

Operationalising the Amazing Qur'ān: Yoruba Muslim Clerics in Focus

Adeoye Tawaliu Oriowo, Akanni Akeem. A & Abdus-Salaam, Khidir Adigun

Abstract

The Qur'ān is a uniquely sacred text of divine origin, unparalleled among other scriptures attributed to divine revelation. One of its distinctive features lies in the multiplicity of functions it performs and the diverse purposes it serves in guiding human conduct. It is a comprehensive source from which Muslims derive guidance on worship, ethical norms for regulating human behaviour, legal principles for harmonizing social life, and solutions to the manifold challenges of existence. Since the prophetic era, Muslims have consistently applied the teachings of the Qur'ān across various dimensions of life, whether personal or communal, physical or spiritual, albeit with some variations. The practice of turning to the Qur'ān in times of difficulty, either for temporary relief or permanent solutions, remains widespread among Muslims of all generations, likely due to its historical significance and divine origin. In light of this, the operationalisation of the Qur'ān among contemporary Muslims warrants critical examination to ensure alignment with the fundamental purposes for which it was revealed. This paper aims to investigate the ways in which the Qur'ān is being operationalised by contemporary Yoruba Muslim clerics, and how this usage may be further streamlined in accordance with core Islamic principles.

Key words: The Qur'ān, Yoruba Muslim clerics, Shari'ah, Operationalization,

Introduction

The Glorious Qur'ān is the literal word of Allah, revealed to the final Prophet, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, through the Archangel Jibrīl (Gabriel), as the culminating component of divine communication promised to humanity beginning with Adam. As such, the Qur'ān represents the final and most comprehensive of all divine scriptures, serving as a spiritual,

moral, social, economic, and political guidebook for Muslims in their daily lives. It was revealed in the Arabic language, the language of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and documented as such (Abdul, 1982). According to Tantawee (2006), the Qur'ān was revealed incrementally through Jibrīl (peace be upon him) to the Prophet over a span of twenty-three years. Murrad (1985) notes that it was not only revealed and written during the Prophet's lifetime but was also memorised by his companions.

The Qur'ān is the primary source of Sharī'ah (Islamic law) and governs all aspects of Muslim life. This foundational status is what led Abdulsalaam (2017) to describe the Qur'ān as a unique scripture whose knowledge encompasses both worldly and eschatological dimensions. Denfer (1981), as cited in Abdulsalaam (2017), also underscores the revelatory nature of the Qur'ān, defining revelation as an interpretation of the Arabic term *wahy*. This term, derived from the root verb *awhā*, appears in the Qur'ān in various semantic contexts: as natural intuition (Q28:7), instinctive guidance (Q16:68), non-verbal signs (Q19:11), misguidance from evil (Q6:112), and divine communication (Q8:112). In its theological sense, *wahy* denotes God's guidance conveyed through a Prophet via one of the recognised modes of revelation (Abdulsalaam, 2017, p. 19).

From linguistic, anthropological, and ecological perspectives, the Qur'ān is considered a complete and incorruptible word of Allah, preserved from human interference, interpolation, or alteration. This divine preservation is affirmed in the Qur'ān itself: "*Indeed, We have revealed the Reminder, and indeed, We will surely be its Guardian*" (Q15:9).

Qur'ān: Conceptual Clarification

According to Razi (2006), the word Qur'ān is derived from the Arabic root verb '*Qaraha*' meaning to gather something. Thus, to him, the Qur'ān, is so named because it contains chapters and verses. To Philips (1997), the word "Qur'ān," which is a verbal noun, is equivalent in meaning to "qiraa'ah," as both come from the verb "qara'a" which means "to read." That is, Qur'ān literally means "reading or reciting". The term "Qur'ān" has however, been historically and specifically used to refer to the book which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAAS).

Philips further opines that:

The term “Qur’ān” is mentioned in a number of places throughout the Book in reference to itself. For example: “Verily, this Qur’ān guides (humanity) to that which is most just. The name Qur’ān is used to refer to both the Qur’ān as a whole, as in the previously quoted verse; as well as to each verse or group of verses, as in the following verse: “And if the Qur’ān is recited, you should listen to it and be silent, that you may receive mercy “(1997: 85).

