding and memorisation of texts. It is also eternalised in the students through physical presence which both the teacher and student together. In other words, there is much emphasis on the personal presence which is the embodiment of knowledge and modality of the proper character.

Secondly, it is a knowledge system that is based on evidence and devotional capability developed through the charisma of individual cleric and it is learned by "text and acts based on skill, such that a person that has developed piety is perceived to have intercessory knowledge that would enable him to intervene in the life of those who are less endowed spiritually. Hence, the charisma of the *Alfa* is dependent on the knowledge acquired through devotion and dedication to a teacher and religious leader who imparts the required knowledge and the type of knowledge, so imparted in him. This essentially created the modality that established knowledge as authentic.

By and large, the creative skills and expert knowledge could only be acquired through absolute devotion and dedication which makes these classes of Muslim clerics to be identified as saints or *Waliyy*, (friend of Allah) and it is only those who possess this type of

knowledge that one can be certified as petitionary clerics and religious entrepreneur (*Alfa Oníjálàbí*). Thus, the doctrinal knowledge embedded in the petitionary prayer cannot be learned or grasped within a short period and that it cannot be acquired or access in a particular source alone, rather it entails a sort of secretive that could only be discovered through rigorous learning process. Having acquired such knowledge, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* deployed it to manifest in the petitionary practice.

Thirdly, the knowledge and skill deployed in the *Jálàbí* practice may not be found in a specific texts and book of jurisprudence, rather it is acquired over time through a personal relationship between a teacher and his students, rather they must be a clear purpose and objective. It is enshrined in the principle of knowledge secrecy. It is only the teacher that determines the stage at which he can conveniently reveal it to his students and to what extent and degree. The *Jálàbí* practitioners believe that only they know how to access the secrets or hidden thing embodied in the practice. Its secrecy is bound to undermine the diffusion of a standardized, common understanding of religious knowledge, which is at the heart of the doctrinal mode. Here, the most important thing is that knowledge acquisition is through an initiation process. It is believed among informants that this has become a tradition and as such, it entails the disposition of students who is a disciple of the *Alfa*; in a teacher and students' relationship to be successfully prepared to bear true allegiance and trustworthiness, where the student must be submissive to the teacher or leader.

Strategically, these modalities provide hermeneutical tools that significantly expands the epistemic framework of Islamic knowledge practices.

In all, the above narratives and accounts have unveiled the multifaceted epistemological stance of how distinctive knowledge, creativity and imaginative religious skills are adapted into *Jálàbí* and petitionary prayers culture in the quest by *Oníjálàbí* to soothing the mundane affairs and everyday life of the spiritual seekers who often requested and demanded for spiritual redemption to their exsitetial challenges. Knowledge and prayer in this context are key instruments and enabled weaponry against earthly principalities. And one cannot acquire this knowledge except you learn from great cleric. In other words, these specialised knowledge practices are culturally embodied in *Jálàbí* practice, as local epistemologies, which is also central to the success of *Oníjálàbí*. This approach has its root developed from its anthropologically inspired concept of “unreached people’s grop”, which

recommended missionaries acquired a deep cultural knowledge of such 'people' and their 'cosmologies' to better 'sow the word' and 'reap the harvest' (wagner 1986) for the realisation of reality in spiritual realms. This epistemological premises, though apparently flat and flexible instructure, it involves a combination of both an 'expert' knowledge practices and indigenous traditions and claims to knowledge. This also create a hierarchical relation of power that inform the articulation of the spiritual values.

4.1.3 Normative Entrepreneur: The work of *Alfa* and the Genres of *Du'ā*

As spiritual and physical fortification and protection remained imperative to the life of everyone, the *Oníjálàbí* strategically designed certain genres through the lens of cultural materiality of Islamic spirituality to keep people safe and secured from disease, poverty, war, incidence of crime and other hardships that confront their lives., which encourages entrepreneurship intentions. Thus, the rubric of everyday spiritual activities and services rendered by *Alfa Oníjálàbí* as religious figure in the society are often portrayed as 'work' in the vernacular language, *Isé Alfa* (with *Isé* or work) here having a semantic meaning broader than physical or wage labour. Rather it encompasses diverse practices and techniques embodied as spiritual performance, which comprise of: Islamic spiritual consultation, divination, petitionary prayers, geomancy, astrology, provision of spiritual commodities, spiritual retreat exercises, and many more that could act as sanctuary for individual as spiritual seekers and clients' wellbeing and security.

Somehow, this varied activities and embodiment glimpse into the fabric of everyday life, and it provide a form of livelihood and survival strategies for the clerics, which shape the assertiveness towards entrepreneurship. The wide range of meanings built around *Isé Alfa* can be inferred from the following common phrases: *a má sisé fún yín* (we will work for you), *a má sisé kan tó njéé fún yin* (there is a good work that we shall do which is very potent), *òdo wa ló tí nsisé* (he gets work done here).

During my fieldwork, I met Alhaji Imam Mudasiru Atanda Bada, the Chief Imam of Oluyole Estate Extension Central Mosque, Ibadan Southwest, Ring Road, Ibadan. Apart from being one of the most prominent and celebrated Islamic intellectuals, scholars, and clerics in Ibadan, he happened to be a retired financial expert and an insurance broker of

high repute. He started engaging in religious activities during his university days as a member of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) and the *Quādirriyyah* Sufi group. He delivers lectures on radio and television as well as in many public functions, locally and internationally. Like some other clerics, possibly because of his *Sufi* background, Imam Bada's teachings usually focus on spirituality and religiosity. He would emphasise that one can cultivate spiritual doggedness through remembrance of Allah and practice of *dhikr* by chanting the names of Allah all the time. This religious doggedness, for him, would move one closer to Allah and offer protection against evil and spiritual attacks.

In his sprawling residence, there is a small mosque and a library. The library was well-equipped with the latest literatures, both western and Islamic religious texts. That was where he took me for the interview session, which centred on the notion of Islamic prayer. Imam Bada did not open the conversation without praying for me. "God will let you do well in your research work," he said. He described prayer as an act of appeal to God that requires full conscious participation of all the mental faculties and body of the one praying. For him, when a believer engages in petitionary prayers, he is in direct communication or contact with God Almighty, who hears and understands everything the supplicant says.

From the above exposition on the concept of petitionary prayers, a few inferences can be made. First is the idea of petitionary prayer as an act that involves "communication" or "connecting" with the divine realm. Second is the assumption about petitionary prayer serving as instruments for actualising individual needs and dream in life. Imam Bada reiterated the fact that people are allowed to conduct petitionary prayer in their own words using their local language. He posited that *du'â* should be made with full concentration and absolute commitment. This was further supported with a quotation from the sayings of the prophet Muhammad (SAW). *Hadith* thus:

Make *du'â* to Allah in a state that you are certain that your *du'â* will be responded to and know that Allah does not respond to that originates from a negligent, inattentive heart.

Imam M. A. Bada in his explanations, considered petitionary prayers as capable of effecting desire changes in the lives of individuals and nations. "Petitionary prayer is more than merely talking to God. Through petitionary prayers, we can change things. We can change the course of our lives and our circumstances for the better. We can change things in

our homes, our jobs and business, our finances, and our bodies,” he said. He also described clerics (*Alfas*) as capable of effecting changes in the lives of other people, our cities, our nation, and the world through prayers. The important thing, he concluded, was that some people know the different prayer litanies and formulas for different problems or situations. It is also because they possess prodigious powers and notoriety for the use of the esoteric sciences, which encouraged people to seek their intercession with God.

Another key informant, Imam Zakariyyah Balogun, also identified different genres of petitionary prayers and litanies in spiritual patronage as instrument for confronting existential threats to human survival. He averred a firm conviction about the efficacy of Islamic prayer and other related spiritual services. He also asserted that he often received clients on a regularly basis. In his words:

If you experience any “obstruction” or frustration in your life career and progression that could thwarts you from realising your life dream or “full potentials” on health, wealth, children, a business success and family life, either way, then you need to consult spiritual experts for petitionary prayers. Perhaps, many people live in constant fear of unknown and darkness because they believe that these forces cause misery and destruction to human life. In view of this, one should know how to deal with diabolical forces. Overcoming them entails spiritual fortification by your religious leader of substance.

In his long spiritual journey, *Imam* Zakariyyah Balogun has a lot of people consulting him for a wide range of issues and myriad of problems: women to become pregnant; search for a lifelong partner, either husband or wife; taming delinquent children to be useful; achieving success in examinations and interviews, especially promotion and elevation at work place or to secure profitable contract; securing profitable jobs and good fortunes or other opportunities of life; fortification against ancestral curses, unseen forces or to avert dangerous situations; recovery from sickness or diseases, especially when advised by the medical personnel to seek spiritual fortification by consulting religious experts for appropriate cure. Certain dates of the Islamic calendar are often adopted as moment for special period for petitionary prayers. These include 13, 14 and 15 days of every lunar month. While we often extract certain techniques from the *Qur’ân* verses and Prophetic

traditions which could be combined and blended in soothing and seeking divine blessings (*barakah*) for the welfare and security of religious consumers (Fieldwork 2017).

According to the dominant narrative of the Muslim clerics interviewed during the fieldwork for this study, it was noted that anything that consistently proved beneficial are used for ritual purification and the believed that whatever has been approved by Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) to be beneficial cannot be doubt and should not be condemned, as such does not contain or involve unlawful substances or invocation. It was this collection of petitionary prayers and litanies that most *Alfa Oníjálàbí* obtained as ritual performance and for blessings in *Jálàbí* practice. The theme of their petitionary prayers included seeking remedies for sickness and illnesses as well as praying for peace and orderliness, success in careers and businesses, a good harvest in farm output, among other prayers for earthly principalities.

In an excerpt from a Friday sermon delivered by Ustadh Sulaiman Amubieya, the Chief Imam of Iyana Bodija Central Mosque, Ibadan during a Friday Jummah sermon, where he accentuated that there are prophetic medicines, which he refers to as collection of certain prayer patterns and natural products for the treatment of different ailments and diseases afflicting people and this can be found in the hadith and other relevant documents on Islam. Ustadh Sulaiman Amubieya further gave a narrative to captured it thus:

A woman once complained to Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) that her children had been inflicted by the 'evil eye. He replied. Why did you not seek *ruqyah* remedy through invocations from the Qur'ân and sunnah. So, people are expected to seek whatever they desire from God directly as contained in the hadith because there is no cause for you to consult anybody for spiritual needs, he contends. But today, our people are very lazy. They cannot learn nor read the Qu'rân in Arabic very well which would allow them to conduct the petitionary prayers for themselves.

With it, the Ustadh literally spoke against the practice by some Muslims who have formed the habit of contracting the task of conducting petitionary prayers. He posited that there are a lot of petitionary prayers formulae (*du'â*) as evidence from the Prophetic medicine which could be used by all faithfuls if they are steadfast in their religion. He further lent credence

to this position by citing various petitionary prayers line which could be used to achieve human desire goals.

For instance, there is collection of petitionary prayers called *Al-Isml-al-A'zam*” Allah’s greatest name; for instance, *Ya Hayyu Ya Quyyum, bi-Rahmatika Astagheth*. In other words, the key to open all things are knowledge of *'Ismi'l-Lāhi- al-A'zam!* All known scholars of Islam, he said, agreed on its efficacy and effectiveness on human life.

In this way of thinking, he clearly suggested that if an individual Muslim can recite or perform any prescribed recipe or litanies of petitionary prayer as directed, such person become their own *Alfa*.

At times, someone could suddenly experience a very disturbing state of mind, feeling negative and depressed. At this moment, the person will be thinking tha God has forgotten him or her. In view of this, he cited recitation of a *Surat* like *Ad-Duha* which according to him, was sent to humanity as relieve material, and to come out of negative feelings and to get hope, positivity, and the assurance that God is in control. In other words, regular recitation and invocation of this *Surat* means that someone is seeking to find peace, hope, and to renowned faith in Allah. This according to him will promote more positive outlook and stregnten the will to live well.

Furthermore, he spoke about another very fascinating and effective religious item that was recommended in the prophetic medicine called *Habbatul-Sawdā* (Black Cumin seed). This item, according to him contains incredible curative remedies for every known human ailment or disease, except death. If somebody apply this item to his body, it will ward off spirit and protects against the attack of the evil ones. These litanies, if followed or used as prescribed on regular basis will bring respite, relieve, and reduce burden of issues like high blood pressure, high cholesterol level, reduce asthma symptoms, stomach upset, among many others (Ustadh Sulaiman Amubieya, Interview, Fieldwork 2017).

حي الدافع

بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم
اللهم يا حي يا قيوم يا دافع يا قاهر اقهر من
اردنى بضر بقهرك يا من اخرج ادم من الجنة
ورده ويا من ضر ايوب وشفاه ويا من جعل
اعداء لموسى ونجاه ويا من رفع عيسى الى
السماء ويا من جعل يونس فى بطن الحوت
واخرجه ويا من نجى نوحا وقومه من ماء
الطوفان نجنى ويا من سلم ابراهيم من نار
النمرود سلمنى من كل الفزع والحزن والههم والغم
والضر والشر والفقر والمرض ومن كل ذى شر
ومن جميع مصائب الدنيا والأخرة يا ارحم
الراحمين ويا من اخرج يوسف من غيابة الجب
وزينه بالحسنى يا قديم الإحسان احسانك القديم
يادائم يا قيوم يا كريم حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل
نعم المولى ونعم النصير وايوب اذ نادى ربه انى
مسنى الضر وانت ارحم الراحمين فاستجبنا له
وكشفنا ما به من ضر واتيناه اهله ومثلهم معه
رحمة من عندنا وذكرى للعابدين

Plate 6. 4.1.2: Extract of a petitionary prayer formulae known as Hayyu Dafiu obtained by the researcher from *Alfa Oníjálàbí*

Source: Fieldwork 2017

The plate 6 as displayed above portrayed how Islamic tradition give considerable attention to the curative power and influence of petitionary prayers, such that a good health is a sign of both a wholesome lifestyle and divine favour. In times of hardship, pain and loss, many people attempt to find solutions and the Muslim clerics is considered as a critical stateholder that played an important and highly valued role in the restoring the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the spiritual seeker. For this reason, the *Oníjálàbí* often adapt and utilise *Hayyu Dafiu* (see plate 6) as a powerful petitionary prayer invocation to resolve countless human problems; be it poverty, sickness, diseases, among many others existential challenges. It is tagged *Hayyu Dafiu* because of the names of Allah that proceeded it. According to *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, a regular reciter of this highly valued petitionary prayers line will have abundancy in life and be secured. In other words, this special petitionary prayer formula is a great weapon used by righteous Muslim clerics and individuals to counter evil eyes and ward off or send it back to the sender.

Nevertheless, there are complex and ever-evolving set of spiritual capital and products which depends on many contingents' factors that constantly intersecting with each other. However, deduced from the interviews and interactions with informants, the *Oníjálàbí* have identified certain techniques of self-promotion to proved themselves as reputable religious entrepreneurs in the public sphere. These identified techniques consist of various spiritual products and commodities that are deployed with diverse foci and forms for the consumption of religious consumers. This is categorised into two distinct facets. The first stage entails identification techniques or, to use the medical science language, diagnosing the religious consumer (client) for specific predicament, while the second stage is giving appropriate medications or treatment as a remedy. Simply put, the therapeutic or the prescriptive stage. The diagnostic technique is known as *istikhārah*.

It is a technique in *Jálàbí* practice that entail diagnosing the client's problems or predicament (spiritual seeker) and unravelling the mysteries behind a particular human problem. The prescription stage is when the Muslim cleric, *Alfa Oníjálàbí* offered and prescribed specific suitable insurance products or solutions that would meet up the clients' condition. While both the diagnostic and prescription stages require that the spiritual seeker (client) pays a certain amount of money before and after to put up the necessary prayer ingredients for the desire result to be achieved. The cultural production of these distinctive

spiritual commodities in different forms acted as security and insurance products which create alternative ways of understanding dynamic of contemporary Islamic spiritual tradition (Ustadh Mushin Arzukuna, interview, Fieldwork 2019). Thus, the idea of clientelism and patronage reflects the recurrent debate about the concept of reciprocity, especially in anthropology discourse.

4.1.3.1 *Istikhārah*: Prayer of Seeking Divine Guidance – “*AYEWO*”

The Yoruba people have for long formed the habit of consulting their religious leaders on different occasions for different reasons, and this consultation process has become an important part of the socio-religious landscape for many decades, even before the arrival of the world religions; Islam and Christianity to be specific. For *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, *istikhārah* is an established religious instrument for seeking spiritual guidance. It consists of prayer lines based on *hadith* or *Sunnah* when someone is in a dilemma, as what decision, or choice to make at a particular time. *Istikhārah* is also a key functional element in the liturgy and spiritual experience of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*. They often employ these approaches as diagnostic techniques to unravel human predicaments so that spiritual seekers (clients) could be convinced beyond reasonable doubt, and to a large extent, justify the fees or payment being demanded by the Muslim cleric. Thus, the *istikhārah* is simply the petitionary prayers of seeking God's guidance and guide on a particular decision to be undertaking, either for preventive, curative, or therapeutic purpose.

Most significantly, within the rubric of *istikhārah* there are varieties of methods and patterns that *Alfa Oníjálàbí* often employed to get solutions, clarification, and answer to the clients' requests and demands. Accordingly, these methods and patterns of diagnostic techniques depend largely on the acquired knowledge, experiences, and inspiration of the clerics. Each *Alfa Oníjálàbí* adopted the strategies that he considered suitable and work well for him. These include petitionary prayers, sand cutting (*Arabic: Khatt ar-raml*; Astrology), Arabic numerology, rosary selection, palmistry among others. Thus, the technique is an analytical ritual symbolism among Muslim clerics that demand the application of knowledge that has been acquired from his teachers. Each of the above techniques is self-fashioned and it is widely used among the Yoruba Muslim clerics for spiritual patronage and consultation in *Jálàbí* practice but is subjected to individual clerics' styles and ideological background,

especially the school of thought and group he identified with, for instance, some belong to the *Tariqah* group, *Al-Sunnah Wajama 'h*, and so on. Many of the *Jálàbí* practitioners often provide a special room apartment for this purpose, aside from their consultation office as well as waiting room separate in most cases as identified in this study. While each client is being diagnosed privately without allowing other clients to know his or her purpose of consultation while every client's case is kept confidential. Therefore, the *istikhārah* prayers often provide clerics not only with an interpretation of the client's problems but also offer a distinctive directive for how they are to live their lives.

Theatre of Petitionary Prayers

There are a number of votaries embodied in the Islamic faith that have a strong religious underpinning as mode by which religious consumers (clients) are spiritually diagnosed and express their yearnings within a wide range of theatre of petitionary prayers (*adu'ā*). It is the tradition of Prophet Muhammad to seek divine guide or light on any issues and this has constituted part of mode of spiritual consultation among Muslim clerics. According to the *Sunnah*, prayer is often employed in the process of determination or consultation as observed in various prayer practices that were recommended by Prophet Muhammad. In other words, petitionary prayer requires mediation and ritual as the first technique expected to be used to determine the condition of the client. A prominent and popular pattern of the *istikhārah* prayer is the formulae below which most *Alfas Oníjálàbí* considered to be effective in attaining spiritual guidance on any matter. It should be noted that the person must pay full concentration to all the process involved. This is done by first performing ablution when you are about to sleep at night. Then the person is required to say the intention of the subject matter, followed by reciting this *niyyah* invocation (intention).

Allahumo Nawaytu Nafilat istikhārah Lillahi Taala

Meaning:

O Allah! I intend to perform a supererogatory prayer for seeking guidance in Allah, the Highest.

The person will perform two *Rakāh of Nafīlah* (two units of non-obligatory prayer) in the following order. In the first *Rakāh*, he would recite Suratul Fatiah and be followed by *Suratul Ikhlas* 33 times and followed this pattern for the second *Rakah*. Thereafter he would end the prayer by saying the salutation (Salam), after which he would seek forgiveness of sins by reciting the following line of prayer:

*Astagh firullaha 'l azima ladhi Laa ilaha lilla huwal, Hayyul Quyyum
Wa attubu ilehi (33 times)*

Meaning:

I seek refuge in Allah, the Great; there is no deity except He, the Ever-Living, the Eternal, I turn to Him in repentance.

The person will then recite *Ayatul-Qursiyyi* (Qur'ān Chapter 2 Verse 255) – 50 times.