Denffer (1981) defines the Qur’ān as “the speech of Allah sent down upon the last Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) through the Angel Gabriel, in its precise meaning and precise wording transmitted to us by numerous person (*Tawaatur*) both verbally and in writing”(p6). Khallaafas quoted by Jareeshah (1987:6) describes the Qur’ān as:

The word of Allah revealed by the trusted Spirit to the mind of the Apostle of Allah Muhammad the son of Abdullah (SAAS) with its Arabic wording and truthful meaning so that it may be a proof attesting that he is an Apostle of Allah as much as to be a book of law for people to be guided by it as well as a means of drawing close to Allah by reading.

Qur’ān is the one codified in between the two covers of Mushaf starting with Fatiah and ending with Suratun-Naas and one which was passed down to us in succession with people reciting it mouth to mouth from one generation to another and was protected from any alteration or amendment in conformation of Allah’s statement, the Exalted be He “verily, We revealed the remembrance and surely, We are its protectors” (Q15:9)

In spite of the afore mentioned definitions, Jareeshah (1987) opines that giving an all-inclusive and all-encompassing definition of the Qur’ān is an impossible task analogous to the unique nature of the Qur’ān which, according to him, refuses to be encompassed. Perhaps, the best description of the Qur’ān is one given by its conveyer, that is, Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) when he said:

In it (the Qur’an) is an information about what was before you, and an information about what will come after, as well as solutions pertaining to

the matters between you. It is a clear speech – not a jest. Whoever abandons the Qur'an out of arrogance – Allah will shatter him! And whoever seeks guidance in something else, Allah will leave him straying. The Qur'an is Allah's firm rope, it is a wise reminder and the right way. Neither passion can divert it, nor can tongues change it. The knowledgeable cannot satisfy their appetite for it neither can it be spent out through continuous repetition. There is no end to its splendor. Even the jinns, when they heard the Qur'an, could not resist without saying: 'Verily, we have heard a wonderful Recitation (this Qur'an), which guides to the straight path.' Who speaks according to the Qur'an, speaks the truth; who works by it, will be rewarded; who judges according to it, he is just; and who invites to it, he is guided to the straight path. (Jareeshah, 1987:8).

Considering the various definitions given by the above scholars, it would be observed that the Qur'ān is very unique for the following reasons:

- i. speech/actual word of Allah;
- ii. through Arch-Angel Jibril;
- iii. concluding part of Divine communication to mankind; and
- iv. a means of guidance هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ (Q2:38, Q2:185)

A Brief Historical Account of the Revelation of the Qur'ān

The revelation of the Qur'ān to Prophet Muhammad began when he reached the age of forty in the year 610 CE. The first portion of this revelation occurred unexpectedly in a cave called Ḥirā', located a few miles from Makkah, where the Prophet often meditated on the creation of the heavens and the earth, seeking the true Creator.

From the beginning of its revelation, the Qur'ān was systematically documented for future generations. The Prophet appointed literate companions with the responsibility of recording the Qur'ān as it was revealed, bit by bit. Whenever a portion was revealed, these scribes were summoned immediately to ensure proper documentation. This practice

continued uninterrupted throughout the Prophet's lifetime. The most notable among these scribes was Zayd ibn Thābit (Abdulsalaam, 2017).

In addition to the official recording, the Qur'ān was also memorized by many companions, who sought the spiritual rewards for its recitation and memorization as outlined in both the Qur'ān and Hadith. These two methods—documentation and memorization—worked complementarily, ensuring the preservation of the divine word for future generations.

However, at the time of the Prophet's death, the Qur'ān was not in the form of a bound book. It was instead preserved in various fragments, documented on different materials. This was partly due to the scarcity of writing materials and the expectation of further revelations.

The responsibility of compiling the Qur'ān into a single book was first undertaken by the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, who ordered the collection of these fragments. Later, the third Caliph, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, completed the task by standardizing the recitation modes of the Qur'ān and producing multiple copies from the compilation made during Abu Bakr's time. These copies were then distributed to various provinces of the Muslim empire (Rahim, 2001).

The Qur'ān is such a book generally believed by the totality of the Muslims as an inimitable word of the infallible and Almighty Allah revealed through the agency of the trustworthy Angel Gabriel to Muhammad the Arabian Prophet of impeccable character. It is equally believed that no single part of it can be possibly attributed to Muhammad as history testifies that he was an illiterate who could neither read nor write. This perhaps accounts for the reason he was made unlettered as alluded to by the Qur'ān when it reads: *وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَأَرْتَبَ الْمُضِلُّونَ* "Neither did you read any book before it (the Qur'ān), nor did you write any book (whatsoever) with your right hand. In that case, indeed, the followers of falsehood might have doubted" (Qur'ān chapter 29:48).

The Qur'ān is also believed by the Muslims to be a multipurpose book. To them, it is the main source of all religious teachings of Islam with regards to the knowledge about God, the Prophets, about the fundamentals which comprise prayer, fasting, alms giving and pilgrimage. It is a source of

legislation for them comprising what is lawful and unlawful on a variety of issues like foods and drinks, marriage and divorce, business transactions and others. It constitutes their great source of information about the people of the old, and various narratives about earlier Prophets and their messages to their people and the latter's responses as well as it is being a source of information about incidents of historical value. The Muslims also use the Qur'ān for liturgical purposes as of course, they derive from it the primary prescriptions for the regulation of daily living and to which its people turn to find nourishment and salve for their devotional life (Abdulsalaam, 2017).

Features of the Holy Qur'ān

The Qur'ān as a Sacred Book of Allah contains so many distinct and imperative features that make it unique in all ramifications and also confirm its validity and authenticity. The following are some of the features of the Holy Qur'ān:

1. All previous Divine messages are preserved in it. Allah (SWT) explains that nothing is left out undiscussed in the Book including the historical information of the early Prophets and their books. (Q6:38)
2. No human interpolation. The Qur'ān states: 'Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and surely We shall be its guardian' (Q15:9). Another portion states: '...لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبُطْلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ'...It is a Mighty Book. Falsehood shall not come into it from before it nor from behind it; it is a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One' (Q41:42).
3. Fundamental law of human life and complete code of conduct. Qur'ān contains the fundamental law and code governing the entire life of man without any exception and this accounts for why the Creator says: وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ...And whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are the unjust' (Q5:45).
4. The greatest miracle given to any Prophet. The Holy Qur'ān as the mother of all books revealed in the Prophet's dialect can be read in many different dialects without any change to its meaning.

5. Not to be touched except in the state of purity. One of the uniqueness of the Holy Qur'ān is that it is quite a Pure Book and the Originator that is, the Creator prefers and therefore orders that only the pure ones must touch it. The Qur'ān states: لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

‘None shall touch it save the purified ones’ (Q56:79).

6. No crookedness shall creep into it. Allah testifies that the Holy Qur'ān does not contain any contradiction or crookedness الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا (Q18:1).

7. It is preserved in a secured Tablet: Allah establishes that the Holy Qur'ān is divinely preserved in a secured Tablet known as *Lawhul – Mahfuuz*. The Qur'ān states: بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ فِي لَوْحٍ مَحْفُوظٍ (Q85:21-22)

8. Revealed for 23 years. One of the beauties and uniqueness of the Holy Qur'ān is that it was revealed piece meal for a period of twenty three years. This undoubtedly paved way for clarifications and explanations of some previously revealed verses or portions that seemed to be somehow ambiguous to the early Muslims and all other generations of Muslims.

9. To ensure its competence, Jibril led Prophet Muhammad in its recitation annually in the month of Ramadan and this was done twice in the year of the Prophet's demise before his death.

10. Treasure of all sciences and the fountain of all knowledge. In Q3:7, Allah says this about the Qur'ān:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَبِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَبَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

It is He Who has sent down to you the Book. In it are verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book; and others not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow (only) that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking Al-Fitnah, and seeking its Ta'wil, but none knows its Ta'wil except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it; all of it

is from our Lord." And none receive admonition except men of understanding

11. Its like cannot be produced by combined efforts of men and Jinn

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'ān) to Our servant (Muhammad), then produce a Surah (chapter) of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful). (24. But if you do it not, and you can never do it, then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers (Q2:23).