Allahu la ilaha illa huwa alhayyu
Alqayyoomu la takhuthuhu sinatun wala
Nawmum lahu ma fee alssamawati wama
Fee alardi man tha allathee yashfau 'indahu
Illa biithnihi ya'lamu ma bayna aydeehim
Wama khalfahum wala yuheetoona bishayin
Min 'ilmihillaha bima shaa wasi'a kursiyyuhu
Alssamawati waalarda wala yaooduhu
Hifthuhuma wahuwa al'aliyyu al'atheemu

Meaning:

There is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of (all) existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with except by His permission? He knows what is (present) before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He will. His chair extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The last recitation would be observed with the person lying on the bed, getting set to sleep off for the day. According to the informants I spoke to, if the process is followed diligently, the person would either dream or observe certain feelings and signs towards the issue at

hand, either negatively or positively, favourable or discouraging mood, as he would be guided on what to do.

Similarly, *Ruqyyah* which is an Islamic exorcism method of treatment that involves the use of specifically selected and complied verses of the Qur'ān and invocations of prayers that were prescribed as Sunnah in the Hadith for ritual performance. For instance, one of my key informants, Ustadh Muhsin Arzikuna, professed “*Ruqyyah first*” as his slogan for healing. For him, this is the first technique that can be used to diagnose clients, even as young and undefiled, male, and female, who must be sound spiritually and be steadfast before he/she could conduct the recitation of *ruqyyah* ritual formulae on any of our clients. The process goes thus: The *Alfa* reciting the prayer will place his right palm directly on the head of the client while the person sits down conveniently as the *Alfa* recites these selected Chapters and verses of the Qur'ān called 'Ayatu 'r- *Ruqyah* (Verses of exorcism) into the right ear of the client at the special room provided for such service and activities. As he recites the prayer formulae, he observes any sign or conditions of the client which would be reported to Ustadh Mushin, as the team leader.

According to Ustadh Muhsin Arizkuna, who posit that his group has successfully treated, healed, delivered, and rescued a lot of people, spiritually and physically who were victims of spiritual attacks and ward off or drive *Jinn* (demon) away from them with the use of *Ruqyyah* exorcism in recent time and it has helped to restore their good health. Also, many different *istikhārah* prayers formulae have been formulated by different Muslim clerics based on their personal experience and its pragmatics, it is often recommended for their students to learn from it, and it is mostly adaptation from the Prophet's hadith and Qur'ān verses for spiritual protection among Muslims. It is rightly argued that the whole Qur'ān is sometimes seen as protection for the believers and can heal and solve human problems in whatever forms as stated in this Qur'ān n verse thus: “We send down, of the Qur'ān, that which is remedy and mercy to the believers” (Q 17V 44). In other words, this supplication entails protective and healing.

Intimately, he posited further that it is one of the popular traditions of Prophet Mohaamed; whenever he visited any sick member of his family, he would touch the person with his right hand and supplicate accordingly.

Allahumma Rabbanasi, adhibil-ba'sa, washfi, Antash-Shafi,
la shifa'a illa shifa'uka, shifaa la yughadiru saqaman

Meaning: O Allah the Rubb of makind! Remove this disease and cure (him or her). You are the Great Curer. There is no cure but through You, which leaves behind no disease.

Sand Pressing (Khatt- ar-Raml)

Another diagnosis mode identified by this study is the sand pressing (Arabic: *-Khatt ar-raml*), known locally as *títè Yanrìn*. This is a spiritual means of seeking clarification and guidance on major life matters using sand writing techniques with the aid of letters and numbers in line with Arabic knowledge. According to informants, this process involves specialised knowledge of writing lines on the sand as God directs and guides the hand of the cleric. Sand writing, *títè Yanrìn*, as it is used by some *Alfa Oníjálàbí* combines with their common-sense knowledge, deep inspiration, and understanding of cosmology and Islamic practices.

Theologically, it is centred on signs comprised of marks, letters, and numbers made in the sand which has been well smoothed on a tray designed purposely for seeking spiritual guidance and consultations on matters affecting human destiny and wellness in life. The following is gleaned from a conversation with one of my informants: Specific money is usually offered and laid on the sand writing tray which is meant for the consultation exercise. The clients will be asked to whisper his thoughts and requests silently on it (intention: *da aniyah*), he or she then sends it off on the *Alfas's* sand writing tray on the spiritual mat, where the *Alfa* usually sit down when attending to a client during such consultation visits. The *Alfa* thereafter would remark; *Olorun afi wa mona* (May Allah guide us right).

Using this technique, at the end of the exercise, the result which is usually based on a binary geometry gives indications on the client's predicaments and condition. The *Alfa* would explain what the problem was, the causes, and what could be done. The *Alfa* would thereafter direct the client on what next to be considered as the solution based on what the spiritual consultation on sand writing has revealed to him accordingly (Fieldwork 2017).

Ilmul Falaky (Àkosèjayé)

Next is Arabic astrology (*Ilmul falaky*) known in Yoruba as *Àkosèjayé*. The term astrology refers to prayer techniques associated with the ‘knowledge of the stars’, *ilm-ul- falak*. It is related to various Islamic religious practices concerned with the knowledge and perceptions of the time, letters, numbers and certain forms of calculations that are linked to the life cycle of the planets and on three numbers that are linked to Arabic words/letters to give a precise meaning and solution to the spiritual seekers’ predicament. This technique enables the clerics to critically examine the cause and effect that create worries, anxieties, sorrow, chaos, or turmoil in the life of clients as well as determine the spiritual needs and demands of clients by the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*.

According to many informants, this technique is regarded as one of the best techniques by the practitioner because it is used to determine exactly what the cause of the problem is, and it often offers a specific direction or what to do as a prescription for the client. And it is usually used to determine; either positive and negative implications of an event or decision to be embark upon, such as marriage, choosing careers (what type of trade to lean or course to study at the University), business, or travel for greener pasture. Yoruba people believe that it is important for them to know where their fortunes or luck lies as well as stars and predictions. In essence, *Alfa Oníjálàbí* believes that the knowledge of the stars could be used to influence people’s fortune or luck if they seek proper guidance. Most parents, especially women, would ask their children to bring the names of their girlfriends or boyfriends or fiancés to them so that they could make appropriate spiritual consultation before giving consent to marriage. If that is sorted out, the second stage is to know, if the marriage ceremony should be elaborate or not. If it happens that the consultation does not favour elaborate marriage, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* may be asked to influence the outcome, if possible. Many parents, I interviewed, were of the view that marriage fails because couples and their parents did not seek proper spiritual guidance before embarking on the journey of marriage. This position was elucidated by an informant, Alhaja R. Tiamiyu, a businesswoman at Bodija market, Ibadan.

I always seek counselling and guidance from my *Alfas* who are my spiritual advisers before embarking on marriage planning for any of my children. Three of my children are married. One was celebrated on a low level and the two others were celebrated elaborately, because I listened to the

directive of my *Alfa*, as they have warned me. Can you imagine a wedding ceremony that was recently reported on a local television station in Ibadan where some family members, including the bride's parents, were involved in a ghastly motor accident along Lagos-Ibadan expressway, around Sanyo Area, Ibadan, on their way to the venue of the wedding reception programme from the Church programme on Saturday, March 25, 2017. I believed if either of the parents has sought spiritual guidance, maybe they would have averted this calamity from happening to them (Alhaja R. Tiamiyu, Interview, Fieldwork, 2018).

Many parents consult *Alfa Oníjálàbí* on behalf of their children right from childhood to know their *akosejaye* which they assumed would guide the child till adulthood and in all his life endeavours. Another informant told me the case of a young man whose father-in-law insisted on a low-profile wedding for his daughter. The man wanted only the parents and just two family members in attendance at a location different from his home. This decision was based on a spiritual revelation that came during a prayer consultation while the would-be bride was still an infant. The family, according to my informant, was well to do in the society and had enough resources to organise a befitting and well-attended wedding ceremony for their daughter but they chose to align with the spiritual directive of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* (Alfa Idris Salaudeen, interview, Fieldwork 2017).

***Qira'āti Subhah* (Prayer beads selection)**

Another essential tradition among *Oníjálàbí* is the adoption of prayer beads or rosary selection, known as *Subhah*, locally known as *Tasbīh*. For some *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, the use *Tesibiyu* is a critical mediation technique for unravelling the secret behind their client's problems brought to their attention. It involves the use of Muslim prayer beads or rosary (*Tesibiyu*) among the Yoruba people. In using this technique, according to informants, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* would first recite certain verses of the Qu'r'ān and sometimes part of the ninety-nine names of Allah in Arabic; he would then fold the rosary into one and then whisper on it. He would thereafter ask the client to choose a portion of the folded rosary. The *Alfa Oníjálàbí* would then make some recitations in Arabic language, which would guide him in explaining the perceived problem of the client based on the inspiration and the knowledge of this technique. He then offers the client necessary advice on the solution to the problem.

Again, *Qira'āti Subha*, like any other spiritual product could be worked on by *Alfa Oníjálàbí* for various spiritual purposes depending on the need of the religious consumers. It could be hung like any spiritual goods at the front of a shop or business place, the entrance of a house, inside displayed wares, or hanged on the neck like a necklace.

During fieldwork for this project, I boarded a public transport from Odo-Ona Apata area, en route to Oja'ba, Ibadan. I was seated beside the driver, and suddenly I saw a *Tesibiyu* hung and attached to the vehicle's steering, and the following conversation ensued between me and the driver:

Me: Oga driver, what is this?

Driver: *Tesibiyu* of course. ok.

Me: What is the purpose of putting it on the steering?

Driver: It was handed over to me by my Alfa. It consists of spiritual power. Do you think it is ordinary *Tesibiyu*? It is meant to protect this bus from any havoc and accident, because as a driver, I have insured this vehicle spiritually, and the only way to give it proper and guaranteed insurance are this.

I have the believe that the tasbih will help me in attaining a free state of mind and be at ease. It will help reduce or remove my anxiety, worries, and find peace while driving this vehicle on the road.

Remarkably, the Bus driver then went on to explain that he had experienced a lot of problems since he started this driving profession, and that even if there was no accident, the vehicle could be engulfed in fire suddenly or break down. For him, with the *Tesibiyu* on the wheel of his Bus, his problem was solved. He also expressed the belief that the *Tesibiyu* could as well protect and ward him off from the evil eyes of those people who did not want him to succeed in the driving business or those that does not wish him well. Inded, I was not hearing such narratives for the first time but the strong belief the Bus driver has in the *Tesibiyu* invited introspection into the use of Islamic spirituality in the public space. It displayed also portrayed its utilitarian use and functionality to the holder or user. Thus, these plates as displayed and the naratives attempted to construct dramatic sense of public self, turns mundane space into sanctioned place, and points to the way in which the religious object popular religious transform and provide succour to human life. In addition, plate 9 displayed an array of *Tesibiyu* in a shop, with different adoring colours and shapes that are meant for sale.



Plate 7. 4.1.3.: Commercial Bus with *Tesibiyu* hang on the wheel of the Car.

Source: Fieldwork 2018



Plate 8. 4.1.3.: Cobbler hanging *Tesibiyu* on his box.
Source: Fieldwork 2018



Plate 9. 4.1.3.: *Tesibiyu* dipayed for sale at a shop.

Source: Fieldwork 2018

In the same view, the plate 10 above also reflected a typical doctrinal practice among some Hausa Shoe Cobbler who often hang a *Tesibiyu* on their box, as he moved and hawk from one place to another. Accordingly, I met one of these Shoe Cobblers at Adelaja Street Mokola, area, Ibadan and the following conversation ensued between him and myself: although, this young man could not speak English fluently, but the conversation was achieved through an interpreter:

Me: Hello, what is this?

Shoe Cobbler: *Tesibiyu* of course. ok.

Me: Why do you put here?

Shoe Cobbler: It is a spiritual commodity. I collect it from my *Mu'allim* (spiritual consultant). It is a usual practice in my community to do so. It is very popular practice over there (Niger republic). So, we don't take anything for granted because it is for a purpose. The essence of this item as placed on the box, which is my working equipment and workshop is to bring good sales and by extension to good fortune for me. It would enable me to make more money that day.

The above narratives vividly captured how *Tesibiyu* has been commodified as an essential spiritual commodity and doctrinal litanies that serves as protective and curative necklace, if hanged or wrapped on a particular object or place, it became a means of assuaging fear and danger that could befall the holder, as act which God invocation has been invoked for safety and protection of the holder or space. Likewise, plate 11:4:1:3 on the other hand shown a display of various tasbih in a shop with different adoring colour, shape and size, with price ranging as well.

Palm Reading (Qir'aūtul Kaffi)

Palm reading or *Átèlewò wìwó* in Yoruba represents one of the highly criticised *Jálàbí* diagnostic and investigative techniques. It is used by *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to unravel the hidden facts about their clients. Such *Alfa Oníjálàbí* is knowledgeable to know the meaning of every line on the palm of everyone, analyse and interpret it accordingly, while also applying it to each human predicament and situation of things. By taking a critically look at the human palms, he would say what is likely to happen now or in the nearest future and by that

he could make prescriptions that would make it a good omen for the clients through his recommendations. *Alfa* Idris Salaudeen, one of the informants I interviewed for this study asserted that the popularity and the resounding success of one of the foremost and renowned Muslim clerics in Yoruba community (name withheld). According to him, when this great scholar established his Centre for Arabic school, there were a lot of students who were not performing very well in their studies, and it became a great concern and source of worry for him. He later adopted this *istikhārah* ritual performance on each of the prospective students. Anyone that he discovered would not do well in the Arabic education were rejected immediately and were advised to seek alternative profession or learn a trade where they may perform better (*Alfa* Idris Salaudeen, interview, Fieldwork 2017).

In the area of therapy, *Oníjálàbí* exhibited some aspects of Islamic and indigenous values to *Jálàbí* practice. The practical experience of these clerics occurs in the diagnosis of the nature and causes of their ailment or disease, as well as giving therapeutic solutions to it in various forms and patterns. Their main objective centre on making meaningful diagnosis and finding solutions as a pointer to the spiritual dimension.

4.1.3.2 Ritual performance: The work of *Alfa*

All culture and societies have manifestation of spiritual objects imbued with protective powers for shielding and safeguard the user. While the rendering of religious services and petitionary prayers by *Oníjálàbí* constitute ritual performance within a secular space of relationship, in most cases outside Mosque itself, creating a specific spiritual meaning that is being transformed into a sacred space for everyday spiritual consultation and patronage. Whereas the Muslim clerics constitute one of the well-respected institutions in Yoruba communities for their wide spectrum of responding to human existential challenges and soothing it through cultural production and rendering of spiritual work and services. This ‘work’ is a kind of repetitive performance through which people negotiate and seek divine help and protection of their social conditions.

In this context, the diagnosis strategies of spiritual consultation often led to what we can call treatment or appropriate measures that guarantees protection from illness, problems, or misfortunes and as well ward off evil or bad spirit, bad dreams, thus bringing about good fortunes and wellbeing of the clients and other users. Clearly, these structures include:

Khalwah Prayer Sessions or ‘mystical retreat’ on petition/ intercessory prayers, *Tírà dídí* (*Khatim-Waqf*), *Hantu* (*Kitabati-fi-Lawh-Potion*), bathing with special soaps, *Gbérè* (incision), and medicinal herbs, as recipes to obtain various spiritual and physical benefits. Thus, the availability of these seemingly insurance commodities and products is a pointer to the dynamics of Islam and how popular religious culture has found its way into Yoruba society in Nigeria. It all contains Islamic inscriptions from the Qur’ānic verses or names of Allah on it.

An informant, Mogaji Ayede, *Shaykh* Abdul-Qadir Ayede, provided an interesting account that encompassed the above processes. According to him, it was toward the 2015 general elections, and one of the top Governorship aspirants in Oyo state who happened to be a spiritual client to late *Shykh* Ibrahim Ayede, *Al-Fulani* had come for prayer assistance so that he could be victorious both at the primary and the general elections. To ensure his victory in both elections, the *Shehu* constituted a special petitionary prayer team for him. As the first aid treatment, he was given a *Tírà* that must be in his pocket always. A daily *hantu* that he must drink for seven days was also prepared. The petitionary prayer entails that he must be there personally for those seven nights before his political party’s primary election. The special petitionary prayers commenced by midnight in one of the rooms provided for that purpose, and all the prayer team turned their clothes upside down and the aspirant would sit in the mix that formed a circle round him, carrying the *Qur’ân* on his head till the end of the prayer, which usually ended around 4:30 am.

According to my informant to the Glory of God Almighty, the said client emerged victorious in all the elections, and he paid for this service, even more than expected from him (KII: Fieldwork, October 2017).

Khalwah - Prayer Retreat Sessions

Petitionary prayer retreat is one of the deeply strategic means by which *Oníjálàbí* do obtain solutions to the problems confronting their spiritual seekers. Certainly, human beings would always aspire toward higher positions and move up in the ladder of life, either seeking job promotion in the civil service or private sector, businessmen and women also want to experience patronages; politicians, among many other, always ask and require the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to work for them. Also, people compete with one another to attain higher status

whether that person deserves it or not. When someone perceive been cheated by another person and he/she wishes to reverse the situation or wants the person to pay for it dearly.

In many ways, all my interlocutors asserts and maintained that this technique gives effective spiritual support, which in turn drawn people closer to make direct contact with God. Thus, one of the most exciting ways of addressing the spiritual need of clients is by organising ‘petitionary prayer retreat’ for some days with many *Alfas* in attendance depending on the nature of the request in a secluded environment. Some may require urgent attention, as delay may be dangerous. Although the petitionary prayers could be organised by *Alfa* and for the religious consumer (client), who have requested for such depending on the circumstances or urgency of the matter at hand.

In essence, the petitionary prayer retreats are strategically meant to seek Allah’s favour and mercy on behalf of the spiritual seekers (clients) by being in seclusion for a particular period that affords the *Alfas* to live away from the sinful acts and worldly affairs. Informants contend that there are a lot of Muslim clerics that have dedicated all their lives to petitionary prayer with total devotion to God to have spiritual command of this world. It was suggested that such *Alfas* hardly come out to the public domain except during the two Muslim major festivals to observe the *Eīd* prayer. They believe the period of exclusion would afford them the opportunity to be closer to God. People use the rare opportunities of festive periods to meet them at home or at the *Eid* ground to solicit and make prayer requests because they know that such clerics are already well-established friends of Allah (*Waliy*) and whatever they say, or touch becomes blessed immediately with Allah’s permission. In other words, certain sacred prayer cultures are observed in the evening or in the middle of the night, when the veil between the two worlds is the thinnest and the outside, physical world is the quietest. The *Onijàlàbí* usually conduct these special petitionary prayers between after *Salat* Magrib and pausibly continue till the early morning hours.

Apart from this category, other *Alfa Onijàlàbí* also set aside certain periods and time to make special petitionary prayers to seek Allah’s favours on behalf of their clients for days and months, if the client can afford the required payment and logistics for such demand. This is often the case among many Nigerian politicians who engage the services of *Alfa*

Oníjálàbí when seeking political offices and canvassing for people's votes as well as when they want to maintain the existing status.

Another informant, an *Alfa*, narrated how in 2007, a prominent politician gathered (11) eleven young *Alfa* including himself to offer prayers for his success in politics. The gathering of *Alfa* was put together by the personal assistant to the politician. The mystical prayer retreat was planned for three (3) months, with accommodation and feeding provided. The politician had wanted the *Alfas* to follow a specific petitionary prayer litany (*Nakali-Asiri*) which had been given to him by another *Alfa* long time ago outside the country. He thereafter explained the format of the petitionary prayer litany in details and the specific role each of them was to play and how he wanted them to conduct themselves during the prayer retreat. The prayer retreat was divided into three sessions: the morning session was between 6:00 am and 11:00 am, the afternoon session was between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm and the last session lasted between 11:00 pm and 3:00 am every day.

According to the informant, the *Alfas* involved in the prayer retreat were instructed to put on white attire or *Jalabiyyah* all through the prayer period. The politician also said he would be sending someone to check on them weekly, ensure their welfare and pay their honorarium every Friday. The client, in this case, also warned the *Alfa* to observe the prayer as instructed since he would see signs that the prayers were answered as the retreat progressed. He also promised to visit the team should the need arise and as well send them on Holy pilgrimage to Makkah and Medina among other forms of compensations. "He was very confident that if we followed the required procedures, the victory was certain", the informant said. Providing further details on how the prayer retreat was conducted, the informant continued."