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتِطَعْتُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Or do they say: "He has forged it" Say: "Bring then a Surah like unto it, and call upon whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are truthful!" (Q10:38)

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتِطَعْتُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Or they say, "He forged it." Say: "Bring you then ten forged Surahs like unto it, and call whomsoever you can, other than Allah, if you speak the truth!"(Q11:13)

قُلْ لِّئِنْ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

Say: "If mankind and the Jinn were together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another." (Q17:88-89)

12. It has about 20 other names and many attributes: The Qur'ān is called by some other names and attributes in the Holy Qur'ān itself showing the uniqueness, authenticity and the importance of the Scripture. Some of the names include *Al-Kitab*- the Book (Q2:2), *Al-Hudah*-the Guidance (Q2:2), *At-Tanzil*-the Revelation/Sent down (Q26:192), *Adh-Dhikr*-the Reminder (Q15:9), *Al-Furqan*-the Criterion or standard of judging right and wrong, true or false) e.t.c. Some of its attributes are *Nur*- Light, *Rahmah*- Mercy, *Majeed*- Glorious, *Mubarak*-Blessed, *Shifāu*- Remedy/ Cure e.t.c. These names and descriptions indicate the many aspects of the message of the Qur'ān (Lemu, 2005).
13. Any part of it could be used for a purpose desired. One of the importance of the Qur'ān is that it could be used for any desired purpose. This accounts for why it is called the Cure, Healing and Remedy for any ailment and a kind of mercy for all mankind and jinn. Allah says:

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

And We send down of the Qur'ān that which is a cure and a mercy to the believers, and it increases the wrongdoers in nothing but loss (Q17:82)

14. As a protection against the evil ones. Allah revealed the Qur'ān as a kind of protection and fortification for the Prophet (SAAS) and the whole universe. This necessitated the revelation of Suratul- Falaq and Nās (Qur'ān chapters 113 and 114).
15. The best of men is he who knows it and teaches it to others. The Prophet is reported to have emphatically stated while talking about the importance of learning and teaching the Qur'ān that: 'The best of you (people), is the one who learns the Qur'ān and teaches and teaches others' (Muhammad, 1997:443). The Prophet is even reported to have said: 'Read the Qur'ān, because it is going to be an intercessor for the its recite on the Day of resurrection' (Muhammad, 1997:443).
16. It is to be read or recited in a beautiful and loud voice. The Qur'ān states: *وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا* recite it slowly with a beautiful voice, for that will help in understanding the Qur'ān and contemplating it

(Q73:4). A reciter of it should take at least 7days to read the complete Qur'ān and at best (i.e longest time) a month to complete (Q17:106).

17. When being read, attention must be paid, to its message. Allah (SWT) enjoins that full concentration must be given to the Qur'ān whenever it is being recited because if it is so done, both the reciter and the listener will surely be rewarded for it. Allah says:

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

So, when the Qur'ān is recited, listen to it, and be silent that you may receive mercy (Q7:204).

18. Its recitation causes tranquility and angels to descend. Anywhere the Qur'ān is being read or recited, according to Hadith six of An-Nawawi's collections, the Angels of Allah will descend to surround them and ask Allah to send down His mercy, favour and tranquility upon the people in the gathering. Moreover, the Angels will not depart until they stop reciting it (Abdul, 1980).

19. When it is being read, people who have knowledge fall down on their faces in humble prostration. The Qur'ān states:

قُلْ ءَامِنُوا بِهِ أَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا

Say: "Believe in it or do not believe (in it). Verily, those who were given knowledge before it, when it is recited to them, fall down on their chins (faces) in humble prostration (Q17:107).

Operationalising the Amazing Qur'ān: The Contemporary Yoruba Muslim Clerics in Focus

Despite all the above features, importance and the usefulness of the Glorious Qur'ān, the ways and manners it is being inappropriately used by some contemporary Yoruba Muslim clerics are quite heretically inclined. This explains why Owoyemi (2021) classifies them thus:

Today various learned Yoruba Muslims using the Glorious Qur'ān in different ways and for different purposes. There are some Yoruba Muslim

clerics known as Alfa akomonikewu (Traditional Muslim clerics who specialise in teaching children the reading of the Glorious Qur'ān), Alfa alasiri/alaajo (Muslim clerics who specialise in using the Glorious Qur'ān for spiritual healing) and Alfa oniwaasi (Muslim clerics who specialise in using the Glorious Qur'ān for preaching /missionary activities) (p.134)

The following are some of the ways and manners the Yoruba Muslim clerics use the Qur'ān:

1. **The Qur'ān being used as an article/ ingredient/souvenir:**
Some Muslims of today make the Glorious Qur'ān part of wedding articles / ingredients to be given to the brides who at times cannot even pronounce any letter from it. Some portions of it or full copies are also distributed to people as souvenirs at *Fidau*/funeral/ burial, birthday party or other ceremonies without considering the state of purity, faith and knowledge of the recipients. Owoyemi explains this further when he opines:

It is also observed that items such as a copy of the Qur'ān, a kettle, hijab, and a rosary are included in the bridal gifts during the engagement ceremony. These items are presented to the bride as part of the engagement. During the ceremony, an officiating person, typically an elderly woman, will take each item individually and use them to offer prayers for the bride. Among the Yoruba, it is believed that the engagement items symbolize significant aspects of the bride's marital life. At the conclusion of the prayer, the bride is publicly asked to choose the most valuable item from the collection. Typically, if the bride is a Muslim, she will select a copy of the Qur'ān and display it to the guests in attendance (2021:137).

2. **Its recitation as a means of collecting money.** It has now become an order or a standing tradition among the contemporary Muslims (especially the clerics) of today that the Qur'ān must be recited as a kind of entertainment in the Muslim gatherings or ceremonies after which money is collected from people. Owoyemi (2021) is also of the opinion that this act is very common among the Yoruba Muslim clerics when he states:

Some Yoruba Muslims have adopted the tradition of celebrating their birthdays annually with festivity, pomp, and pageantry. During such occasions, Yoruba Muslim clerics are usually invited to participate, and the celebrant requests them to recite the entire Qur'ān. Depending on the number of clerics present, the Qur'ān may be recited multiple times. Each cleric may be assigned one Hizb (one of the 60 parts of the Qur'ān) to recite (p.137).

Similarly, certain Yoruba Muslim clerics claim to have recited portions of the Qur'ān for people who are absent and then request that those people send payment for the recitation at a later time.

3. **Exhibition of the Qur'ān:** It is common among contemporary Muslims to display a copy of the Qur'ān in various places, such as in front or back of their vehicles, on their television sets, or on shelves, as a symbol of a Muslim household. However, these copies are often displayed for exhibition purposes only, without being read, leading to them becoming dusty over time. This practice contradicts the true essence of the Qur'ān's revelation.
4. **Using the Qur'ān as a dubious method of collecting money:** Contemporary Muslim clerics sometimes exploit the Qur'ān by distorting the meanings of its verses to collect money from the faithful. For instance, the verse "Inna Ladhīna Jaabu" (Q2:188) is wrongly ascribed to the Ijebu people, while "Ar-Rahman" (Q55) is misinterpreted as referring to the people of Ara Imo in Ijebu. Similarly, "Watarokuukaqooimaa" (Q62:11), which means "they leave you standing," is falsely associated with the people of Coker. Such heretical interpretations are used to flatter people and unjustly collect money, despite the Qur'ān's prohibition of such practices: "Do not eat your wealth among yourselves unjustly" (Q2:188).
5. **Misinterpretation and wrong connotations:** Some contemporary Muslim clerics also ascribe incorrect or evil meanings to Qur'ānic verses for personal gain. For example, "YaaHuwa" is wrongly linked to the internet scam "Yahoo," and Surah Al-Masad (Q111) is misquoted as "Tabati yadaa alatarodo," meaning "Scotch bonnet's or Caribbean red pepper's

Tabatiyada.” Similarly, “Laqod jaakum” (Q4:170), meaning “Certainly, an Apostle has come to you,” is distorted to “Laqodi ti ja okun” (meaning “Laqodi has cut the rope”). These misinterpretations are often used for selfish interests.