On his own, he said further that a white sheep without any mixed colour would be slaughtered every week and that three big cows would be slaughtered at the end of the petitionary prayers retreat to be shared and distributed to the needy and the poor in the community. However, we were transported to his house that same day and we started the petitionary prayer inside the Mosque located in that compound and another block of a flat was given to us as accommodation. After two months on the petitionary prayer retreat, we were reliably informed by the link man that Baba has started saying *Alihamdulilah* (Praising God) for our effort on the prayer as he has seen good signs and we are due for good compensation, especially our Hajj

pilgrimage trip to Makkah that same year. On the last day on the petitionary prayer, the client and the linked man were with us throughout and they were sitting side by side with the *Alfas*, saying amen to the prayers ((KII: Alfa Abdul-Lateef Alabere, Fieldwork, 2017).

Thus, the conduct and litanies of the special prayers by Muslim clerics in seclusion has remained one of the known means to obtain divine solutions and peace for human problems and decision making through divine inspiration. It may also include the recitation of certain portion or the whole chapters of the Qur'ân is permissible as means of seeking proper relief, and soothing from a number of issues confronting people, such situations these include when someone is having too little to eat, feeling unsafe from crime at home, being afraid to lose one's job or not to find a job, having a bad state of mind or health, inability to make ends meet, sterility, malady, etc

Tírà dídí (*Khatim Waqf*) Seals

Another important fabric in the whole gamut of that which constitutes the work of *Alfa* is the *Khatim Waqf*. It is one of the popular practices among Yoruba Muslim clerics, called *Tírà dídí*. In *Jálàbí* practice, aside from offering petitionary prayers, the *Oníjálàbí* often give out protective item as band to be wore on neck or around waist to ward off evil or demonic eye from the user. It is considered by many as a necklace or pendants containing specific Qur'ânic verses. *Tírà dídí* as a spiritual commodity consist of a leather or fabric pouch that contained folded pieces of white paper on which Qur'ânic verses or inscription (Arabic letters and symbols) are written in exact Arabic language in a specific number of times or ways, 'stitched or sewn' in leather and sealed. It is to be worn on the body or put at a specific place to protect an individual or the place for good fortune.

More importantly, a particular spiritual 'seal' (*Tírà dídí*) would contain a specific portion of the Qur'ân verses identified and imbued with soiritual inscription that would proffer the intended solution to the problem of the client and religious consumer. It could also be in various sizes and forms to make it convenient for client usage. According to informants, anybody could use it, regardless of age, sex, status, or religion, children, and adults inclusive.

The value that this spiritual commodity embodied provides a magnet for good luck and fortunes. The surface of the *Tírà* can be covered with prayers, signs, numbers, and decorative motifs, and the object could be carried in a pocket, or rolled and placed in an amulet case; some put it inside cloth. It could be used as rings or pendants as well as displayed in the homes and cars as plaques. In fact, people do hang *Tírà* at the entrances and exits of their houses to ward off evil spirit, discourage thieves from coming to the house and prevent bad incidents or calamity happening to the family in whatever form. The content of the *Tírà* depends on the issues and problem being considered for solution, but largely to protect the bearer from attack or sudden death.

Hantu: Kitabati-fi-Lawh (Qur'ānic Writings)

Hantu is an important spiritual commodity that largely consists of appropriate texts from the Qur'ān in the exact Arabic language, put together and written out many times with the pen (*Qalamu*) on the popular wooden black slate (*walaa*), and washed off with water for clients to drink, bathe or rub on the body (See Plate 10 & 11). Informants described it as one of the most effective means of curing, protecting, granting of a good wish, or fortifying human body by removing or securing the human body against existential challenges. With *hantu*, Qur'ānic verses are thought to have permeated the body, penetrated the veins, and neutralised every form of physical and spiritual impediments. Apart from being mixed with water for bathing, or drinking, *hantu* can be mixed with body cream or perfume. The use of *hantu* can also go with Yoruba black soap (*ose dúdú*).

Hantu can be manipulated to suit a particular moment and specific purposes, depending on the situation at hand. This was further enunciated by a key informant, Imam Z. B. Balogun who described his relationship with one of his religious consumers. According to him, whenever a client of his who happened to be an auto dealer at the Oke-Ado area, Ibadan complained that he could not get buyers for a particular vehicle, or that the car has overstayed in the garage or showroom, he would make a special *hantu* for him with specific Qur'ānic texts and verses that are meant for that purpose, and instruct him to wash the cars with the *hantu*, allowing it to stay and dry on the cars. Imam Balogun then boasted that the cars would be sold at the client's desire price within a short period, and he got his dues accordingly.

Most *Alfa Onijálàbí* as informants considered *hantu* as an effective spiritual mixture for pregnant women who are expected to start drinking it from the early stage of the pregnancy to the delivery stage. In other words, at each stage of the pregnancy, different contents of *hantu* would be provided for them to drink for the safe delivery and protection of the baby and the mother. Also, *hantu* is used to treat waywardness among children and enhance the memory of school children. (KII: Imam Z. B. Balogun, Fieldwork, 2017).

Significantly, the effort of a woman expecting a baby find no bound, as she will frankly make spiritual consultations on how she gets pregnant, protect her pregnancy and ensure safe delivery of the baby. The excerpt of an interview with another informant, Muqaddam Taofeeq Adebayo provided an insight into the significance of *hantu* in *Jálàbí* practice, as he narrated the experience of one of his clients. A woman had come to seek spiritual assistance to conceive, and he worked for her, with the instruction that she must observe and complete all rituals process, and she must be available to collect her *hantu* from time to time at each stage of the pregnancy. He also instructed the woman to let her husband be aware of the treatment litanies she was undergoing, especially when she was closer to her delivery period during when she must take the last *hantu*. According to him, the woman only remembered to inform the husband about the *hantu* while she was in labour, and the husband refused to visit an *Alfa* to collect *hantu*. *Alfa* Adebayo said that the man allowed the wife to undergo pain for three days before eventually putting a call across to him to collect the *last hantu* for her wife. This made him to be furious as he realised that the woman suffered unnecessarily. The *Alfa* then spoke with a tone of accomplishment:

I asked him to come to my house immediately and he collected the *hantu* which has been prepared for her already since she has been informed me about her likely delivery date. He came around 12:15 am to collect it. To the glory of God, the husband was able to sneak the *hantu* into the hospital's labour room perhaps he was only the person allowed to see her wife. Without the knowledge of the nurse on duty, he quickly used some part of it to rub her wife's tummy and made her to drink the rest immediately. Within 15 minutes after drinking the *hantu* I gave her she delivered a bouncing baby boy girl. As such, at each stage of her pregnancy, I prepared different *hantu* that was meant to perform a specific role in her body. Perhaps, the *Qur'ān* itself has been described as containing verses embodied for human 'healing' (*Shifā*) and 'mercy' (*Rahman*) (Muqaddam Taofeeq Adebayo, Interview, Fieldwork 2017).



Plate 10. 4.1.3.: Sample of Black slate for writing Arabic inscription (hantu).

Source: Fieldwork 2018



Plate 11. 4.1.3.: Black slate with Arabic inscription written on it, before washing off.

Source: Fieldwork 2018

Islamic Medicinal Herbs and other Substance

Some Muslim clerics have knowledge of medicinal plants and recipes for the purpose of benefitting people and curing various ailments and diseases of their clients. It is believed that God created these medicinal products for therapeutic and safeguarding of human life. While many of these materials and ingredients for medicines are simple, accessible, and easily prepared. It is a cultural practice derived from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*) with reference to health, diseases, and treatment that later became known as ‘the Prophetic medicine’. Islamic herbal remedies entail the use of medicinal herbs, Zamzam water, pure honey, olive oil, dates, herbal concoction (*Àgbo*). Although there are different prescriptions and mode of preparation and administration for different herb lore. Thus, it also includes collections that combine verses of the *Qu’rân* and local flora and fauna in the application of therapeutics for diverse sickness that usually pose challenge to the wellbeing of the people.

The mostly used plants parts are leaves, roots, fruits and seeds, and bark. The remedies also include mixed processes: decoction and infusions, dried and ground plants added to food. For instance, the treatment of women with gynecological problems, which encompass menstrual cramps and menstrual disorders, pregnancy issues, and children’s health challenges followed the mixed processes. Infusion is considered the best mode of preparation of these herbal mixtures, especially those used as digestive, for gynecological and urological problems. They are often administered through oral ingestion as drink and on food.

Moreso, a segment of the *Oníjálàbí* regularly contend that there are certain ailments or terrible health circumstances that may not be detected nor diagnosed scientifically through medical laboratory. For them, such situations are spiritual in nature, and it requires the attention of spiritual specialist like *Oníjálàbí*, who could render petitionary prayer into the metaphysical realm to connect to spiritual seeker’s abnormality to God. Alternatively, there are situations that people are advised at the hospital to seek spiritual attention for their conditions. While they frequently work in conjunction with the *elégbòogi* (herbalists) who sell and identify specific herbs, leaves, roots that are curatively valuable to a specific need of the people. According to informant’s sources, *Alfa Oníjálàbí* who uses this type of

material often base their argument on the fact that it is done to save human life and provide rectitude for the client only.

Again, some of the underlisted recipes and products are recommended as medicinal which could be mixed with any other herbal to secure, cure, and safeguard the healthy living of the spiritual seekers. In fact, many of these could be blended to form herb powder (*Àgúnmu*) for human well being. Because some Yoruba people have adapted and accustomed to use of local herb in treating many ailments and see no reason or justification for going to hospital in certain instances. These recipes include: *Khal* (Vinegar), *Al-‘asal* (honey), *Sidr* (Lotus), *Thūm* (garlic), *Zaytūm* (Olive Oil) *Rumman* (Pomwgranate).

Another notable practice is the use of incision (*Gbere*) by some *Oníjálàbí* as an instrument for warding off evil attack and guide against assault. This practice is called *Nushrah* which is a form of exorcism in which a sick person whose sickness is perceived to be a result of sorcerous and the treatment must be based on other sorcerous means. In other words, the use of incision (*Gbéré*) is meant to ensure total and complete delivery from any evil attack. The incision mark varies in number and pattern; it is observed that it is usually in odd figure like 11, 21, 27, and it is done on the head, chest, fontanel, wrist, and so on.

Significantly, it was observed that there are numbers of cherished techniques and spiritual commodities that were adapted and cultivated from Yoruba worldview to *Jálàbí* work. One of such popular practice is what Yoruba people called *áséje* (food concoction). A typical *áséje* was described by an informant thus:

This is a situation when certain ingredients like *Eja Aborí* (dry fish), along with permissible and lawful materials are put together into a local black pot with already prepared *hantu* are added as sauces. This is allowed to be cooked together. The client is made to eat this food concoction (*áséje*) for a while, and mostly in the night before going to bed. It is for a specific curative or protective purpose (Alhaji Ibrahim Afe, interview, Fieldwork, 2018).

As part of the process, the Muslim clerics may also recite certain Qur’ānic verses before eating the *áséje* to ensure total victory and to achieving desire outcome for the client. One of such spiritual invocation and doctrines include:

Suratu-’l- Jinn (Q.72), *Yaasin* (Q.36), *Safat* (Q.37)

The above chapters and verses are typical example of the Qur’ān that are mostly recited.

Moreso, some of the Muslim clerics that I interviewed argued in respect of the incision (*Gbéré*) as another means of saving human life. For them, by putting the incision mark on a client, it would easily penetrate right into the vein of the client, and it would stimulate the fastest recovery for the sick person as well as prevent further spiritual attack from anywhere to the person having that incision on his or her body. Although it is maintained that Islam forbids sorcery but provides remedies, since the prophet of Islam; Muhammad was once a victim of it. In the like manner, many of the Muslim clerics interviewed denied and criticised this technique for being non-Islamic but I observed that some of them make use of it, as fresh incision marks were noted on their body during the fieldwork.

Functionality of Islamic material culture in *Jálàbí* practice

Culturally, within the purview of Yoruba Muslim sphere, religion is expressed to bring power and meaning to human social life, and these are construed as essential part of everyday religious life. The charismatic manifestation in the written and oral forms of Qur'ānic verses fits into a larger landscape of sacred materiality, which included a range of spiritual objects or commodities invested with petitionary prayers. *Oníjálàbí* as informants express delight that religious consumption remains one of the pervading ways of expressing people's religiosity in the contemporary society, as they identified certain tools as repertoires of spirituality that help transforming the everyday life for social engagement of the religious consumers as well as a link between everyday practices and interpretation of human life. This repertoire of everyday spirituality, therefore, explain what spiritual consumption means in people's everyday lives in dealing with and confronting problems of health, human security, wellbeing and to ease the daily lives of the religious consumers. Its consumption has greatly helped humans to face the adversity of everyday life and providing succour to understanding their lifeworld which serve as meaning-making. These factors are grouped into four distinct categories: the creators, the material forms, recipients, and the social world.

The first factor to be considered in making consumption choice is centered on the creator and giver of the commodity or object, which in this study is the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, as a

self-made and independent religious entrepreneur in the society. The identity of the giver conveyed deeper insights into the meaning and recognition attached to the commodity.

The second factor is the material form of the object itself, which is the petitionary prayer, blessings, and spiritual commodities of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*; in other words, the spiritual value people place on the commodities explained why it is being accepted or not.

The third factor is the recipient of the object, which represents the end-user of the object and of course, the clients and the religious consumer who is in dire need of the prayer fortification and spiritual assistance. The personal conviction of the receiver of the commodity provides predictive accuracy and merit.

And lastly, the social world in which the commodity exists as a cultural phenomenon is also very important. Hence, religious imprints within Yoruba communities have been occupied largely in response to the broadened appeal of human security and creation of freedom from fear and want in a precarious society. In all, when people are primed with religious beliefs, they tend to value their belonging more than the people that are not primed or who have weaker religious beliefs. These effects are caused by religious teachings and experiences on being content with one's belongings, which lead to the over evaluation of one's possessions.

Meanwhile, the spiritual commodities as embodied human security is offered for consumption in the form of blessings, prayers, and religious items are key to the development of a religious economy in a pluralistic community like Ibadan and elsewhere in Yoruba society, with diverse culture and people, and the practice has made the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to be seen as “free-floating sanctifiers” in a religious economy that has become to be much more like a ‘market with fee-for-service in ascendance. Of course, the *Jálàbí* practice here is operated privately by the Muslim clerics to construct a unique identity and structure of religious legitimacy. While the practice is based on a broadly shared set of religious practices, but the individual clerics develop and adopt distinctive techniques and strategies in attending to their religious consumers. Despite the changing structure of societies in the Yoruba public sphere, people continue to consult and engage the services of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* up to date.

Going forward from this point, using religious consumption as a shared framework for understanding *Jálàbí* practice, discussions and analysis in this study has shown the

manifestation and performative construction of various variegated religious commodities and objects that are imbued with protective power to secure individual religious consumers as expression of religious commitment. This myriad of Islamic commodities' consumption constitutes people-oriented security that cater to focus on spiritual functioning to human well-being and securing dignity of life ambiguities in a fee-floating manner. Although the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, as Muslim religious entrepreneurs culturally aimed to advance the Islamic traditions, absorbing it, studying it, teach it, but also attempt to maintain or earn livelihood from it by charging fee for their commodities and the services being rendered to the religious consumers. Thus, consuming religious commodities and products can enhance attachment to a particular culture, and they can reflect mastery of that culture. Significantly, the major messages and emphasis of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* are about putting succor and smile on the face and life of their religious consumers from time to time, even, when hope is lost, they still make life meaningful.

Besides, these clerics must be creative enough and be ready to acquire or deployed new doctrinal or exegetical ideas from time to time. Therefore, *Jálàbí* practice is socially constructed here as a product of the lived religious experience of the people who have the supernatural encounter that is seemingly transformational in ameliorating human existential challenges. It is made by man for the benefit of man. It is about how religion spins out belief and their functionality to human existential needs. In all, *Jálàbí*, as an Arabic word, is used here to refer to a form of invented traditions representing a dramatic social expression of the changing cultural landscape of Nigeria society influenced by neoliberal ideology and capitalism. Therefore, this rich tapestry of the prayer fortification and spiritual commodities are contributing to the overall human welfare and a source of security which illustrates the values which religious consumers placed on them as weapon against earthly principalities.

While one cannot ignore how this petitionary prayer has been connected to helping people derive meaning from and sustain with the enormous everyday psychological stress and emotional strain of life. Thus, the culture and ethos embedded in *Jálàbí* practice illustrate the embodiment of ritual gravitas and symbolic narratives that restructure social relations to bring about desire outcome. *Jálàbí* therefore provides a framework for understanding how religious practice constitute worldview that shape individual lifeworld.

Meanwhile the plethora of numerous doctrinal prayer formulae/litanies and strategies are categorised according to everyday life situations, that emerged as conceptual tools for meaning making which shapes and influence religious consumers's everyday life experience. In a broader context, the end user or recipient of this valuable commodities need to follow the laid down guidelines and instructions for it to manifested and achieve the desire goal in a specific context. It is instructive that many informants, both the clerics and clients approved the effectiveness and agreed that many of these spiritual commodities are pervasive tools for confronting all sort of human existential challenges on everyday matters. Therefore, spiritual commodities and products remain significant and imaginative with the Islamic inscription embodied as cultural codes. While the material life of these spiritual items explains the objectness, which also contributes to its materiality and meaning formation that it gains.

4.1.4 Spiritual Capital, Human Security and Values Embodied in *Jálàbí*

Among the *Oníjálàbí*, spiritual capital is believed to be essential for obtaining success, succour and breakthrough for their spiritual seekers. It is regarded as the embodiment of religious consumers' multiple subjectivities, aspirations, and concerns, and define it as a blend of individual capacities stemming from intrinsically cherished spiritual values. Thus, in unpacking the link between people' wellbeing and social development, *Oníjálàbí* initiated and modified Islamic practices with embodied values to wipes away sorrows, confers graces, and protects from illness, shipwrecks, and other misfortunes. Clearly, the task of this study is to explore the practices of *Jálàbí*, with a view to determining the cultural meanings embedded in commodified prayers and how a notion of human security that provides protection against threat from fear, needs and wants, to human survival is produced from a transactional engagement. Undoubtedly, many also aptly understood *Jálàbí* as an alternative practice to traditional native medicines which appropriate insightful assemblage of spiritual capital as an embodiment of religious infrastructure that allows the citizenry to build religious castles to ensure their survival and security in a precarious state.

While our aim in this study is to understand the meanings of a clientelist relationship between *Oníjálàbí* and religious consumers (clients), in this section I present narratives that

illustrate how the quest for human security engenders *Jálàbí* practices in a secularising state. In this sense, the *Oníjálàbí* attempt to prove the effectiveness of their services and spiritual commodities as a religious entrepreneur in a spiritual marketplace. Whereas the spiritual marketplace resonates with Yoruba adage of *Aiyé L'ojà* verse *Àrà gbe ayé*.

Meaning: the world is a marketplace which is full of qualms, deceits, unpredictability in human relations, failures at self-actualising dreams, insecurity and fear driving from power of the unseen and unknown. On the other hand, '*Àrà gbe ayé*' simply connote that to be alive is to experience ups and downs of this journey.

The above adage serves to remind us about the need for man to be fortified spiritually to live well in a competitive lifeworld, where human struggle to succeed in order to fulfil and achieve life destiny in the world (*Ayé*). In other words, the reality and realisation of peace (*Àláfíà*) can be attained through petitionary prayers, and the *Oníjálàbí* as religious entrepreneur provide pragmatic search for human security and to respond to the market pressure and needs.

The first narrative is about the transaction which a *Jálàbí* practitioner had with a trader whose goods (two trailer load of rice) were seized by men of the Nigerian Customs Service. The *Jálàbí* practitioner, having listened to the woman's story and predicaments, told her that the goods would be released within a week after offering his prayer intercession. The woman gave him some money and promised to show further appreciation and show of gratification in cash when the seized goods might have been released. According to the *Oníjálàbí*, the seized goods were released few days after, but the woman failed to redeem her previous pledge of further gratification. A month later, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* met the fellow who referred the woman to him and complained bitterly about her unappreciative behaviour. He was surprised to hear from the referral about the woman's claim that the *Alfa* did not assist her spiritually and that she had contacted a different *Alfa* who gave her spiritual commodities (*tírà and hantu*), which she drank and hung on her neck during the meeting with the Nigerian Customs Officers.

This spiritual capital, according to her, were reckoned with and worked for her, and that was the reasons why her goods were released, and the woman appreciated the latter cleric accordingly. This experience, he said, made him to resolve not to render any service to

people without the use of spiritual commodities, especially for women, who he said were more interested in physical things offered to them when they solicit petitionary prayers. (Usatdh Ismail Showumi Basmallah, interview, Fieldwork 2017).

In another narrative meant to portray the relevance of the spiritual capital of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to human security, an informant explained how the life of one of his consistent spiritual seekers, a high-ranking officer in the Nigerian Police, was saved because he heeded his counsel. According to the *Alfa*, he had a terrible dream about the Officer, and he immediately woke up to observe some special intercessory prayers on his behalf, including his daily *Tahajjud* prayer. Afterward, he put a call across to the officer as early as 5:00 am, narrated his dream, and warned him against going to the office that very day. Fortunately, his client heeded and stayed back at home after calling his office to complain of unwellness, which afford him the privilege to stay at home that day. Precisely, after five hours of staying at home, then tragedy struck at about 1noon The *Alfa* said, te officer was relaxing on a chair in his living room and watching a programme on Channels Television when he saw a breaking news: Bomb incident at the Nigeria Police Headquarters Abuja! The bombing incident, he said, claimed many lives and he was left wondering what could have been the fate of his client if he did not offer those intercessory prayers for him.

Mr. Sola, a resident of Idi-Arere Area, Ibadan was referred and introduced to *Alfa Oníjálàbí* by his mother's friend, though he is a Christian and her mother's friend was a Muslim faithful, a member of the *Alásàlátù* group in the community. His narrative also provides instructive evidence to the surge of *Jálàbí* practice within the logic of human security. He was a thrift collector (known in the local parlance as *Alájo*). He was prosperous with a lot of customers. He also hired two staff as assistants to meet up with business demand and keep appointments in various locations. Of course, the nature of the business embodies honesty and faithfulness. However, Mr. Sola suddenly noticed that monies were missing daily where he normally kept cash that could not be deposited at the bank probably due to the lateness in the collection of those contributions. Over time, he became indebted to many customers due to missing monies he could not account for.

Moreover, he could no longer meet up with the loan requests. He discussed this problem with his mother's friend, an Alhaja, who suggested that Mr. Sola had left himself spiritually vulnerable for too long. The woman told me and said: '*díé omokùnrin kò tó'*,

meaning, a man needs not leave himself without spiritual fortification. And next, she took him to *Alfa Oníjálàbí* who she believed would assist him to find solution to the mystery of disappearing money.

Upon a visitation and consultation with the *Oníjálàbí*, he was offered spiritual commodity, according to his predicament and need, he was directed to put it in the box where he normally kept money. With that, the *Alfa* assured him that the identity of the thief would be exposed soonest. The *Alfa* also him another *Tira*, which must always be in his pocket, and asked him to report back to him in two weeks if the situation of event did not change or if he had experienced anything. In fact, within a week, the identity of the person stealing the money was revealed. The fellow openly confessed because she became unwell and uncomfortable, and thought she could die mysteriously. Immediately after the confession, Mr. Sola called the Alhaja to inform her about the development, and she advised him to arrest the person immediately so that she could refund all the stolen monies. This encounter and experience, according to him, solidly made him to strongly believe that the Muslim clerics were real ‘men of God’. (Fieldwork August 2017).

It is usual for women, mothers, and grandmothers to feel concerned about the everyday actions of their children as they grow older – from primary school to secondary school and higher institution of learning. Even after graduations, parents and guidiances continue to carefully monitor their life progression, as they show interest in whom they get married to, when to marry and how to get married. These are some of the circumstances and situations that warrant consulting and engaging the service of *Oníjálàbí* for petitionary prayers. Moreso, the narrative below depicts the life of one of my interlocutors, who is simply refer to as Alhaja Mulikat. She said:

I have made it a normal obligation to ensure that I am in regular contact with my *Alfa* either through phone call or physical meeting, in order not to go astray and awry, especially to avoid stepping into the wrong way of life which is very perilous. This is a long-time tradition that I learned from my parents who have inculcated that in me. For instance, as a mother, I must consult my *Alfa* before any of my children get married, and I will know if they are compatible with their proposed partner, or if their wedlock would be fruitful with children, and if they both can live long when joined together in marriage (Interview, Fieldwork 2017).

The work of the *Alfa* does not end there for this Alhaja. It is the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* that will determine when and how the marriage event would look like, whether it would be low key or elaborate momentous. According to her, if he advises that the marriage gathering should not involve many people and the warning is ignored the consequences are always there waiting. She ascribed the challenges which some couples faces after their wedding ceremony, including fertility issues, miscarriages of pregnancy or even divorce to failure to heed the advice of their *Alfas*, as spiritual advisor. On the confidence she reposed in the guidance of *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, she said:

For me, three of my daughters are married and their marriages are blessed with children, and I make bold to say that they are happy indeed. Two of the marriages were held in elaborate and it was even my eldest daughter's marriage was organised on a low key based on the advice of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*. Honestly, whenever I visited my *Alfa* on any matter, I always feel I am in a safer hand because I feel closer to God, who answers prayers through the petitionary prayers of my *Alfa*. This is clearly the evidence that God answered prayers (Fieldwork 2017).

There was also another interesting narrative from a radio programme that I listened to on Petals 102:3 FM, a local radio station in Ibadan, in 2014. It was about a kidnap event that happened in Idi Amu, Oje, one of the indigenous Areas of Ibadan, and the deployment of Islamic spirituality in apprehending a kidnapper. According to the story, Musa, a 12-year-old boy and his younger brother, Waliyu, about 3-year-old were playing in the balcony of their house when a strange woman hypnotized Musa and sent him on an errand. Before he returned the stranger already left with the young Waliyu. Musa remained incoherent for three days and could not explain the circumstance that led to Waliyu missing. However, the father who happened to be a Muslim cleric swung into action immediately. He gave him some *hantu* to drink, and *tírà* to wear on his neck to neutralise the charm put on him by the kidnapper. These spiritual items were meant to build the boy up against any other future adversity and enable him to regain his memory and identify the kidnapper wherever he sees her. Musa regained his consciousness after three days and narrated his whole story to the parent. It was only then that they knew that Waliyu was kidnapped. Musa's father continued his petitionary prayers and assured the community and the people around him, that the kidnapper would be apprehended.

Two weeks after this unpleasant incident, as Musa was passing along the street, he saw this same woman and he immediately ran home to alert and inform his parent that he had seen the woman that kidnapped his younger brother, *Waliyu*. The parent, without wasting time followed him to the place, and when they got there, it was amazing that they saw the woman. They raise alarm to alert the public about the woman kidnapper, who has been terrorizing the community for sometimes. Upon checking the woman's handbag, a lot of implicating materials which includes head scarfs, *hijab* of different colours, sizes, and types were discovered inside her bag.

As it mostly happened in such cases, a mob descended on the suspected kidnapper, much to his chagrin, even as Musa father alerted the Police station at Yemetu, where a report of the missing child had earlier been made.

In the same manner, another significant narrative of how spiritual capital became central to everyday life was the story I heard from an informant, simply identified as Mr. Banji, about an incident that involved his newborn baby who was bewitched and the role of *Oníjálàbí* in restoring him to normalcy. Around March 2010, his family was blessed with a baby boy. The child discharged from the hospital healed, and hearty, became ill few days after an elaborate naming ceremony was organised by the parents. The boy's situation was so terrible and could hardly sleep at night. He took the baby back to the private hospital where the birth was taken but there was no improvement. Then he called his elder sister to intimate her of the development and the woman suggested that the family should consider the spiritual option. Mr. Banji's sister, a staunch member of an *Alasalatu* group in her community, being very familiar with different *Alfa* introduced him to an *Alfa Oníjálàbí* who once 'worked' for her family when her husband had a spiritual attack. They both went to see the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* who, after adopting a particular diagnostic technique explained that one of the well-wishers that visited the baby at the hospital soon after birth, indeed cut part of the baby's hair and buried it inside the bush for a spiritual against attack him.

According to him, the *Alfa* as well told him that the woman aimed to punish his father and the only means she had was through inflicting pain on the new baby boy. The *Alfa Oníjálàbí* made some spiritual invocations in Arabic and that petitionary prayers would be conducted for three nights. He also gave the boy a particular *tírà*, which he had to wear on his neck for at least six months to avert any future reoccurrence. The petitionary

prayers, Mr. Banji claimed, was meant to force, and coerce the woman to exhume the hair. All the processes were observed diligently, the *Alfa* was paid for his service and the boy's health was restored. The feat endeared the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to him dearly. Before I ended the interview with him, the young man proudly announced:

Although the incident that happened to my child was something I never thought of. It was like a grief-stricken moment because I didn't expect it. Nonetheless, it has been an amazing encounter and relationship we had, and I am proud to be associated with him till today, as he is still my spiritual adviser because I refer and relate all vital matters about my business and family affairs to him daily. In fact, for the past years, he has initiated a monthly petitionary prayer session for my family which usually has all members of the family in attendance, as he often comes with many other *Alfas* for the family prayer. The experience has been extremely fulfilling and awesome for me and my family (Interview: Fieldwork, October 2017).

Relatedly, another informant, a young married woman with three children and a graduate of one of the Federal Polytechnics in the country, re-counted the account and experience her extended family had with *Alfa Oníjálàbí* for some of their existential challenges. The woman decided to go into business after graduation, having failed to secure employment in the formal sector. On the advice of her mother, she solicited the spiritual assistance of an *Alfa* to determine the line of business to follow. She thereafter consulted an *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, who she said later became a family member (family *Alfa*) because all her other siblings, including her parents consulted and patronizes the same *Alfa* for prayer fortification and seeking of Allah' blessings, benedictions, and sanctifications.

Accordingly, there was absolutely nothing happening in her family circle that the *Alfa* was not aware of and that he also attended their social activities. She revealed that the closeness was constructed on mutual trust and that the entire members of the family had confidence in him as 'man of God with locus of power'. For instance, when her father was going on a holy pilgrimage (*Hajj*) in Saudi Arabia, the same *Alfa* organised special petitionary prayers for him to ensure safe trip, devoid of any obstacle during and after the *Hajj* exercise, and he went and return safely.

Again, when her brother was not performing well in his academic programme at the University, to the extent that he was to be rusticated from the school. She advised her father

to consult and discuss the issue with the *Alfa*, which he yielded to immediately and having discussed the issue with him, the problem was resolved positively. The *Alfa* was also close to her husband, who saw the *Alfa* as a trusted family member. She was extremely happy and elated that her husband often engaged the services of the *Alfa* without even informing her. For her, it was amazing the way the entire family adopted and relate with him spiritually as their *Alfa* because of the great work and services he offers them over the years.

From these diverse narratives and vignettes as voiced and articulated from the interviews and observations of my interviewees and interlocutors in this study, no doubt, have illustrated the centrality and extent of the pragmatic, utilitarian benefits, and positive values that people derived from the spiritual encounter and relationship that was struck between the Muslim clerics and the people based on their impressive belief and faith in the Islamic petitionary prayers (*du'â*), and how much consumptions of spiritual capital immerse the totality of people's life. People, as religious consumers hold the view that every petitionary prayer has its functionality for the human well-being and happiness. These narratives, therefore, display critical ways in which petitionary prayers are used in reordering social world, path to success and making Islam the lived religion among Ibadan inhabitants and beyond, which also attract a lot of religious consumers.

Religious entrepreneurship and Social Network in *Jálàbí* Practice

There is no gainsaying that social networks play a defining moment in religious sphere as cultural entrepreneur space. That is why, it is also important to know how the transactional relationship between *Alfa Oníjálàbí* and their religious consumers or spiritual seekers create a social network that provide privileged access, mutual benefits, and spiritual solace to fostering development of religious values for human gains. To maintain this network, *Oníjálàbí* seldomly associated themselves with their religious consumers in a relational value. However, from the observations and several interviews conducted for this study, I realised that many *Alfa Oníjálàbí* utilised the influence of spiritual patronage and transactional relationship to build social networks with their clients. They rely on them for a long term social and financial support that extends beyond the services they render. In fact, there is a way in which they turn every single encounter into a more perpetual relationship

and opportunity to make regular demands. Such was the kind of relationship that existed among three of my key informants, namely, *Alfa* Lateef Alabere, *Alfa* Sheu Alabidun and *Alfa* Malik Alabito, with a political figure in Ibadan. The three clerics have been working for a top-notch politician for over two decades, using the mosque in his compound as their office space. The mosque was hardly free of activity on any given day, especially with political associates regularly thronging into the residence.

Quite often, the trio offer petitionary prayers for him and his family and arrange for different genre of intercessory prayers to generate special affection and emotion. They also do organise special retreat prayer sessions during the last ten days of Ramadan fasting. In fact, some of the man's political associates also adopt them as their personal *Alfa*, inviting them for spiritual fortification services and to even officiate at their social gatherings. The relationship they established with the politician was quite mutual and beneficial. The man pays their house rents and sponsors important events such as naming ceremonies, among others. He would give each of them rams during *Ileya* festival (*Eīd el Kabir*) and makes provisions for new clothing they would wear on the *Eīd* day. Same man had sent them on both lesser hajj and pilgrimage to Makkah, as part of their religious obligation. They also seek financial assistance from him in taking care of their family needs, like paying their children's school fees and hospital bills among others. At the beginning of the Ramadan fasts, he would make provisions for food items and beverages. Through his followers and network, the three *Alfa* had worked for so many people and depend largely on this chain of network for their existence, survival, and livelihood.

As I was to end the interview, one of them raised a *waka* (chorus), which the rest of them sang gleefully with a sense of accomplishment:

Kòko gbígbìn kì sé isé wa
Àgbàdo gbígbìn kì sé isé wa
Obì gbígbìn kì sé isé wa
Ká kómo ní Kéwú, ní isé Alfa, òyèn lònà t'ólórùn rán wa
Jálàbí síse, nisé Alfa, òyèn lònà t'ólórùn rán wa

Meaning:

Cultivating cocoa isn't our job.
Cultivating maize isn't our job.

Cultivating kolanut isn't our job.

Teaching children the *Qur'ân* is our job; it's the path Allah set us on
Jálàbí work is *Alfa*'s work; it's the path Allah set us on

The above *waka* genre simply explains and buttressed the essential callings of religious clerics and the expected roles of *Oníjálàbí*, like any other cleric in the community, depicting petitionary prayers as the spiritual recipe made available for human consumption. This also depicts a cultural context and shared sensibilities in which religious entrepreneurship takes the centre stage. In essence, just as religious consumer ties their life, careers progressions, business and destiny to the spiritual patronage of *Oníjálàbí*, the clerics on the other hand, in turn, also find solace in the social network created by the inordinate affluence of the *Oníjálàbí* that has permitted them to maintain enormous households in which their families are maintaining a minimal but comfortable lifestyle. Indeed, there is an expanding network of religious sphere, created by the spiritual patronage and relationship between the *Onijalabi* and religious consumers.

Moreover, at the Temidire Central Mosque, Bodija, along the Ojoo/Iwo Road Expressway, I observed a daily ritual performance and cultural practice that portray 'cash for prayer'. With every donation made the Imam would immediately put the money under his prayer mat and respond to each of the donors with the saying, "*Olórun á gbàá*" (meaning: Allah will accept it). I also learned that the Imam's prayer mat was also special to him. Thereafter, the Imam would engage in intercessory prayers for members of the congregation, and he will be mentioning each of them by their individual names during his supplications. In his petitionary prayers, he would not fail to extend good wishes to them, their households, far and near, and as well prays for successes in their daily affairs, especially as they prepare for the day's activities.

I observed further that the tone of the petitionary prayers and the time spent for each of the donours corresponds to the amount of money given to the Imam even though he hardly counted the money at the presence of the congregation.

I later interviewed the Imam of the mosque, *Shaykh* Abdul-Qadir Ayede, and his words gave strong credence to a sort of privatise petitionary prayer that is engendered by commodification ethos. He said in the following words:

I will only pray for those who know the spiritual value and the potent of petitionary prayers being rendered to them. Any member of this congregation that does not know and appreciate the spiritual value of it would be left alone to his or her destiny. You don't have to pray for somebody free-of-charge. This is because prayer is the royal road to God. So, any serious-minded person that does that joke with prayers and it requires procedures does that his or her peril. I am also a family man with a lot of responsibilities; my wives (*Elehaa*) and children are expecting money from me too. There is no plain money, it is the money that people give us that can neutralise and purify their earnings. So, it is only those who want something from God that make requests with their gifts (*saara*) and the more you give, the more you get from God as a blessing.

Although, he seems reputed to be a person who is friendly and open-minded. He emphasised gratification as an integral element of religious practice, as he posited, that *sara* (free-will-gift) burnt sins, protect and brought the giver closer to God. The Imam affirmed the intercessory roles that clerics do play between the faithful and God. In his words, "God loves those who are generous and when I present your file to Allah, it would be easily accepted, and requests are met." The giving of *saraa*, he claimed, is the secret of the blessings that givers will thereafter receive from God. Apart from the show of gratification and monetary exchange, by giving money in return for intercessory prayers, the Imam reckons that illness and death can be prevented.

Certainly, it is quite clear that this Imam is more like a privatised figure, influencing and swaying virtually all areas of social life of the people in the community (KII: Shaykh Abdul-Qadir Ayede, Fieldwork 2017).

In a more critical perspective, the nature of the people who seek petitionary prayers and spiritual fortification has changed dramatically. As such, Muslim clerics, as religious entrepreneurs have also found innovative and creative ways to sustain and maintain their engagement in religious practice, as 'work' grounded in materiality as commodity. This was reflected in a key informant interview thus.

This informant asserted that he received a phone call from a woman that resides in the United Kingdom and was referred by another fellow whom Alfa Basmalla had worked for in the past. The woman, according to him, had fertility challenge, having not conceived

four years after marriage and had sought spiritual assistance for herself and the husband from many quarters. The *Alfa* claimed the woman had been to many fertility clinics and hospitals in the United Kingdom and even sought help from Pastors and Imams. He thereafter assured her of resounding success by God's grace (*Insha Allah*) and listed a few procedures and things that would be involved in the prayer fortification to achieve the desired result. He also stated the possible financial implication. The woman requested for the bank details and in a short moment he received a bank alert indicating twince as much as the amount he charged. Interestingly, he also received a phone call from the friend who referred the woman.

Apparently angered and not satisfied with the little amount requested, the new religious consumer (client) expressed lack of confidence in the petitionary prayers because the amount charged was far below that which she expected, and what other *Alfas* previously consulted often demanded from her. And he had to call her to reassure her of his earlier promise. The intercessory prayers procedures were conducted as planned but much to his humble astonishment, barely three months after, the woman called to announce that she was pregnant. Obviously pleased by this, it was time for the *Alfa* to make a joke of the woman's lack of faith in his ability due to the minimal amount he charged. He said:

But interestingly, many often pointed to the physical appearance of the cleric. I courageously asked her why she called me, since she didn't have the confidence in me at the very beginning. She politely said she did not mean it that way. By the earlier hour of the next day, her husband personally called me to express his profound gratitude and immediately after the call, my bank account was credited with a large sum of money. They also insisted that I mention any project that I wanted their family to help me execute. According to them, that was part of their pledge to God, if the family is blessed with child as a wonder. In that regard, I continued to pray for her throughout the pregnancy period, and she had successful delivery. Gladly, the family has two kids, a boy and a girl. Since then, we have also maintained good ties and relate quite well, even on other matters about the whole family (Alfa Ismail Showumi, Interview, Fieldwork, October 2017).

However, quite disheartening is the fact that the above orientation and disposition I learned in this study have encouraged some *Oníjálàbí* to ply on the faith and specifically the

ignorance of some desirous people gave them them impetus to exploit them (clients and spiritual seekers) by ensuring that their ‘work’ and ‘services’ are not rendered at little or no cost. In most cases they charge a price, usually high, for the work done for the clients during consultation rather predetermined price. Thus, it exemplifies how selfish motives and personl gain have become the order of the day for some of the *Oníjálàbí*. Apparently, given that people continue to consult *Oníjálàbí* for spiritual breakthrough in life, many see or utilise such situation as occasion to make money and acquire wealth in abundant, and this also reflected in the lifestyle of some these *Oníjálàbí*, as they can been seen with the fleets of exotic cars and the type of house they built in the town. In pursuit of daily survival some *Oníjálàbí* have refracted through the extortion racket of religious consumers in the society.

Nevertheless, it is within the context of the prodigious power and renown for the use of esoteric knowledge by *Oníjálàbí* with the appealing power and influence in discovering the causes and the solution to a particular human existential challenges, ailments, and predicaments, including those that may defy orthodox diagnosis were often resolved easily using Islamic spiritual processes is paart of the everyday life in Yoruba societies.