6. **Unethical behavior while reciting the Qur'ān:** Some Muslim clerics engage in unethical practices during Qur'ān recitations. They may instruct people to close or open their eyes and smile while reciting certain verses, or ask them to read chapters upside down. For example, they might request that Surah Yāsīn be recited in reverse order (starting from the last verse), a practice known as “Yāsīn atorikodo” (upside down Yāsīn).
7. **Mixing chapters during recitation:** Certain clerics mix verses or chapters from different parts of the Qur'ān during recitations for spiritual or liturgical purposes. This practice disregards the traditional order of the Qur'ān and is inconsistent with the principle of “Tartil” (proper recitation with clear and measured pronunciation), which is emphasized in the Qur'ān (Q73:4).
8. **Improper handling of the Qur'ān:** Some clerics mix the pages of the unbound Qur'ān before reciting, resulting in the random combination of different chapters. This violates the intended order of the Qur'ān and shows disregard for its sanctity.
9. **Using animal blood in rituals:** There are reports of contemporary Muslim clerics writing Qur'ānic verses or chapters using the blood of animals, including those considered forbidden (like dogs and pigs). This practice is part of certain spiritual rituals intended to make money, and it goes against the sanctity of the Qur'ān.
10. **Putting written Qur'ān portions in the mouths of animals:** Some clerics place written Qur'ānic verses in the mouths of animals, including forbidden ones, with the belief that this will speed up the outcome of their spiritual practices. They believe that such acts will enhance the power of their rituals.
11. **Using the Qur'ān in harmful rituals:** Certain clerics place written portions of the Qur'ān on the bottom of stoves (Aaro), believing that the heat will inflict pain on their enemies. This practice is associated with harmful traditional beliefs in which the Qur'ān is treated as a tool for causing harm rather than a source of guidance.

12. **Qur'ān in grave rituals:** Some contemporary clerics place written portions of the Qur'ān in graves, particularly for rituals intended to bring financial gain. They believe that the spirit of the deceased will bring money or blessings to those who perform such acts.
13. **Throwing written Qur'ān portions into wells or rivers:** In certain rituals, the written portions of the Qur'ān are thrown into wells or rivers with the belief that this will cause everlasting pain to the intended targets. This act is performed with the belief that the material will never return, thus causing permanent harm.
14. **Using forbidden items in rituals:** Some clerics combine written Qur'ān portions with forbidden items, such as "gaari tira" (devilish items), which may include haram substances. These items are then buried or thrown into water sources, violating Islamic principles.
15. **Distorting Qur'ānic text for personal gain:** Some contemporary Muslim clerics alter the text of the Qur'ān by replacing words with strange ones to suit their selfish interests. This is often done to justify dubious practices, including collecting money from people or performing rituals. Allah condemns such actions, as evidenced in the Qur'ān: "Among those who are Jews, there are some who displace words from (their) right places..." (Q4:46) and "Woe to those who write the book with their own hands and then say, 'This is from Allah'" (Q2:79).

How can the Amazing Qur'ān be Operationalised?

The practices mentioned above highlight a significant issue within the contemporary Muslim clerics' approach to the Glorious Qur'ān, where the focus seems to be on recitation, reading, or writing without truly internalizing and acting according to its teachings. This observation aligns with Owoyemi's (2021) argument, which notes a disconnect between the spiritualism of the Qur'ān and its practical application for societal reformation. Such an approach undermines the Qur'ān's role as a guide for personal and societal transformation.

As stated in Surah Al-Kahf (18:1-2), the Qur'ān was revealed to be a source of guidance, free from any distortion, offering warnings and good news for those who believe and perform righteous deeds. It is not merely for recitation, but for action that aligns with the divine commands. Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) emphasized the Qur'ān's comprehensive guidance, stating that it contains the truth of past records, the judgment for the present, and prophecies for the future. It is the ultimate guide for justice, truth, and guidance along the straight path (Muhammad Bakr, 1997:448).