In all, the aforementioned narratives and accounts are reflection of the current neoliberal era and transformation in religious sphere. The meanings of every exchange transcend the economic transaction dimension and illustrate the values which people placed on prayer as a commodity whose value lies in its consumption in confronting existential threats and a weapon against earthly principalities. A deep sense of gratitude and gratification is required of religious consumers as motivation for the spiritual breakthrough, ‘following the logics that we pay for what we value’.

Yet, as the vignette above demonstrated, many Yoruba people still utilise the spiritual capital to unlock and assuage difficulties in life, wherein *Alfa Onijalabi* offers a creative mode of Islamic ritual practice that captured the everyday lived experience of people, of various ages and genders, including educated elites, politicians, artisans, civil servants and public servants, the mass of urban unemployed in the society. This is quite a response to universal challenges of being human.

4.1.5 The theatrics of Solicitation

In Yoruba Muslim communities, Southwest Nigeria, certain celebrations, and events have found expression through a range of ritual performances to become a persistent feature of the everyday life, and these myriads of events continue to adorn the social and religious landscape which become engrained into the fabric of everyday Islam. Also, these are labelled as ‘instance of soliciting’ that portrayed petitionary prayers of the Muslim clerics as an essential commodity that need to be grasped for human existential needs and consumption, as it involves a ritual life circle where the *Alfas* and Imams officiate. Perhaps, the petitionary prayers that accompany each of these events play a significant role in meaning-making to people’s life and reality.

Indeed, pregnancy and childbirth constitute a crucial part of everyday beliefs and practices that are socially and culturally defined with ritual performance. Child’s naming ceremony is among the highly valued and celebrated event through varied rituals and rites. Names are an important part of every human culture, as it is by name that a person is first and foremost identified and recognised. As such, an individual given name says a lot about him/her as an embodiment of cultural practice. Flowing from this preposition, on 23rd December 2016, I attended a naming ceremony (*‘aqīqah*) at the Ojoo area, Ibadan, having been invited by an informant who knew about the relevance of the event to my research. I had attended naming ceremonies of Muslim folks in the past but not as a researcher. In this instance, I was observing with a purpose. The programme commenced with an opening prayer by one of the *Alfas*, who thereafter promptly requested guests at the event to “make a donation” for the prayer.

Of course, many of those present acceded to his request, although people parted with a small denomination of Naira mainly ₦50 and ₦100. A few gave ₦20. Recitation from the Glorious Qur’ān was the second stage of the event, and it was conducted by another *Alfa*. The man quickly deployed an Islamic *wākà* (Islamic Music lyrics) to draw attention to his task, which he carried out with all dexterity, after which he too requested for donations. In the same pattern, every stage of the ceremony entailed a call for donations. As such, the commodification of the entire programme of event by the Muslim clerics.

The theatrics of the solicitation, however, came to fore at the third stage, the thanksgiving part. The *Alfa* called on the father and other guests to join the father of the new baby to give thanks to Allah because the child is perceived as a special gift that must be welcome with a specific sum of money. At this juncture, the *Alfa* explained the essence of the gathering. In a brief sermon, he argued that the stages of life began with pregnancy and periods surrounding it, so if a woman could pass through these stages without many obstacles or difficulties. He went further to remind the parent the importance of head shaving which symbolises the cleansing of the baby from impurities and the start of its life afresh in the presence of Allah. Similarly, the whole family members were invited one after the other, including friends and well-wishers to make generous donations. With each announcement of prospective donors came an Islamic lyric (*wákà*) that matches the call. The entertaining component of the *waka*, I later understood made it easier for people to come forward to make substantial donations. One of the *wákà* was very apt and instructive.

*Bàbá Olómo, owó, Àlúbárikà,
 Ìyá Olómo, Owó Àlúbárikà ...
 Àlúbárikà, lára ló n gbé,
 Àlúbárikà lára ló n gbé,
 Má gba tara mi fún omo làkajì
 Àlúbárikà lára ló n gbé,*

Meaning:

You, father Offer money for good fortune.
 You, mother, Offer money for good fortune.
 Good fortune resides within personal self.
 Good fortune resides with the self.
 May mine never be given to another person.
 Good fortune resides within personal self.

As soon as the thanksgiving part ended, the leading *Alfa* was called upon to publicly announce the name of the new baby. At this point, the baby was handed over to him (*Alfa Àgbà*), who performed the first ritual of prayers on the baby, with few words in Arabic. As he stood up, the other *Alfas* also stood up with him as a mark of honour and respect for the senior *Alfa*. Interestingly, they launched another *wákà*... As usual, money was requested from the audience to enable the *Alfa* to make the pronouncement. And he was about to announce the names when another *wákà* was introduced:

Adéfowò pè sá lomó n'jé
Adéfowò pè sá lomó n'jé
Ejé káfowó pé, kó le lówò ó
Ejé káfowó pé, kó le lówò ó
Olówó ò ri rà, lomó wá n'jé o
Ejé káfowó pé, kó le lówò ó

Meaning:

The child attracts money.
The child attracts money.
Let's use money to call him so that he can be wealthy.
Let's use money to call him so that he can be wealthy.
Non purchasable by the rich is the name of our child.
Let's use money to call him so that he can be wealthy.

The above *wákà* simply mean that money is the mechanism to announce the names to the public. There was also the element of threat in the performance. For instance, people were asked to donate promptly as failure could mean the clerics postponed the naming ceremony to another day. As expected, this view was loudly rebuked with a resounding voice response from the gathering, and donation consequently followed because they all cherished the baby as a special gift that deserved appropriation of rightful ritual performance for the baby to fulfilled destiny and sense of purpose in life.

In this context, the naming ceremony represent and embodied ritual performance that serve as a preparation process for the succeeding stages in the life of an individual member of a community. However, immediately the names were announced to the public, the presiding *Alfa* informed them that the next item was for people to buy *Àlúbárikà* (good fortune) for the new baby. He said thus:

Owó Àlúbárikà
Owó k'ámo má gò
Ìyá àti Bàbá Kàramátù mú owó wá o
Wón ní k'ámo yín má gò, kòsì ní Àlúbárikà
Bàbá àti Ìyá Kàramátù mú owó n'lá wá
Wón ní k'omo yín ní Àlúbárikà tó pò, kòsì má gò
Ló'lá surat Fathia Àlúbárikà lá'papò

Meaning:

The money to obtain good fortune.
The money to ensure smartness for the child.

Karamat's paternal grandma bring forward money.
For your baby to have good fortune and be smart.
Karamat's maternal grandpa bring forward money.
For your baby to have abundance of good fortune and be smart
In the name of surat Fathia, good fortune altogether.

Overall, the *wákà* added glamour and create imagined community of faithful consumers at the occasion, one of my informants said thus, “a religious gathering becomes monotonous and boring where *waka* is not included, at least to arouse the interest of the audience.” Adebayo (2006) described the *wákà* as an instrument used by Muslim clerics to praise Allah and eulogise virtues on preaching to people, especially at a social gathering under a religious atmosphere. Just like women and housewives, this class of Muslim clerics cannot do without this praise poetry during social functions.

Another area of spiritual transactional exchange that I observed was the *Walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ān*, (Qur'ān graduation ceremony). It was usually organised to mark the successful completion of the learning of the Holy book by Muslims. The spread of Islam in Yorubaland was followed apparently with the teaching of the Qur'ān and Islamic knowledge production. To realise this, it became customary of Muslim clerics to establish Qur'ānic schools, otherwise known as *Ilé-kéwú*, where children learn to read and recite the Holy Qur'ān. This goes in tandem with the popular axiom that “*àti kékeré ni Mùsùlùmí ti nkó omo è lésìn.*” This means that “it is from the cradle that Muslim parents inculcate religious rites in their children.” This also relates to the virtues of the Prophet's tradition: “the best among you is he who learned the Qur'ān and taught it to others” (*Hadith*).

Aside from that, it is held by most Muslims that the Qur'ān is a source of healing: “And We send down in the Qur'ān that which is healing balm. And mercy for believers” (Qur'ān:17V82). In other words, the acquisition of this knowledge means the possession of a weapon against earthly principalities and authorities. However, the pre-colonial period witnessed the establishment of various Qur'ānic Schools in Yorubaland, majorly of which were attached to Mosques under the supervision, in most cases, of the Mosque Imam, locally known as *Mallim*.

Likewise, other private Qur'ānic Schools are established all around the Yoruba communities, particularly in areas where Muslims constitute a majority, while attendance in

such Schools was tuition-free. Hence, its advent in Yorubaland served as open access to Qur'ānic Education. This was because, to charge tuition fees for the teaching of the Qur'ān was deemed an infraction against the divine blessing which ordinarily would come the way of those who are involved in the exercise. And it is expected that there would be an official Graduation Ceremony after the completion of the *Qur'ān* School, depending on how fast the student was able to complete the exercise. However, the cultural interaction between the Yoruba and Islamic clerics makes the acquisition of the *Qur'ān* education aglow.

In Ibadan, and I guess in other parts of Yorubaland, Muslim clerics, who double as the proprietors of *Qur'ān* schools continue to suffer a lack of necessary or required funding to make a success out of their vocation and to properly package the *Qur'ān* schooling and education to the society. Driven by the typhoon of modernity, a great number of Muslim clerics have attempted not only to commodify but also to repackage the techniques and pattern, as well as change the public significance of the *Qur'ān* education. Thus, the *Qur'ān* graduation ceremony offers a veritable opportunity for the clerics to make huge financial gains. Parents of graduands are charged for the *walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ān*.

Among other things, the importance of monetary solicitation during the ceremony was put in context by *Shaykh* Imam Abdur-Quadri Olatunji Ayede. He averred that collecting money from parents during *walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ān* was important because the children did not pay school fees during the period of acquiring the knowledge, unlike the conventional school where they pay an enormous amount in school fees every term. He said:

Whereas this *Qur'ān* knowledge is what these children could use to intercede and save themselves, their family, and forty people each from both his/her father's and mother's lineage on the day of judgment. So, I must ask them to pay my bill too before the day of the ceremony, which they must meet and at this same time, on the day of the ceremony, they must satisfy and respond to our demand during the programme itself, and the parents must show appreciation to God for the successful completion of this *Qur'ānic* Education.

Another informant, Imam Ibrahim Uthman, explained that parents might not have appreciated the value of what their children learned if there was no formal award of certificate and ceremony conducted for them. For him, the essence of the ceremony was to

promote *Qur'anic* education and make the whole world appreciate the beauty of Islam. The money aspect, he said was very important because *Alfa* would use the avenue to make some money and take care of his family. He described the *walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ān* as one of the “pot of soup” or simply put, the “marketplace” of the *Alfas*, and it is only a means of giving back to the clerics.

Much of the transactional engagements between the parent and the *Alfas* towards the *Walimat* ceremony reflected the element of commodification process. This was aptly captured by Mr. Akeem Ayinla whose son did *Walimat-ul Qur'ān* recently at Felele area, Ibadan. According to him, before the *Walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ān*, the *Alfa* called the parents to a meeting and discussed what was required of them. At the meeting, each of the parents was adequately informed about what to contribute to the event. For instance, each of them was to pay the sum of thirty thousand Naira for logistics. They were also made to be aware that they would spend money during the *Walīmatu-khatmil Qur'ān* programme in the form of donations to *Alfas* who would be in attendance. Likewise, each parent was mandated to invite personalities that would grace the event and that would spend when they were called upon to do so. They all agreed because it was their joy that their children completed the Qur'an education successfully, and such a relationship intend to instill a love for the teacher, who is assumed to embody the etiquette of scholarship.

On the day of the *Walīmatu-khatmil* ceremony, as I learned, children were dressed in an Islamic outfit specifically meant for such an occasion. Like other Muslim occasions, the programme commenced with the opening prayer, followed by the recitation of the Qur'ān, the introduction of the graduands, turbanding of the graduands, recitation of Qur'ān by each of the graduand to the public, presentation of '*Opón Olà*' to the graduands and seeking of special prayer (*barakah*) for the graduand. Each of the stages of the programme was anchored by different *Alfas* and each tried as much as possible to make the event memorable by using a very melodious language to catch the attention of the audience who were enjoined to make donations to the *Alfas*. At each stage, levies were imposed on the parents, families, and the guests.

Another classical example of the transactional engagement of the Muslim clerics in *du'ā* was from the instance of chieftaincy and turbanding ceremony. Indeed, almost every aspect of the social life of the Yoruba Muslim is affected by Yoruba culture. One of the

many cultural practices the Yoruba hold in high esteem is the chieftaincy title, because of its important value and role in society. Many individuals defined lifetime ambition in terms of acquiring honour through chieftaincy titles. The Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria also admire so much the chieftaincy institution and the award of chieftaincy titles to people, either at the Mosque or community level.

However, the evolution of Muslim chieftaincy titles in Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba ethnicity of the Southwestern part of the country, was through the effort of Muslim clerics who creatively invented to celebrate the achievements of the individual members of the Mosque and Muslim Ummah. In other words, it was an adaptation of Islamic and Yoruba culture. Some of the common chieftaincy titles include:

- Aare Musulumi*/ President of the faithful
- Baba or Iya Adini*/Father or mother of the faithful
- Balogun Adini*/ Generalissimo of faithful
- Seriki Musulumi*/ Protector of Islam from attack
- Iya Sunna*/ Custodian of prophetic tradition.

According to my informants, a person to be turbanned is expected to be knowledgeable in Islamic virtues to some extent, devout, pious, and of good character. Thus, it is believed among the people that the conferment of Islamic chieftaincy titles is practically a blend of the Yoruba tradition and Islamic culture. Meanwhile, the motive for the introduction of the Islamic chieftaincy titles has been expanded, modified, and commodified, in such a way that only the wealthy now have access to any religious title in their respective communities. This trend has turned the turbaning ceremony in mosques into a jamboree of a sort. Consideration for the religious title is based on the economic status of the candidate. As well as the occasion for celebration.

Alhaji Chief Hazeem Gbolarumi, who was turbanned as the Balogun Adini of Ibadanland and Oyo State recently after the death of the last titleholder described Islamic chieftaincy titles as conferring prestige on the holders and desirable for as long as the intending title holder has enough money to share to clerics. For him, the chieftaincy titles entail financial commitment not only to the Muslim community but to the *Ulama* (clerics) who would be contacting the title holder from time to time for financial issues.

In a similar vein, Imam Abdul-Quadri Ayede revealed in the singular privilege he had to nominate people to be turbanned with Islamic titles. Such considerations, he said, are

reserved for members whom he certified to be financially strong and buoyant enough, and he considered generous enough to attend to the needs of the *Alfas*. He cited Qu'rânic verse to buttress his position thus:

Of their wealth take alms, that so thou mighty purify and sanctify them; And pray on their behalf; verily thy prayers are a source of security for them: And Allah is one who heareth and knoweth.” (Q. 9 :103

The turban ceremony itself has been monetised and commodified in such a way that honourees are expected to pay a huge amount of money before the programme, and they must have enough money at hand before agreeing to be honoured.

As in most African communities, the transitions from this world to the next constitute one of the matters that often receive important attention in all cultures and religions. In Islam, death is treated with great dignity. Islam like other religious culture and tradition have funeral rites for dealing and treating with the death. However, in the last few decades, the Yoruba Muslims have cultivated the practice of organising special prayers over the deceased, locally known as *fidāu*. It is a religiously inspired rite for the death and a way of appropriating religious performance as responses to honour a deceased who was a Muslim till death.

Petitionary prayers offered by both sons and daughters of a deceased Muslim to seek forgiveness for the departed soul would bring great benefits and relief, as reported by Prophet of Allah in (hadith) sayings (peace be upon him) said: “A man’s status will be raised in Paradise and he will ask, ‘How did I get here?’ He will be told, ‘By your son’s *du’a* (prayers) for your forgiveness”. For Yoruba Muslim, it is either on the third or Eight days after a person is buried, the families gather and invite Muslim clerics to pray for the soul of the departed person. In some cases, the family add glamour to it by offering food, drink, and even dance. They could also gather on the 40th day after the person’s death for another ‘*fidāu*’ prayer, depending on their choice and the resources available. This is a way of organising a befitting burial, which they assumed to be obligatory for positive aftermath and outcome on those left behind and the dead, as Yoruba belief that the dead also have eminent power and influence over the living. As they pray, they hope that Allah will grant the soul a place in the best paradise, *Jannatul Firdaus*.

Over time, this *fidāu* prayer has developed and commodified into an opportunity for clerics to make money. An informant, Mrs. Oladimeji narrated her experience during the *fidāu* prayer for her deceased father. The family had invited three different groups of *Alfas* to officiate at the event to balance different interests. She did not say whether her late father was known to these groups. The three groups agreed to jointly conduct the programme and the family expected that the money realised at the event would be shared collectively by the groups.

However, hardly had the programme commenced that a particular group of *Alfas* attempted to sideline others because they felt the deceased was close to them than any other group and worshipped with them during his lifetime. Perhaps, this was because the large amount of money was involved, and there was hot disagreement over the issue. According to her, the attention of the eldest son of the deceased was called to this issue while the event was still ongoing, and the situation was arrested. As in many other Islamic programmes enunciated earlier, the event was well-conducted to the admiration of the guests and the families, who gave out money generously each time the *Alfas* requested them to do so.

Conversely, immediately after the closing prayer was said by one of the *Alfas*, the event was brought to an end. At this point the stage was set for entertainment and merriment, and the family invited the *Alfas* to a separate place within the arena for the reception, with the hope that they would be able to share the proceed equitably. However, there were complaints that the collection was tampered with. Obviously, many of them monitored the trend as guests gave out their donations, and the amount declared simply fell short of expectation. In the process, fracas ensued among the *Alfas* with a group insisting that the complete sum of the collection be produced.

Another informant, Alhaji Mutiu Abayomi, buttressed this assertion by sharing his experience during a similar event that took place in Lagos state. According to him, it was the *Fidāu* prayer for the father of a popular Nigeria Fuji Musician, Saheed Osupa. There, a prominent *Alfa* ordered one of his younger *Alfa* to cart away the money realised during the event. The scene, which was witnessed by many prominent artists who came to honour Saheed Osupa was very embarrassing and demeaning.

In recent times, Muslim organisations like Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria (ADS) do organise, on annual basis, a special *Fidāu* prayer for the repose of the deceased members of the society, and to seek Allah’s forgiveness for their soul and continued protection and abundant blessings for the family and the children. The society, the informant stated, also used the medium and opportunity to generate money for the development of the society. As part of the preparation for the ceremony, invitation letters were sent to the deceased family members who were often encouraged to spend money during the programme, seeing such donations as good deeds that could earn the deceased rewards and make their souls rest in peace. From the money raised, I learned, the society would appreciate the effort of the Missioners by giving them a certain percentage. Many informants see the essence of the *Fidāu* programme as embedded not only in the special prayer offered for the repose of the deceased and recitation of the Qur’ān, but also in the monetary aspect, which is so conspicuous in the entire duration of the programme (Imam Alhaji Abdul-Fatai Yaaqub, Interview, Fieldwork 2017).

All in all, the excerpt from the above vignettes and narratives, have shown how ritual performance and embodied practices are connected to everyday dimension of life, and a pointer to how people ascribe meanings and conceptualise spirituality. It however, portrayed the instances of soliciting, and capturing “cash for prayer” transaction encounter among the Yoruba Muslim clerics within the rubric of everyday religious engagements and transactions. This array of events involves ritual life circle where the *Alfas* and Imams officiate, that is inextricably linked to neoliberal capitalism, recognised as a supporting pillar of substance in the community. Given that religion and spirituality are contextual practice which find expression through ritual performamnce, the petitionary prayers that accompany each of these events play a significant role in meaning-making to people’s life.

It also depicted the fact that the petitionary prayer upon which the *Oníjálàbí* thrives is considered a two-way affair involving people in need and clerics that supposedly possess sufficient spiritual capital as instrumental commodity to meet those needs. In other words, money and monetary exchange has been elevated to become the enforcer, the facilitator and carrier of petitionary prayer to God.

Perhaps on several occasions and in reference to some of the *Oníjálàbí* I interviewed for this study, people often expressed their feelings and

mind to me, 'he is very powerful'. Quite well, I also understood this to be a way to underscored and identified certain events and actions as the wonders and miracles of the *Oníjálàbí*.

In all the conversations, given the reputation for miracles and wonders, the idea of petitionary prayer as “the royal road to God, became very instructive, prominent and well emphasised that it requires monetary beautification”. Money given in exchange for prayers was seen as *Sadaqah* or free-will gift that shields givers and their families from evil attacks and assure them of divine abundance blessings from God.

In the word of an informant, *Shaykh* Abdul-Qadir Ayede:

Sadaqah extinguishes sins, just as water extinguishes fire, and that Allah offers reliefs and stability to the mundane affairs of those who give *Sadaqah*. It is more of shade for the religious consumer that eases hardship and removes calamities on their way as may affect them. In other words, as one invests in spiritual capital, the *sadaqah* strategically validates a myriad of culturally appropriate, power-laden social relations that mutually implicate both the giver and the receiver with the centre.

Furthermore, it is the basic practices among *Oníjálàbí*, who have adopted emotional mode of religiosity, with intense emphasis on petitionary prayers that significantly appeals and resonate with people' everyday spiritual needs. In all, the social and religious celebration that was identified above which involve *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, where money is assumed and thought to be the messenger and vehicle, through which the wishes of the clients are taken to the God Almighty, who would grant such requests, but also engender commodification outcome. Thus, the monetary exchange and gratification as reciprocity for the services rendered by clerics is a fundamental aspect of the relationship. This is significant as people see the efficacy and effectiveness of the petitionary prayers by the Muslim clerics as human security because an individual's interest is certainly unlimited, and at every available opportunity (ies) he always attempts to seek spiritual rejuvenation and redemption to his or her predicaments where prayers are offered to access the divine realms. Thus, many Nigerians placed their hope to attain meaningfulness, not by expecting anything from the political and policy actions of the government, but by looking towards spiritual

consumption and symbolisms. Thus, all stages of life are ritually celebrated and defined with one form of prayer ritual or the other, as expressions of cultural value.

It is important to bring to fore that this section of the study has demonstrated and explored the sociality and performativity of *Jálàbí* practice as construction of lived religious experience that give meaning to people existence in life and to affirmed them as a member of the community within a cultural and religious setting. It is made by man, for the benefit of man. It is a form of invented traditions representing a dramatic social expression of the changing cultural landscape of Nigeria society influenced by neoliberal ideology and capitalism. In other words, the quest for spirituality is being shaped and tainted by the pragmatic considerations, utilitarian value, and economic benefit, which avails the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* the opportunity to appropriate and turns a tidy return through commodification process, within its overarching narrative of religious entrepreneurialism. Yet, if modern society is therefore into a consumer culture (Dawson 2013), religious dynamics, self-transformation and monetary transactions are imposiible to disentangle from one another.

4.2 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Hermeneutics of Prayer Commodification

For Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria, religion has always been a transactional phenomenon, where gift-giving, gratification and monetary exchange take centre stage in all spiritual fortification procedures and sustenance. For instance, when a religious consumer visit *Oníjálàbí* with heavy heart and mind full of sorrow and go back home well revived, revived, and spiritually healed, because they recognised the potency and effectiveness of petitionary prayers. Thus, if the diversity of religious experience and expressions share anything, it is transactional, the *Oníjálàbí* offers petitionary prayers for the religious consumers to receive divine blessings, pleasant life experience, and spiritual protection, and the religious consumers, who also need the abundant blessings in order to achieve a desire goal also reciprocate. Therefore, both are ultimately seeking a balance of some kind between self and other. This simply implied that the social life of the people is deeply immersed with prayers and spiritual patronage in a globalised capitalist culture to create spiritual relationships with *Oníjálàbí* as masters to resolve what they perceive as existential problems and situations in a contemporary context.

Above all, our aim in this study is to determine the cultural meanings embedded in commodified prayers, within the Yoruba-Muslim context, as an expression of human security and a weapon against earthly principalities and diabolical forces that is rife in the societies; we shall in this section explore the different interpretations that can be gleaned from the prayer consultations and the transactional exchanges that often occur between the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* and their clients (religious consumers). From the ethnographic data presented, several themes have consequently emerged, around which the arguments of this thesis are framed. These themes were examined by drawing attention to the multiple and diverse ways in which *Oníjálàbí* commodified petitionary prayers and other everyday religious activities and engagements with the public sphere, the meanings people make of their experiences, and how these affect their everyday life, and what the consequences are for them.

In discussing these issues, we will return to the idea of religious commodification and cultural hermeneutics which we proposed as our theoretical framework elsewhere in the thesis. We maintained in that section of this thesis that religious commodification involves the act of turning embodied practices in petitionary prayers and other spiritual-related

services into an everyday commodity for human consumption to empowered individual as human security and attaining a greater height in their mundane affairs. These embodied practices represent any spiritual engagements and activities that involve the *Oníjálàbí* which, when subjected to critical examination, demonstrate an attempt to seek, transform and connect humans with the divine realm to acquire abundant blessing (*barakah*). Symbolically, the alarming rate of the existential threat to human survival, well-being, and livelihood, and the attempt to seek solutions to it has steadily forced people to commit major life decisions to faith, which in turn necessitate the patronage and consultation of the *Oníjálàbí*, for petitionary prayers.

More so, these practices attempt to provide insightful meaning to every engagement of both parties, religious clerics, and their consumers. Speaking hermeneutically, within the context of Yoruba-Muslim practice, the *Oníjálàbí* creatively appropriate assemblage of invented petitionary prayer formulae and spiritual capital as an embodiment of religious infrastructure that allows the citizenry to build religious castles to ensure their survival, sustenance, livelihood, and security in a precarious state. Thus, in this era of cash cropping, money and monetization are indispensable as they play a major role in the entire process of prayer consultation, examination, and fortification in the *Jálàbí* practice and as the surest medium for soliciting or sending prayerful demand to Allah. While this practice must be strengthened and reinforce with the spirit of reciprocity and gratification of material gifts, otherwise known as *Sadaqah*. Therefore, the interplay between religion, petitionary prayers, and everyday urban life is engendered by commodification outcomes that developed out of the give-and-take interaction between faith commitments and commercial culture.

Relatedly, the most germane concerned is about how the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* commodified petitionary prayers in the spiritual marketplace as material culture and sites of spiritual transformation. *Jalabi* practice, therefore, emerges as a form of sensational practice in a changing societal landscape, where spirituality and religiosity, continue to intertwine with everyday public life, within a wider neoliberal context. It thus focused on how different embodied practices of spiritual significance, expressed within neoliberal ethos and forms have shaped and transformed the nature and the practices of Islamic petitionary prayers and spiritualities in a postcolonial Africa society.

Aside from the above, this further provide insightful forms of instrumental prayers that have a pragmatic-oriented function that in the end, brings about collective spiritual redemption, as an individual, religious consumers are referrals of human security and a platform for ordering society. Perhaps, reality comes to us interpreted based on perspectives derived from our worldviews. The worldviews are like the spectacle that helps us to see and interpret the world from a defining point of view. Yet, the landscape of our social reality of everyday life is being embedded within the symbolic framework of an ‘enterprise culture’, as reflected in *Jálàbí* practices. In other words, the symbolic influence of this practice was what prayer mean in people’s everyday lives and how it shapes their life. Its effectiveness as a weapon can no longer be doubted in the city of Ibadan, where it was borne out of the historical account, utilitarian value, and pragmatic functioning of the petitionary prayer of the Muslim clerics which was considered to bringing succour, attaining success, fame and victory to the various epidemic, and existential problems affecting the community and the people. It was the same kind of guidance, medicinal, fortification, and material benefits that the *Orisa* cults previously offered.

However, the petitionary prayers and the embodied spiritual services rendered revolved around the provision of varied spiritual capitals as insurance items and products that acted as ‘human security that could be worn on or hang on the body as a means of protection against perceived danger or misfortunes. Pertinently, the imagination, efficacy, and the effectiveness of these petitionary prayers (*du’â*) encouraged religious consumers to consider the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* as the locus of power, with the ability to influence, empower and improve the life condition and experiences of people as well as mediating between the spiritual and the material world.

The recent explosive growth and expansion in religious practice and daily life also indicate that women fold often appreciate and consult the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* more and the relationship and cohabitation has played increasing role in shaping, determining, and influencing their everyday worldview, including mothers, unmarried women, and young ladies. These women often, did not only visit as well consult the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* on every major decision and matter about the lives of their husband, children, grandchildren, jobs, and business but also ensure that the *Alfa Onijalabi* provides spiritual and emotional supports,

moral support by just being there for spiritual fortification, and providing answers to their requests and demands.

Significantly, one of the cardinal ethos in *Jálàbí* practice is the expression of reciprocity and gratification in terms of gifts-giving and monetary exchange; either in cash or kind, which is often considered as the medium or the portal for opening the door between the temporal and divine worlds. Thus, the petitionary prayer was also depicted as the royal road to God, requiring monetary beautification, framed within neoliberal ethos as an expression of lived experience. Pointedly, *Oníjálàbí* construed this ethos as *Sadaqah*, which is conceptualized as a catalyst that facilitates easy access to human goals as well as shields the givers and assures them of abundant blessings from God. Although meanings attached to monetary exchanges or gifts-giving varied but in all cases were embedded in the idea of human-spirit reciprocity as defining factor in the value and efficacy of prayer. In public functions, it is defined as a ‘seed’ that religious consumers must ‘invest’ to secure *alubarika*, (divine abundance) which is deeply ingrained into everyday experience.

In a way, the reciprocity and gratification as embedded in *Jálàbí* practice is assumed as a divine messenger and the vehicles that carry petitionary prayers to God, who answers prayers. Hence, the chance of a petitionary prayer being answered is thought to correspond with the value of gratification and exchange that occurred between the two parties. It is believed that money intercedes for the petitionary prayers of the faithful before Allah. Of course, gratitude, they say, is not only the heart and essence of Islam, but it is also the key to attracting abundance, prosperity, peace, and success in one’s life. *Sadaqah*, in this transactional phenomenon create the access for the transformation of worldly gains, salvation and success of the spiritual seeker within a framework of rituals values and performance.

In all, the everyday religious experiences, and expressions in *Jálàbí* is constructed and imbued with meanings as human security and weapon that could be salvaged through the reciprocity gesture. This is quite related to the Yoruba metaphor about life, that “*Àràgbé Layé*”. Meaning: We pay to live well in this world. In other words, being successful in your mundane affairs is not a gift, rather you have to actively work for it physically and spiritually. This simply implied that the gratification and reciprocity as the exchange and gift-giving is portrayed as the royal road to God, which requires gratification. In other

words, *Jálàbí* practices accord prayers the same significance as food that nourished the human body and hence an item to be purchased as human security. For them, prayer is the sword of a Muslim and the *saara* is its feather. As such a petitionary prayer request cannot fly without *sadaqa*.

Significantly, this implied that people continue to depend on spiritual functioning to social life, as an appropriate niche for confronting existential challenges and achieving reality. Thus, the need to have and be closer to a spiritual advisor or actor, such as *Alfa Oníjálàbí* who could intercede and mediate spiritually on major life decisions, with a shower and invocation of petitionary prayers and blessings for people to achieve good health, wealth, protection, and overturned misfortunes to good as food that nourish their human imagination and materialise in human security, as ways of being in the contemporary context.

Nonetheless, more than eighty percent (80%) of the Muslim clerics have no tangible source of livelihood, aside from engaging in routine religious duties and religious entrepreneurship activities in the community. Although these daily routine activities of the Muslim clerics remain enormous; such that the *Alfa* often begins his daily work in the Mosque as earlier as 5.00 am in preparation for the first *salat*, *Subh* prayer (early Morning Prayer). He must be there to lead another congregation prayer (*Zuhr*) between 1:00 and 2:00 pm. Similarly, the 'As'r prayer is between 3:30 and 4:15 pm and, he must not miss it. He is still in the Mosque for the *Magrib* (around 7:00 pm) and for 'Isha'i around 8:00 pm. Yet, that may not be all. He takes charge of funeral (*Janazah*) matters when any member of the congregation passes away. He also washes the corpse, through the Islamic ritual bath. He shrouds it and leads the *salat al-Janazah* (prayer offered on the dead). He is there for the solemnization of marriages (*nikkāh*). He is still the one that teaches the children Arabic and religious education in the evening. In all, this situation seems that the Muslim cleric is overworked, overtasked but despite these gigantic tasks, he is underpaid or not appreciated monetarily.

Over time, there was a rise of liberal capitalism, religious freedom, and ideas, which did not only foster a sense of individual responsibility, competitiveness, and choices but also led to the emergence of spiritual patronage and religious consumers as an identity. This was greatly influenced by the commodification of religious practices and beliefs into security

scape which demonstrated the inextricable interpenetration of religion to social reality. Thus, the need for survival enhances the transformation of religious practices into a consumable commodity by the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* in Ibadan and Yoruba communities in a postcolonial era.

However, it is within the rubric of this neoliberal capitalism and development, that certain aspects of the everyday engagements of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* were commodified in degrees of contextual embeddedness and variegated forms: wedding (*nikkāh*), naming (*‘aqiiqah*), funeral (*Fidāu*) and Qur’ān graduation (*waliimah*) ceremonies were seen as marketable products to rake in their dues from the negligent congregations and make a livelihood. This is often done to the chagrin of the envious populace who framed it as inherently precarious and more exploitative. But the obvious argument is that many of these people that criticise the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* cannot perform the duties of the religious clerics. If I may ask certain salient and fundamental questions, can they bathe their dead relations, none of them can solemnise their daughter’s marriage by themselves without the Muslim clerics being invited to conduct it? Therefore, people have failed to accept the obvious reality that Islamic scholarship is a profession itself, thus, the Muslim clerics seem to be badly short-changed in this respect.

Nonetheless, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí*, in trying to make sense of the world and their practice adopted pseudo-capitalist tendencies which are framed within neoliberal ethos as an expression of lived experience, prayer (*du’ā*), and gratification in the form of reciprocity is a free-will gifts (Arabic. *Sadaqah*; Yoruba: *saara*) construed as an indivisible and integral element of *Jálàbí* practice. In *Jálàbí* practice, the belief is that when you beseech Allah with prayer requests, the religious consumer (client) must be ready and willing to offer enough *saara* or give *owo adua* for the prayer to receive accelerated answer and acceptance from Allah. Invariably, this experience provides the impetus for understanding social phenomena within a neoliberal context that points to the utilitarian and pragmatic functioning of spiritual capital and its consumption for a materialistic tendency and gains. On the other hand, the production of entrepreneurial skills and development model bound up by *Alfa Oníjálàbí* is to forge their path out of poverty to sustainability, to earn livelihood, to become self-sufficient and thriving in life.

Obviously, emerging from the above narratives, *Jálàbí* practices have become deeply engraved into the everyday lives of the religious consumers as an instrument of spiritual

rejuvenation and means of assuaging difficulty and fulfilling a human desire for healthy, wellness, strengthen spiritual wellbeing, satisfaction, and above all, human security. While the cultural meanings embedded in this practice emerged essentially in response to the demand for spiritual realities and the need to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people, which depict the centrality of Islamic petitionary prayer and spiritual functioning to people's worldview. In essence, *Jálàbí* practice is epitomised in this study as a lived religion which means religion at work and what it does in the everyday life experience of the people, in the street or home. It is a shift away from the centrality of beliefs to framing religion as one of the things people do to organise their lifeworlds into coherent domains of experience such as social order, personal relationships, and interactions with forces beyond the immediate control of the human or community.

Jálàbí practice, therefore, redefines spiritual functioning and redemption, most specifically those that address their fear and freedom from hunger, poverty, danger or incidence of crime and conflict to create self-authenticity, and intimate relationship, the improvement of family life, and that offers solutions to their social, economic, political, and even ecological problems. Perhaps, the chief aim of all humanity and human security is to move closer to a promised land, either material prosperity, or human fulfillment and secure the 'vital core' of human life (Alkire, 2003). Commodification, in this context creates the continuous flow of religious patronage and consumption which gave rise to both consumer society as well as the emergence of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* as religious entrepreneur.

From a most basic understanding, and the narrative of everyday life, *Jálàbí* is not only a spiritual rejuvenation but also an instrument of human security for attaining peace, success, fame, personhood, and survival that shaped the physical and spiritual experiences of religious consumers. In sum, what is important is not only the efficacy, effectiveness, and values of the petitionary prayers, but also the divergent forms of its interpretations and understanding of meanings embedded in *Jálàbí*. Hence, the use-value of the *Jálàbí* practice ended not, in a certain instance, as a commodity for human consumption, but also as an object of material culture that provides insightful understandings in which folk's spirituality transformed the society as a practice of mediation. This further explained the reason why many Nigerians, in regardless of their religious affiliation, gender, ethnic identity, or region cultivated the habit of seeking spiritual nourishment from the Muslim clerics as well as

consume religious commodity seen largely as human security that provides safety from threats such as poverty, hunger, the incidence of disease, and repression, and to seek protection from a sudden or untimely death and hurtful disruption in their mundane affairs.

To sum it up, the plethora of socio-cultural contexts and doctrinally practices being deployed by the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* that produce commodification outcome certainly reflects the flexibility and malleability of Islamic practices within the diverse Yoruba-Muslim societies, where prayer is considered as a key to shaping ‘everyday life’. Indeed, *Jálàbí* practice is arguably reflect the Yoruba notion of a state of well-being, call *Àláfíà*. Whereas the pragmatic approach of the *Jalabi* practice create religious and spiritual imaginations that integrated individual salvation and self-realisation. Therefore, the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* became an emblematic figure of the Yoruba religious landscape, with a burgeoning ethos of a fee-for-service ideology, as they offer and render ‘prayer, spiritual service’ and ‘work’ for the people. It has also created a greater religiosity among the people as they often relied so much on the ‘dictate’ and ‘directive’ of their *Alfa* on major life decisions on mundane and everyday affairs. This spiritual conundrum and orientation dramatically lure and influenced people into spiritual patronage with the *Oníjálàbí*.

In this respect, the divergent phenomena and vignettes that were captured in this thesis mirrored the spiritual imagination of the people that augment the importance of the prayers of *Oníjálàbí* as Muslim religious entrepreneurship in the Yoruba society. But the experience of their religious consumers could measure their visibility and acceptability by individuals in the society who have firm faith and believe in this religious practice. In this context, the cleric-consumer’s relation could be described as based on the view that the practice provides pragmatic functioning to people’s existential threats as well as their economic sustenance and survival. These narratives have proven that the petitionary prayers rendered by the *Oníjálàbí* have influenced their clients to build on religious references, norms, and values of spirituality, which have earned the clerics better visibility in the public space. While individual experience in the hand of *Oníjálàbí* would be a turning point in their life and it would encourage continue patronage, commitment and become more devoted to God.

From this standpoint, as *Oníjálàbí* intervene in the everyday life of the people, the religious patronage became tacitly influenced by the neoliberalisation and monetization

ideology which is engendered by commodification of *Jálàbí* practice. This is defined within the scope that to achieving desire wants and desire is critically subject to gratification to the clerics who takes prayer requests to the divine realm for the mutual benefit of their religious consumers. Thus, the petitionary prayer has been construed and commodified by *Oníjálàbí* could be described as ‘sacred canopy’ with diverse beliefs and practices in contemporary society. The sacred canopy simply means a world that is religiously defined, which provides moral order and a spiritual sanctuary to humans and their society. Hence, the emergence of *Oníjálàbí* religious entrepreneurs which is premised on the demand for spiritual services delivery and salvation attainment for the overall healthy, wealth, and success and prosperity of their religious consumers.

The theoretical stance of this study, as reflected from the vignettes and narratives obtained from the fieldwork implied that when religious practices are commodified, they do not lose their symbolic value or efficacy, rather intimately embrace the suffocating forces of the market logic and contribute to the circulation of religious phenomena, the popular religious markets thus, challenge traditional, hierarchical forms of religious authority. This relates well with what Lukens-Bull’ (2007) call, “ideologisation of commodities” that consuming religious commodities places the consumers into a world of Muslim identity and allow them to “broadcast” a certain version of Islamic practice with ease and convenience. The Muslim clerics are not only reaffirming the faith but also reshape their social and civil identities amidst the new growth of Islam in the post-19th-century new order. In other words, the *Oníjálàbí* deployed diverse cultural and religious contexts to showcase their social engagement with the public. The symbolic economy surrounding religious practices, therefore, embodied ritualised acts with complex meanings. It is indeed a specific form of economy, which relies on a ‘source of symbolic capital that acts ... to reinforce simultaneously their desire for existential well-being and their ethnic identity (Askew 2007).

Within the above totalising swirl of explanation and analysis, it is highly remarkable that religious practice could only survive ‘not so much as a reflective faith but more as an emergent form of cultural mediation, performed and seen to intervene in a social world, as a means of dealing with, and confronting unfolding human social crisis and existential threats and the construction of a healthy society (*àláfíà*), that creates freedom from fear and want, as embedded practices that are reshaping livelihoods, with benefits for worldly human

wellbeing. The study has engaged with the term *Jálàbí* to connote practices that creatively demonstrate an all-purpose instrument and an easy-to-access practice that foster peace, security, and development that shape individual lives and societies.