For the Qur'ān to be properly operationalized, it requires more than just recitation or superficial engagement. The deeper meanings and teachings embedded within its verses must be fully understood and implemented in every aspect of life. This involves deriving lessons that promote the growth and development of individuals and the Muslim Ummah. The Qur'ān calls for its followers to reflect upon its verses, internalize its messages, and apply its teachings in their daily lives, fostering both personal growth and societal betterment. The true operationalization of the Qur'ān, therefore, lies in its ability to reform the self and society by aligning actions with its moral and ethical guidance. For example, Q17:22 can be summarised to address the following themes:

1. Monotheism
2. Goodness to parents
3. Relationship with extended family
4. Generosity and miserliness

5. Family planning /Abortion
6. Adultery and fornication
7. Sanctity of life
8. Retaliation
9. Relationship with orphans
10. Economic relations / measurement
11. Rumor / Spreading false information
12. Humility

The Prophet (SAAS) describes a Muslim who reads this message (i.e. the Qur'ān) and acts on its order in the following Hadith:

The example of him (a believer) who recites the Qur'ān (and acts on its order) is like that of a citron which tastes good and smells good. And he (a believer) who does not recite the Qur'ān (but acts on its order) is like a date-fruit which is good in taste but has no smell. And the example of a dissolute wicked person who recites the Qur'ān is like the Raihāna sweet which smells good but tastes bitter. And the example of a dissolute wicked person who does not recite the Qur'ān nor acts on its order is like the colocynth which tastes bitter and has no smell (Muhammad, 1997:445).

Though there are textual proofs of using the Qur'ān for spiritual development, it is also important to apply its instructions to our daily lives as Muslims. It has to be impactful on our moral, economic, political, social and family lives. This is why it is called a scripture. In Islam, it is believed that spiritual possession and infliction of pains may be caused by the jinns, if one offends them, may be by urinating or pouring hot water on them. The belief in the reality of evil eyes (al-‘ayn), magic (sihr), and witchcraft has really impelled some Yoruba Muslims to rely on charms, amulets and black magic (oogun) (Oloruntele, 2009). In making an endeavour to offer spiritual therapeutic for Muslims who have spiritual challenges, Muslim clerics (alfas) therefore utilise diverse methods to cure them. Among them are divination, exorcism and supplication. The Muslims who are very cautious of engaging in *shirk* (associating partner(s) with Allah) therefore prefers to recite the Qur'ān as a divine remedy. This is in conformity with

the submission of Opeoloye and Jimoh (2004) as cited in Owoyemi (2021) thus:

A special congregational prayer is often organized within certain communities where specific chapters of the Glorious Qur'ān are recited to address spiritual and metaphysical problems. These selected chapters are believed to have particular effects on various aspects of life, and they are recited with the intention of invoking divine help for different needs.

Suratul Yasin (Chapter 36) is regarded as a chapter that can provide relief from spiritual issues, such as those related to distress, health, or personal difficulties. It is often recited to cure problems perceived as spiritual in nature. Suratul Kahf (Chapter 18), on the other hand, is frequently recited by Yoruba Muslims seeking protection from harm or danger, as well as those requesting blessings related to wealth and prosperity. This chapter is believed to bring general protection and safeguard the individual from various forms of adversity. Suratul Fath (Chapter 48) and Suratul Mulk (Chapter 67) are also recited with specific intentions. Suratul Fath is often associated with victory and ease, and is recited to seek success and resolution in difficult situations. Suratul Mulk, known for its focus on the dominion and authority of Allah, is recited for protection and to invoke Allah's mercy. These prayers and recitations form part of the spiritual practices within the community, underscoring the belief in the Qur'ān's power to bring about healing, protection, and blessings when its verses are recited with sincerity and faith. The practice reflects a deep spiritual connection to the text and its perceived ability to address both personal and communal needs.

For the amazing Qur'ān to be well operationalised, the following must be done:

1. Qur'ānic education must be encouraged and intensified among Muslims.
2. Tafsir al-Qur'ān should not be limited to the month of Ramadan. At least once in a week across *Ratibi* (Area/local community) Mosques.