In this study, the petitionary prayers and consumption of spiritual commodities are equated with traditional native medicines whose spiritual values and effectiveness are believed to be proportional to the amount expended. The commodification ethos involved in the petitionary prayer by the *Oníjálàbí* and their clients (religious consumers) goes beyond economic transactions in Ibadan, Nigeria. It also illustrates the values which people placed on prayer as human security and a weapon against earthly principalities. In all, the study shows that spiritual and the material, the sacred and the profane, are irreversibly intertwined such that religious consumers and religious clerics interact in a quintessential spiritual marketplace to produce meaning in consumers lives.

To this end, Yoruba communities in Nigeria, like many other African societies, has witnessed a dramatic wave of religious change and shift in landscape, accentuated by offering and rendering of petitionary prayers as food and commodity that nourish human everyday life in a spiritual marketplace which continue to engender commodification outcome to eke out livelihood and for the benefit of the spiritual seekers and consumers. Thus, keeping pace with the growing influence of Islamic petitionary prayer and consumption of spiritual commodities as essential instrument of spiritual fortification and rejuvenation, the *Oníjálàbí* has demonstrated religious vitality as a system of figurative and collective identity that informs the social and cultural dynamic of contemporary Nigerian society. This has increasingly emerged as a symbol of elitism, associated with the road to fame and success. Therefore, the rising tide of this Islamic spirituality as a means of assuaging existential threat critically corresponded with the accentuation of religious symbols as decisive factor that continue to shape modern Nigeria landscape. This, presumably, is what J.S Mbiti also had in mind when he argues that religion permeates all aspects of life. This was further made clearer by Lamin Sanneh in his observation that in Africa, religion falls like a shaft of light across the entire spectrum of life and that African communities live, move, and have their being in religion.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indeed, to be *secure* is to be free from *fear* and *want*. This study focuses on one of the diverse social and cultural expressions of Muslims and Islamic materiality in the contemporary Yoruba context, southwest Nigeria, and it examined how Islamic petitionary prayer (*du'ā*) became a valuable instrument and commodity for defining, understanding, and interpreting fork's lifeworld. As such, a class of Muslim clerics, self-identified as *Alfa Oníjálàbí* pay particular attention to and consider security immune from the existential threat to people's survival, sustenance, and livelihood as paramount. This study, therefore, explores how a people-centred security approach is intertwined into the fabric of everyday reality and solicited as a tool for soothing and assuaging the strained social and economic circumstances of the human lifeworld.

Research into everyday life may not so be much a matter of what they already know, but of helping bring to birth things which have not yet been put into words – and which in some cases could never be into words, but might be captured in a picture, a dance, or an object. Thus, provides insight into how to conceptualise the ways in which spirituality is understood and practiced as human-centered dimension to security, and the attempts to empower the citizenry to ensure the realisation of their life dream through the instrumentality of petitionary prayers, which also engenders commodification outcomes as a vehicle of neoliberalism. The study argues that human security affects development processes, therefore improvements in human livelihood and well-being will enhance societal development. Indeed, the narratives of this study signal contributions to understanding Islam and Mulsim cultures by demonstrating how petitionary prayers' embodiment gives expressions to everyday lived experience in contemporary content.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The study has focused on how the intersection of religious practices and everyday life provides a fresh synthesis from first-hand ethnographical research work that opens new windows into the lived Islamic experience in Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria. Generally, the spread of Islam in Yoruba land was closely associated with clerics who performed miracles and offered the hope of intercession with God who answered prayers. Although Ibadan is a city with considerably a large Muslim population, where people's everyday life is critically influenced by religion symbolism and Islamic values. Thus, Muslim clerics are considered as significant and dependable religious actors who are important in shaping everyday life and adding social values to their lives. Embodied a style of Islamic religiosity characterised by a distinctive set of spiritual redemption and fortification which are understood by religious consumers to explain ways in which people's spiritual, economic, and social well-being depends on their relationship with their religious or spiritual leaders.

Focusing on a category of Yoruba Muslim clerics and actors, known in Yoruba parlance as *Oníjálàbí* who deployed and rendered petitionary prayers and other spiritual services as religious infrastructure that intervene in the life of the religious consumers, this study is foreground on the fact that African religious epistemology is based on the idea that the spiritual welfare of the people, community, and the entire manifest world, is dependent on maintaining a proper relationship, with religious advisors and actors, whose specialized knowledge and activities are often considered secret (Brenner 2000). This led to the rise of *Jálàbí* practice, with its perceived flexibility, associated in the popular imagination with Yoruba cosmology.

In this study I have narrated, conceptualised and analysis the cultural embodiment and production of *Jálàbí* practice by the *Oníjálàbí*. Thus, the impression of prayer as “the royal road to God is conceptualised within the rubric of everyday lives with references to the precarious social and economic condition in Nigeria which also requires monetary beautification”. Money given in exchange for prayers was seen as *Sadaqah* or free-will gift that shields givers and their families from evil attacks and assure them of divine abundance blessings from God. It however, portrayed the instance of soliciting and it also capture the “cash for prayer” transaction encounter among the Yoruba Muslim clerics within the rubric of religious everyday engagements and transactions. It also depicted the fact that the prayer

practice upon which the *Oníjálàbí* thrives is considered a two-way affair involving people in need and clerics that supposedly possess sufficient spiritual capital as a commodity to meet those needs. In other words, money has been elevated to become the enforcer, the facilitator and carrier of prayer to God. In specific terms, it emphasises the expansion of religious capital in a developing society and the alternative it offers to a population that is daily let down by a State, which does not just fail in providing security from hunger, poverty, and diseases but as well could not protect the citizens from an incidence of crimes and violent conflicts. This shows how the value of spirituality has been sustained by the Muslim clerics over the years.

As noted from the interviews and observations during the fieldwork, Islamic practice and Muslim clerics in the Nigerians landscape cannot be ignored, as both have a firm root in Yoruba cosmologies and worldviews, as they continue to shape, determine, and reshape everyday life decisions. Thus, Muslim clerics had become a major factor that played a critical role which positioned them at the centre of most undertakings. Thus, despite the claims of modernity and secularisation, religious patronage and spiritual consultation continue to provide meanings and intertwine with people's daily social, economic, and political activities, as it gives purposive social and cultural meaning of life.

Over time, *Jálàbí*, like any other everyday practice has taken commodified forms, such that *the Oníjálàbí* offer petitionary prayers as commodities for public consumption in an ever-expanding spiritual marketplace, influenced by neoliberal ethos. This can be equated with the Yoruba axiom that “we valued what we pay for, and that we may not value what we don't pay for “. In other words, the transformation and embodiment of this Islamic infrastructure provide insightful, intrinsic, and spiritual meanings for the life of religious consumers. It thus offers insightful explanation and meaning to how religious practice shapes and acts as mediating culture that offers and empowers men and women with an instrument to confront the ambiguities and uncertainties of life.

Apparently, it appears that before this present work, no major ethnographic exploration and analysis of *Jálàbí* practice among Muslim clerics and the hermeneutics of prayer commodification in Ibadan, southwest, Nigeria has been undertaken. That investigation is what, in the main, this study has attempted. More importantly, the literature reviewed draws attention not only to review existing literature on scholarly works that are

germane to this study but also to explore Hans-Georg Gadamer's Cultural Hermeneutics and Kitiarsa Pattana's Religious commodification theory as the theoretical and conceptual framework; both have offered meaningful analytical and methodological frames for the study. Epistemologically, the interpretive or constructivist paradigm, which often encourages the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant enabled us to generate rich and detailed descriptions of the social phenomena by encouraging our interlocutors to speak freely and thus uncover how they interpret, experience, and understand reality (Saunders et al., 2012).

Interestingly, many of the scholarly explanations of prayer commodification have subjected it to only the aspect of creative practices by which clerics engage in transactional exchanges with clients to critical inquiry, ignoring the hermeneutics of such engagements. Whereas by rendering petitionary prayer to the public, the *Oníjálàbí*, purposefully take chances in a situation of uncertainty, when failure seems to be as likely an outcome of people's activities and a threat to life. This turns to faith, therefore, constituted cultural issues to the understanding of human security and well-being among the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria, as Muslim clerics and actors emerged to secure human lifeworld and the community, against existential threats and earthly principalities. Petitionary prayer, therefore, fosters confidence, and a sense of immunity from the fear of evils, misfortunes, and spiritual attacks that are deep-rooted among Nigerians and Africans.

The methodology and research designs employed in the work explained how data were collected and analysed with the stated objectives of the study. This includes a step-by-step explanation of the methods adopted in carrying out the research work and its rationale. Perhaps, the objective is to expose the process by which this discursive structure achieves its goals. For instance, qualitative data were obtained through participant observation, an interview of 86 informants randomly selected at locations of Islamic events, an in-depth interview of 10 *Oníjálàbí* who were purposively selected based on their long years of experience in *Jálàbí* practice, advanced age, and pedigree in the Ibadan Muslim community.

Again, the study was based on ethnographic fieldwork, and data was collected in Ibadan among the Muslim clerics and their clients, referred to as religious consumers. The fieldwork was conducted for ten months, and the researcher collected data through

participants' observation and informal, semi-formal, and in-depth interviews. More so, I lived and participates in various religious activities and events that involve Muslim clerics, as I frequently followed some of my interlocutors to a social function where they were invited as a guest to conduct special events to engage their emotional lives. I thus maintained regular contact with them during the duration of fieldwork. In all, all my observations and interviews were recorded and documented appropriately.

More importantly, the narratives and vignettes from the interviews were analysis descriptively as a reflection of the research objectives of the study, as obtained from the field. Data gathered during the ethnographic fieldwork were presented in a descriptive form to provide clues to our formed hypotheses. The construed findings were interpreted and discussed by utilising the theoretical framework, the theory of religious commodification, and cultural hermeneutics, as a guide. It thus presented the rich soil of the *Jálàbí* practice in Ibadan, its commodification processes and outcomes, its meanings, and interpretations of the everyday lived religious experience of the self-identified religious actors and the individual religious consumers. This study established that *Jálàbí* practice in Ibadan started significantly as a connecting link between the ruling chiefs (Ibadan elites of that period) and the visiting itinerant Muslim clerics that shaped the society and political circumstance of that era.

Its upsurge and transformation in Ibadan are inseparably borne out of the historical, utilitarian, and pragmatic considerations that enabled the intervention of Islamic spirituality to contribute to the development of the city. This was because the Muslim clerics were seen as “locus of spiritual power” and holy men whose prayers are answered and held in high esteem. Over time, the pattern of spiritual patronage shifted dramatically from a service not only to the chiefs (ruling elites alone) but also to the public for a price. This change in spiritual patronage of *Jálàbí* practice was further fragmented and it manifests in different religious functions and events such as naming ceremonies (*‘aqīqah*), weddings (*nikāh*), funeral prayer (*Fidāu*), *Qur’ān* graduation ceremony (*Walīmatu-khatmil Qur’ān*), Islamic chieftaincy honours, and individual’s everyday quest for success and security.

More significantly, this study also identified a plethora of different genres of prayer performances, doctrinal and strategies as cultural production, at a particular time, for confronting religious consumer’s existential challenge This constitutes performance in the

context of the Islamic culture of *d'uā* which is often deployed differently by *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to suit specific needs and occasions that call for prayer (*du'ā*) and it is understood as a didactic instrument of cultural mediation. In most instances, *Alfa Oníjálàbí* claims that their engagement and activities are an adaptation from the various prayer formulae, embodied in the *Qur'ān* verses/chapters (texts), Prophetic tradition, and skillful religious experience of the clerics to form the instrumentality of petitionary prayer, to address and confront the lifeworld of their religious consumers.

This is further augmented and supported by certain variegated religious commodities and objects that are imbued with protective power to secure individual religious consumers as an expression of religious commitment. Thus, the meanings embedded in commodified prayers are engendered by the material forms in which *Jálàbí* occurs (*turābu*, *istikhārah*, *falak* or *Akosejaye*, and *Subaha*, among others) and with the emphasis of putting succor and smile on the face and life of their religious consumers from time to time, even, when hope is lost, they still make life meaningful.

Nonetheless, drawing attention to the variegated forms and expressive modes of doctrines through which *Jálàbí* practices are performed, this dissertation shows that there is more than content or text to grasp in Islamic petitionary prayer, whether it is performed in mosques, private homes, marketplace, or elsewhere. *Jálàbí* practices remained a site of the manifestation of religious performance as a socio-religious practice that sought to commodify religion as an everyday experience. The notion of neoliberal therefore entails nothing more than blank slates onto which the religion appears to tolerate or find tolerable purposely for the interests and needs of the religious consumers in the society. In this form, shades of religious entrepreneurs emerge to address challenges of socio-economic problems and uncertainties that are widespread in many African societies through spirituality. This study, therefore, explored spiritual patronage in the context of how Muslim religious practices are best grasped in contemporary contexts.

Above all, the finding of this study shows there is an unprecedented increase in the number of *Alfa Oníjálàbí* and their public visibility is largely influenced by the existential challenges of contemporary human lifeworld that made people rely heavily on the appropriation of spiritual capital as an embodiment of religious infrastructure that allows the citizenry to build religious castles to ensure human survival and security in a precarious

state. Thus, *Sadaqah* is only the act of giving back to the religious cleric and trading with Allah but also acts as a catalyst that facilitates easy access to Allah's favour and mercy and also acts as protection from evil attacks and other misfortunes. Therefore, the logic of material salvation, according to *Jálàbí* practice hinges on neoliberal ethos as an expression of lived experience. Meanings attached to the monetary exchanges varied but in all cases were embedded as 'negotiated interactions' and defining factors, literally meant to buy *barakah* (abundance divine blessings).

In all, the existential threat to human dignity remains part of the daily lived experience and challenges confronting humanity, and the attempt to seek solutions to it has steadily forced people to commit major life decisions to faith, which in turn occasioned spiritual consultations and prayer fortification. It is often inherent in all human beings to always seek to rise to higher positions in life, as well as material greatness. Perhaps, a man in search of means to achieve his insatiable needs and dreams but recognise the necessitate to be in touch with Allah, through the spiritual effort of clerics who offers prayer and blessings, as a spiritual insurance mechanism for assuaging difficulties, confronting human predicaments and every adversity in life. Thus, the essence of life is the protection of human welfare and dignity, perhaps, a secure human future means a vital and healthy human community.

Symbolically, the study contended that the hermeneutics of prayer commodification in *Jálàbí* practice is evidence of the dynamics associated with neoliberalism, which encourages the intervention and interpenetration of Islamic spiritualities to everyday reality, as a commodity, defined by Igor Kopytoff (2014) as a thing that has 'use-value and that can be exchanged in a distinct transaction. This value is also embodied as human security and a weapon against earthly principalities. Thus, spiritual consciousness would remain one of the fabrics of contemporary society, especially those that intervene in their everyday lives as human security against hunger, danger, and poverty in society when the state was unable to fulfill its welfare and well-being to the citizenry.

Among other findings, this study asserted that commodification has positively shaped the worldview of Muslim clerics and society at large. The study provides deep insights into a 'religious infrastructure' that allows the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* to commodify spiritual capital as human security in confronting everyday challenges and uncertainty of human

survival and livelihood, to form spiritual clientelism. Thus, the hermeneutics of prayer commodification has pushed *Jálàbí*, as a named category, on the map of public discourse. Though many considered it un-Islamic, and hitherto part of dominant attacks on ‘orthodoxy’ claims, closer to *bidi’a* (innovation). Nonetheless, these self-identified Muslim clerics continue to swell the ranks of *the* society in Nigeria, and the blurred boundaries between ‘orthodox’ Islamic practices. Nevertheless, this is overtly the demonstration of the vitality of petitionary prayers and Islamic symbolism as a valued cultural mediation resource for enduring the strained social and economic circumstances of rapid modernisation.

This study shows that spiritual culture and religion are intertwined, such that spiritual capital being made available to assuage existential challenges, as sustainable lifestyles, is drawn upon to amend or restructure those elements of everyday life that are perceived as problematic. For Durkheim, the notion helps to cement the continuity of religious practices and traditions as vital both in developing a sense of meaning and for personal and collective well-being and security. In this respect, the Yoruba people increasingly turned towards Islam and Muslim clerics in search of spiritual fortification and stimulation. This dynamic gave impetus for the service and engagement of the *Alfa Oníjálàbí* as a human-centered security framework. This is most visible during crises, life-threatening situations, and devastating effects of famine in society, drought, war, and diseases.

In a way, *Jálàbí* practice became deeply alive and embodied into Yoruba society, colouring how Islam is understood and practiced. There is considerable continuity at the interstices of this religious understanding, which illustrates and portrayed the value which people placed on petitionary prayer as human security and a weapon against existential threats and to navigate the meaning of life.

5.3 Conclusion

The study has critically examined and focused on how the intersection of *Jálàbí* practice as spiritual intervention and everyday lived Islam in Southwest Nigeria, as *Oníjálàbí* performed countless religious services through the lens of Islamic cultural expressions and materiality that fed into the local sensibility of everyday lives to create specific meanings and expressions of Muslim identities in a plural society. It thus discusses the diversity of petitionary prayers and how the value of Islamic spiritual culture has been sustained by the Muslim clerics in a positive developmental process in the Yoruba society, which cannot be neglected nor easily forgotten, especially as it affects everyday spiritual warfare, well-being in mundane affairs, in wartime, and in emergencies. In fact, they contentedly offer and render embodied petitionary prayers and spiritual support to the people and communities to maintain the social order of a given context. Assuredly, across Yoruba societies, religion is life itself, and no one could think of life without simultaneously looking at religion and its symbolism for meanings-making and interpretations on every facet of their life experience and decisions in contemporary Nigeria.

Of course, over the past decades, many Muslim clerics in Southwest Nigeria, like their brethren elsewhere around the globe have risen to prominence with invigorated and unprecedented public visibility as spiritual leader who promotes Islam as a mission geared toward individual social and moral transformation. Thus, spiritual patronage and consumption remain widespread and continue to circulate in the local, and national arenas as part of contemporary social reality. This manifest itself in a multitude of symbols of Islamic piety and infrastructure which create spiritual awe and connection. Thus, the uncertainty, ambiguities of life, hardship, human adversity, and nurturing hope would continue to provide an occasion for the spiritual patronage of *Oníjálàbí* that allows people to maintain a shared lifeworld.

The study is also foregrounded on the recent anthropological narratives that see the religious practice as ‘infrastructural networks’ that constitute and configure everyday forms of sociality and lived experience of the people. Larkin (2008) argues that the notion of infrastructure goes beyond the technological capabilities and apparatus set up for communication purposes, rather it should include a cultural dimension. By cultural dimension, he refers to practices developed and carried out within specific social contexts.

In this study, I contend that the cultural creativity of the *Oníjálàbí* is about the value and notion of individual choices which implied the ‘culture of self’ with its connotation of ‘self-realisation’ of personal well-being, health, and human security, as *Oníjálàbí* also eke out a livelihood in the grips of neoliberal ideology. Therefore, securing the blessings and benediction of Allah (*baraka*) through the mediation and petitionary prayers of their Muslim clerics has become an integral part of their lifestyles, and such relationship-induced spiritual clientele and patronage that is carefully cultivated over time in an exchange with gratification system. Therefore, based on the pragmatic and utilitarian benefit of *Jálàbí* among Yoruba people in Nigeria, religious entrepreneurship survives, and the heavier the patronage, the greater the profit and the appeal, which makes it a much more reflective tool of a pragmatic enterprise. As such, any religion that hopes to survive and expand in the contemporary world must be sensitive to the changes occurring in the society where it is being practiced and hence be flexible, adaptable, and dynamic (Wotogbe-Weneka 1993).

In essence, man’s sojourn in life is greatly guided by prayer beliefs and at the point of his entrance and exit from the world; he cannot be without prayer. And so, man cannot do without prayer, if the world and its inhabitants must be saved from destruction (Wotogbe-Weneka 2001). Prayer, as a religious practice, is therefore at the bottom of everything and indeed, the ‘vital fluid from which everything, including life itself, flows. It constitutes the bedrock of all we identify as culture; our perception, interpretation, understanding of reality, and, therefore, that on which we organise our lives (Bretall 1993).

From an interpretive standpoint, we can say without equivocal that *Jálàbí* practice has navigated a place for itself, as it steadily provides plausible answers to everyday questions of human precarious challenges, by giving religious consumers a sense of human dignity and security, which the state actors could not guarantee nor assured her citizens. Thus, people’s religion, society, and culture are among the most invaluable resources that influence their development process, and they provide the basis for a development that is at once meaningful and sustainable. We make bold to say that development is not possible without an enabling religious, societal, and cultural foundation. An understanding of the relationship between religion, society, and culture and development is important in

sensitising both scholars, and policymakers to the dangers of treating these issues as if they are intangible in the struggle for sustainable development (Ananti and Madubueze 2014).

Following our discussion so far, we can conclude that Islam and Islamic practices could promote purposive human development that may ensure human security as a vital ground for peaceful co-existence even in the modern world. Thus, the study expands the scholarship on religious entrepreneurship in Africa by exploring how everyday spiritual, economic, and social development are by shaped religious expressions and practices, that in turn provide effective and sustainable means of livelihood for the Muslim clerics, which shapes their social and civic identity to be productive citizens. Thus, religion and religious practice could only survive ‘not so much as a reflective faith but as a cultural production, with value people placed on it as human security and a weapon against earthly principalities.

Against this background, a pragmatic and utilitarian dissection of *Jálàbí* within the context of Nigeria’s current existential challenges would no doubt attest to its relevance to contemporary Nigerian landscape, which also fits into Yoruba cosmo-religious worldview that is consisted with a structural-functional view of the society. It is a cultural practice that is reflected in the interpretation of how the lived religious experience of the people amounts to the negotiation of “modernity” and “tradition”.

Taking together, thus, the culture and ethos embedded in *Jálàbí* practice illustrate the embodiment of ritual gravitas and symbolic narratives that restructure social relations, and shape individual lifeworld to address the growing need for spiritual fortification and meaningful life experience. *Jálàbí* thus provides contexts for folks to conceptualise, affect, and perform spirituality, which is determined by their individual’s social and economic aspirations and subjective notion of well-being. The Muslim clerics, therefore, establish themselves as a strong, self-fashioned, self-confident, and proselytising faith with dynamic yielding. Therefore, spiritual patronage or *Jálàbí* is a logic of everyday meaning-making and self-making practice, through which people’s everyday life is staged, performed, and a channel within which it can be explored and understood. In all, this study has interrogated the meanings, interpretations, and values embedded in the commodification of prayer as a religious culture and practice in contemporary context.

5.4 Recommendations

The study is beset with certain limitations. These limitations are noted here as recommendations for further studies. Thus, what has been offered in this study can be a springboard for further work on other aspects of the study not adequately covered here, particularly the involvement of practices in societies and cultures where religion prevails.

First and foremost, I call for further research that would explore a comparative framework and relational approach to the commodification of the religious practice among Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, and Africa, as our society is gradually becoming ever more pluralistic and multicultural, and people from different cultural and religious background continue to live together.

Secondly, I want to suggest that religious commodification should not remain limited to studying religious practice alone. There is a need to cast a critical look at how Muslim clerics in Southwest Nigeria have taken up new media technologies in their bid to the commodified religious sphere within the context of mediated spirituality. Empirical work is needed to understand how Muslim clerics' reputations in the social media space are construed.

Thirdly, I encourage future scholarships that would examine the proliferation of Islamic groups and the changing role of Muslim actors and clerics in a burgeoning field of Nigeria's landscape, beyond what is presented in this study.

Fourthly, this research has explored the hermeneutic of prayers commodification among *Oníjálábí* in the context of their everyday spiritual engagements; it would be logical to also suggest that similar research is undertaken on other major aspects of their everyday engagement with the public sphere; public sermons, preachings, new learning patterns, and technological usage, veiling and *hijab*, including the activities of private Muslim pilgrimage operators to Saudi-Arabia, etc.

Lastly, to further enhance our comprehension of the importance of religion in contemporary context, more research also needs to be done on the scale and space of gendered and female Muslim figures' involvement in everyday spirituality which remains understudies in southwest Nigeria. Whereas there is a new increasing visibility of *Shaykha* among the populace who offers contractual spiritual and ritual services to empower themselves and the religious consumers.

5.5 Contributions to Knowledge

This research offers numerous potentialities, and it has made a significant contribution to advancing the frontiers of knowledge in the following areas.

Firstly, the study opens the possibility of rethinking the argument for the continued relevance of religious practices and symbolism in a contemporary context as well as provides fresh insights into how petitionary prayers are reconfigured, transformed, and commodified among *Oníjálàbí* to become an important object of human consumption that shapes religious consumers' everyday lives and determinant of major life decisions. This further establishes the role of Islamic spirituality in what could be described as a self-help world, which is connected to a culture of privatisation and individualisation for the sustenance of human lifeworld in a precarious state.

Secondly, the study contributes significantly to knowledge production, particularly in the aspect of adaptability, subjectivity, and sociability of religious practice to the contingencies of everyday social and cultural life. Since petitionary prayers as religious infrastructure are significant and central to folk's everyday life, it stands that they could be employed to promote purposive human development that may ensure human security and as a vital ground for peaceful co-existence even in the modern world.

Thirdly, a core aspect of this work is the hermeneutics of prayer commodification as represented in *Jálàbí* practice. This further provides the impetus that man continues to abstract the world around him in its most profound religious leaning, hence, he has dragged religious symbolism and spiritual consumption into everyday lived experiences in a contemporary context. It also contributes to the conversation on material culture and consumption rituals in the Islamic context, which has to date largely been ignored in the literature.

Lastly, this study provides a major contribution to the anthropology of Islam in Nigeria and beyond by adopting approaches and methodological frameworks that emphasise pragmatism, coherence, and continuity of the Islamic tradition in a contemporary context. It thus further expands the scholarship on religious entrepreneurship in Africa by exploring how economic and social development shaped religious expressions and practices, which in effect provide effective alternative means of livelihood for the religious clerics which reshapes their social and civic identity to be a productive citizen in the society.

PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Ustadh Mushin Abdul-Salam Arzukuna (Chief Imam & Mufasir, L.A Adisa Mosque) at his office, located at L.A Adisa Mosque, Agbowo, Ibadan on Monday, December 28th, 2016, and January 2017
2. Shaykh Imam Muideen Ajani Bello (*Allahu Muiy*), during Ramadan Lecture at Lekan Salami Sports Complex, Adamasingba, Ibadan, on July 8, 2017.
3. Alfa Abdul-Jaleel Yunus (*Kori*), Arabic teacher at L.A Adisa Arabic Institute, located at Ile-Nla, Barika area, Agbowo, Ibadan on Monday
4. Shaykh Imam Abdul-Qadir Olatunji Ayede, *Al-Fulani*. (Mogaji Ayede) at his house, located at the Aduloju area, along Ojoo-Iwo Road expressway, Ibadan. January 2016
5. Imam Ibrahim Uthman Afe, Mission board member, Yaseer Alasalatu Group, Imam Zubair Central Mosque, Barika, Agbowo, Ibadan on Saturday 17th October 2016 and
6. Mr. Akeem Ismail, Civil Servant, Shittu Street, Felele, Ibadan. During the Walimat Quran ceremony for his son, Abdul-Samad Ismail on Sunday 24 October 2017
7. Muqdam Taofeq Adebayo, Islamic and Arabic teacher at his house, located Olomi Academy area, Ibadan on Sunday 19th October 2016
8. Alhaji Chief Hazeem Gbolarumi, Balogun Adeen of Ibadanland, turbaned on Friday October 2015 at Ojaba, Ibadan Central Mosque, Ibadan
9. Alhaji Aare Kamardeen Adebayo Adekola, Aare Musulumi of Felele, Molete, Olorunsogo, Challenge, and Its Environs. He is a public Servant at Fan Milk Plc, Ibadan.
10. Mrs. Taiwo Rasheedat Odeniyi, Trader at her Shop located at Ojoo area, Ibadan November 10, 2017.
11. Alhaji Mutiu Ayobami, Muslim cleric, at his residence, located at Ayeye area, Ibadan on Tuesday 5th January 2017.
12. Alhaji Imam M. B Abdul-Azeez, Chief Imam JMR Motors Central Mosque, Bodija market, Ibadan on Thursday, February 19th and 10th March 2017.
13. Muqaddam Abdul-Hakeem, Muslim cleric, at his office, located at the Ogo-Oluwa area, Agbowo, Ibadan. Monday, December 2016 and 2nd February 2017

14. Alhaji Imam Zakariyah B. Balogun *JP*, Branch Missioner, Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria, Odo-Ona Branch, Ibadan, at his personal house/office, located at Araromi area, Odo-Ona, Ibadan. Date: Tuesday 13 February and 8th March 2017
15. Alhaji Imam Saminu Tijani Ajisope, Chief Imam, Premier Hotel Mosque, Ibadan, at his house located at Ojoo area, Ibadan on Thursday 31st March 2017
16. Imam Mamuud Hamzat Basunu, (grandson of late Imam Basunu) at Sabo Central Mosque, Mokola, Ibadan on Monday March 2017.
17. Imam Dr. Bashir A. Olanrewaju (Eleshinmeta), State Missioner of Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria and a member of Ibadan League of Imams and Alfas at his office located at Ansar-ud-deen Islamic Centre, Liberty Stadium Road, Oke-Ado, Ibadan on Thursday, April 2015 and Tuesday, May 25, 2017
18. Alhaji Ibrahim Olatunde Lawal, Muslim cleric, and Missioner at his house located at Olopomewa area, Eleyele, Ibadan on Saturday 20th February 2017
19. Alhaji Shaykh Abdul-Ganiyu Ahmad Adejare, Muslim Cleric, at his house located at Oluseyi Street, Eleyele, Ibadan on Saturday 20th February 2017 and Saturday 15th April 2018
20. Alhaji Lateef Alabere, Muslim cleric, at his office located at Oja'ba area, close Iba Oluyole residence, Ibadan. On Monday 21st, 2017, Tuesday 22nd March and 12th October 2018
21. Alhaji Malik Ibrahim, Muslim cleric, at his office located at Oja'ba area, close Iba Oluyole residence, Ibadan. On Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd March 2017
22. Alhaji Sheu Alabidun, Muslim cleric, at his office located at Oja'ba area, close Iba Oluyole residence, Ibadan. On Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd March 2017
23. Alfa Abdul-Qadir Azeez, Banker, interview conducted at Ansar-ud-deen Islamic Centre, Liberty Stadium Road, Oke-Ado, Ibadan on Sunday, October 18, 2017
24. Alfa Ishola (Iwo), at his house located at Wofun area, along Iyana-Church, Ibadan
25. Alhaji Pa Mufutau O Makinde, Retired Civil Servant, at his house located Temidire Quarters, Bodija, along Ojoo-Iwo Road expressway, Ibadan on Saturday, November 2014, January 2015 and February 6th, 2017.

26. Alfa Idrees Salaudeen, Muslim cleric, at Gbigbadura Central Mosque, Temidire Quarters, Bodija, along Ojoo-Iwo Road expressway, Ibadan on Saturday, November 2017 and January 2018
27. Sheikh Abdul-Qadir Olaseni Tantawi, Islamic scholar, and Arabic teacher, at his house, located at Agbofieti area, Apata, Ibadan on Wednesday, December 28, 2017, and January 2018
28. Khalifa Naseer Olaosebikan, Muslim cleric, at Olaosebikan Mosque, Agbowo, Ibadan on Monday, June 2017
29. Imam Alhaji Surajudeen Ojularo, Muslim cleric, at his office, located at Ojularo close, Ile-Eja Bus-stop, Agbowo, Ibadan on Monday, June 2017 and August 2018
30. Alhaji Imam Yusuff Al-Adabiyi, cleric and the Chief Imam, Ago-Ilorin Central Mosque, Mokola, Ibadan on Thursday, August 2017 at his house located at Ago-Ilorin Quarters, close to Mokola Market, Ibadan
31. Imam Hassan Aminu Onisiriyan, Mogaji and Chief Imam Onisiriyan Central Mosque, Onisiriyan Compound, Oritamerin area and member, Imam-in-Council of Ibadanland at Onisiriyan Mosque, on Thursday, September 2017 and January 2018
32. Alfa Musadiq Onisiriyan, Muslim cleric, at Onisiriyan Central Mosque, on Thursday, September 2017
33. Alfa Abdul-Waheed Balelayo, Muslim cleric, at Onisiriyan Central Mosque, on Thursday, September 2017
34. Alhaji Chief Nureni Adebayo, Akanbi, Politician and Mogaji, Ile-Iba (Bashorun Oluyole), Oja'ba area, at his official office located Ile-Iba, Ibadan on Tuesday, September and January 2017
35. Alhaji Chief Kamarudeen Salami Osundina, acting Mogaji Osundina Compound, Ilenla, Isale-Osi, Ibadan, (the official Mogaji is based in the USA) on Tuesday, November 2017 and March 21st, 2018.
36. Alfa Moshood Yusuff (*Lakobi*), Muslim cleric, at Gbigbadura Central Mosque, Temidire Quarters, Bodija, along Ojoo-Iwo Road expressway, Ibadan on Saturday, November 2017
37. Alhaji Imam F.A.O Yaaqub, at Ansar-ud-deen Mosque, Agbowo, Ibadan on Tuesday, April 29, 2017

38. Bro Monsoor Dauda, Businessman, at his office located at Ojoo area, Ibadan on Sunday, March 2017.
39. Alfa Qadir Adewale Lawal (*Ajanasi*) at his house located at Ajibode area, Ibadan on Friday, March 2017
40. Alhaji Imam Abdul-Rasheed Adewale Azeez, a Muslim cleric, and Civil Servant, at Inalende area, Ibadan on Friday, April 2017
41. Alhaji Imam Animashaun, a Muslim cleric and member, Oyo State Muslim Pilgrims Board, at his office located at Gege area, close to Apampa Compound, Isale-Osi, Ibadan on March 21st, 2017.
42. Alhaji Imam Maruf Oyebamji Hamzat, Muslim clerics and scholar, at his ADS Mosque, Orita-Challenge area, Ibadan on Wednesday 10th February 2015 and 19th September 2017
43. Alhaji Imam Wasiu Hamzat Jogunosinmi, Mogaji and Chief Imam Jogunosinmi Central Mosque, Jogunosinmi Compound, Oja-ba area and member, Imam-in-Council of Ibadanland at his house located at the Jogunosinmi compound, Ojaba Ibadan on Tuesday, September 2016, and January 2017
44. Shaykh Sulaiman Adebayo Folorunso (Fagba) Muslim cleric and scholar, at his house located at Olodo area, along Olodo-Iwo Road, Ibadan on Monday, March 2017
45. Ustadh Ismail Showumi (Basmallah) at his house located at Alabata, along Iseyin road, Moniya, Ibadan on 23rd March 2017.
46. Imam M.A Bada, a retiree, Muslim scholar, and Chief Imam, Oluyole Extension Central Mosque, at his house located at Oluyole Estate, Ibadan on Monday, May 30th, 2017.
47. Mr. Olusola Ojetokun, Businessman and trader, at his office, located at Adelaja Street, Mokola, Ibadan on Tuesday 23 April 2017
48. Mr. Banji Babayanju, Businessman and Graphic Artists, at his office located at Balogun Street, Mokola, Ibadan on Tuesday 23 April 2017
49. Mr. Monsuru Ajibola Ajadi, Businessman, at his office located at Gbadebo Street, Mokola, Ibadan Wednesday 24 April 2017

50. Khalifah Imam Abubakr Raheem, a Muslim cleric, and scholar, at his house located at Adamasingba area, close to Eleganza, Ibadan Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th May 2017
51. Ustadh Yusuff Jamiu, Muslim cleric, at his house located at Adekunle street, Owode Academy area, Ibadan on Monday 16th May 2017
52. Ustadh Mually Shakirullah, Teacher and Islamic scholar, at his house located at Eyin Grammar, Molete area, Ibadan on Thursday, December 2017
53. Alhaji Lanre Amao, State Secretary, Ansar-ud-deen society, Oyo State Council at his office located Ansar-ud-deen Islamic Centre, Liberty Road, Oke-Ado, Ibadan on Tuesday, March 2017
54. Alhaji Isiaq Aderemi Adebayo, Admin Officer at Ansar-ud-deen Ibadan Zonal Headquarters, Liberty Road, Oke-Ado, Ibadan on Tuesday, March 2017
55. Chief Lekan Alabi, Former Press Secretary to Oyo State Government and Agbaakin Olubadan of Ibadanland, at NUJ Press Centre, Iyaganku, Ibadan on Wednesday, July 18th, 2017
56. Mrs Sahidat Musa, Trader, at her Shop, located at Adelaja Street, Mokola, Ibadan on
57. Alhaji Sheikh Ismail Akeukewe, Islamic scholar and Civil Servant, at his office located at New Garage area, Ibadan on July 7th, 2017.
58. Pa Rahman Oyedokun Isatola, Businessman, at his house located at Opoyeosa area Ibadan on Wednesday, October 12th, 2017.
59. Alhaja Raliat Oyedokun, trader, at his shop located at Opoyeosa area, Ibadan Wednesday, October 12th, 2017.
60. Alhaja Suliyat Amoke Dauda, trader, at her shop located at Oritamerin market, Ibadan on Wednesday, October 12th, 2017.
61. Alhaja Sururah Asukuna, trader, at her shop, located at Oritamerin market, Ibadan on Wednesday 12th, October 2017
62. Mr. Sulaiman Adejare Olayiwola, Public servant, at his house located at Alase area, Moniya, Ibadan
63. Mrs. Hamdalat Ajisope, trader, at her shop located at the Foodstuff section, Bodija market, Ibadan.

64. Alhaja Rukayat Tihamiyu, trader, at her shop located at the Foodstuff section, Bodija market, Ibadan.
65. Mrs. Kafayat Agbeniga, HND Holder and trader, at her shop located at the Foodstuff section, Bodija market, Ibadan.
66. Mrs. Kaosar Oladoye, trader, at her shop located at Agbeni-Ogunpa market, provision and household items section, Ibadan.
67. Alhaja Habibat Lawal, trader, at her shop located at the Foodstuff section, Bodija market, Ibadan.
68. Hon. Muideen Lateef, Politician, and Trader, at his shop located at the Live Cow section, Kara, Bodija Market, Ibadan
69. Mr. Abideen Asiwaju, trader, at his shop located at the Live Cow section, Kara, Bodija Market, Ibadan
70. Mr. Taofeeq Olalere, businessman, at his Shop located at the Plank seller section, Bodija market, Ibadan.
71. Mr. Olufemi Odeniyi, businessman, at his Shop located at the Plank seller section, Bodija market, Ibadan.
72. Alhaji Hon. B.A Solalu, Journalist and Politician, at his house located at Akobo, along with Bashorun Estate, Ibadan
73. Alhaji Hon. D. A Lawal, Retired Banker and Politician, at his house located at Temidire quarters, Zone 2, Bodija along Ojoo-Iwo Road expressway Ibadan.
74. Alhaji B.A Ellias, JP, Zonal Chairman of Ansar-ud-deen Society, Ibadan, at Ansar-ud-deen Islamic Centre, Liberty Road, Oke-Ado, Ibadan on Sunday, May 22nd, 2017
75. Alhaja M.O Yussff, Retiree and trader, at her shop located at No32, Adewuyi layout, Agbowo, Ibadan on Friday
76. Mr Yunus Alamu Onaolapo, trader, at his shop located at Ogunpa market, Ibadan.
77. Mr. Jaleel Adisa, trader, at his shop located at Ogunpa market, Ibadan.
78. Alfa Ismail Tihamiyu, trader, (Textile dealer) at his shop located at New Gbagi international Market, Ibadan
79. Mr. Rahman Sulaiman, trader, (Textile dealer) at his shop located New Gbagi international Market, Ibadan.

80. Mr. K.A Morakinyo, Teacher and Civil servant, at his's wife shop located at Moniya Ibadan
81. Mrs. Bunmi Adelowo-Adeniyi, Teacher at a private school, during her visit to Muslim clerics at Owode Academy, Ibadan
82. Mrs. S.B Fajinmi, Civil servant with local government, at her house located at No 16, Temidire layout, Bodija along Ojoo-Iwo Road expressway, Ibadan.
83. Alfa Abdullah Sagbe, Muslim clerics, at his house, located at Sagbe area, near IITA, Ibadan on Saturday 23rd July 2017.
84. Alhaji Imam Ismail Akeukewe, Islamic scholar and Lecturer, during weekly Asalatu session at New Garage area, Challenge Ibadan on Thursday 23rd March 2017.
85. Alhaji Kabir Durosomo, Branch Secretary, Ansar-Ud-deen Society of Nigeria, Odo-Ona Branch, Ibadan, October 2017
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