3. Friday sermons should be based on the themes/teachings of the Glorious Qur'ān
4. Short sermons based on Qur'ān should be delivered after each daily prayer.
5. Social media to be used to advance Qur'ānic teachings/instructions.

Conclusion

To operationalize the Qur'ān effectively, it is essential not only to read or recite it, but also to act in accordance with its teachings. This can be achieved when individuals well-versed in the foundational principles of the Qur'ān dedicate their time to teaching others. Furthermore, those deeply knowledgeable in the Qur'ān should make an effort to explain to those who can only read the Arabic text the meanings of what they have learned, so that the Qur'ān may become more meaningful and beneficial to them. In addition, it is crucial for those with expertise to secure sustainable means of livelihood to support themselves and their families, as the government does not provide for them in the same manner as in Islamic countries. Such efforts would significantly contribute to alleviating poverty among Yoruba Muslim clerics and would assist them in maintaining integrity while fulfilling their scholarly responsibilities. Consequently, the operationalization of the Glorious Qur'ān would become a reality. The Qur'ān should be regarded not only as a text for recitation and memorization for socio-religious and political purposes but as a Divine Book intended for societal restructuring and moral development. It is evident that some Yoruba Muslim scholars and clerics lack strong moral principles, as evidenced by accusations of their failure to embody the ethical teachings of the Qur'ān. This lack of adherence to its principles leads to their participation in actions deemed detestable and forbidden by the Qur'ān. As a result, the Qur'ān cannot serve as a proof for them on the Day of Judgment.

References

- Abdul, M.O. A. (1980) *The Selected Traditions of An-Nawawi*. Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau.
- Abdul, M.O. A. (1982) *The Holy Book of Islam*. Lagos, Nigeria: Islamic publication Bureau.
- Abdulsalaam, K. A. (2017) *The Efficacy of the Usage of the Qur'ān among the Ijebu People of Yoruba land*. An unpublished M. A. Dissertation Submitted in the Department of Religious Studies to the Post Graduate School, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye.
- Ar-Raazi, (2006) *Mukhtaar Assihaah*, Beirut Lebanon: Daa al-fikr.
- Denffer, A. V. (1981) *Uluum al-Qur'ān: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation
- Jareeshah (1987) *Usulu Shari'atul- Islamiyyah*, Abideen: Daarut-Turaathul-'Arabi Publications.
- Lemu, A. (2005) *Islamic Studies for Senior Secondary School Book 2 and 3*. Nigeria: Islamic Education Trust, Ilmi Avenue, Minna, Niger State.
- Oloruntele, A (2009) *Evil Forces and Shirk Among the Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria with Special Reference to Ilorin City*. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Birmingham, UK, retrieved from ethesis.bham.ac.uk/908, Web. 17 August 2019.
- Opeloye, M.O. and Jimoh S. L. (2004) *The Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria and the Glorious Qur'an*. Journal of the Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Lagos, Lagos State University, Ojo.
- Owoyemi, S.A. (2021) *Spiritualism and Functionalism of the Glorious Qur'an in the Eyes of the Yoruba Muslims of Nigeria: A Critical Analysis*. Journal of Social Sciences, Kampala International University.
- Muhammad, B. I. (1997) *Fiqhul-Waadih Minnal-Kitaabi Was-Sunnah 'alaa Madhaahibil- Arba'ah*, Cairo: Daarul-Manaar Publications.
- Murad, K. (1985) *Way to the Qur'ān*, Pakistan: Islamic foundation. Retrieved 15 May 2017 from <http://www.paradiseway>

Philips, B. (1997) *The Methodology of Qur'ānic Explanation*, Lagos, Nigeria: al-Waseelath Publishers.

Rahim, A. (2001) *Islamic history*, Mushin; Lagos Islamic Publication Bureau.

Sharaf, Y. (2005) *The Garden of the Righteous (Riyyadus-Saliheen)*. Egypt: Dar-Al-Ghadd al Gadeed, Al mansoura.

Tantawee, S. (2006) *Mabaahith fee Uloomal-Qur'ān*, Egypt: Al-Idaarahal-Markaziyyah, Azhar University Press.