

JANAZAH IN ISLAM, ITS APPLICATION AND PRACTICE BY MUSLIMS IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Islam is an all-encompassing religion that provides Muslims with Divine guidance in all spheres of life. However, in Katsina, a predominantly Muslim society, there are emerging innovations associated with funeral rites (*janāzah*) and mourning of the dead. Such innovations include, among others, competitions among mourners, discriminatory treatment among the mourners, and sniffing and rubbing the head (especially by elderly women) with the textile material that was used in accompanying the corpse to the grave. These innovations contradict the teachings of Islam on funeral rites and mourning. This paper, therefore, investigates the issues, analyzes them and proffer solutions from Islamic perspective. The paper used library and fieldwork methods. In the former, it widely consults relevant works in studying the teachings of Islam on the concept of *janāzah*. As for the latter, interview was conducted with relevant informants, and information related to origin, nature and effects of the innovations on the life of the Muslims in the study area were obtained. The paper finally emphasizes on the importance of the Islamic teachings on the practice of *janāzah* and suggested ways to eradicate the innovations associated with death, funeral rite and mourning in the study area. The paper found out that innovations introduced into practice of *janāzah* by Muslims in Katsina state have affected them religiously, socially and economically. It is concluded that Muslims need to abide by the true teachings of Islam in all aspects of life.

Keywords: *janāzah*, Application, Innovations, Muslims, Katsina,

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INTRODUCTION

Katsina, like other parts of the present Northern Nigeria, had witnessed the early introduction of Islam along with other Hausa states in the defunct Hausaland. The Muslims in the area had received the teachings of Islam from the Arab traders, who were considered important agents of Islamization of the area, and who travelled through the Tran-Sahara trade routes into the area (Balogun, 1999). The Arabs met the Hausa people with their traditional religion and customs. The customs were in all aspects of their life (Adeleke, 2005). In the rites of passage, for instance, the people of Katsina used to keep a corpse of their dead for three days before burial, and at the time of burial, they buried the deceased with all their belongings. They also burnt the place where one died so as to prevent the re-occurrence of death in the family (Nababa, 2006).

However, after Hausa people had embraced Islam, they did not completely throw away their traditional beliefs on death as well as other traditional practices. This was among the reasons that made *Shaykh* Usman bn Foduye to wage the 19th century *Jihad* to revive the religion of Islam and restore the practice of *Sunnah* among the Muslims in Hausaland in all aspects of the religion including the *janāzah* (Sulaiman, n.d). But from that period to the present, new innovations have been created and practiced as a religious rite of *janāzah* by the Muslims in Katsina State.

The paper, therefore, studies the concept of *janāzah* and Islamic guidance on it. It also traces the new emerging innovations, their nature, position and effects on the Muslims in the study area in a particular, and Islam in general. It also illustrates the significance of Islamic teachings on the proper way of *janāzah* and highlights ways Muslims in the study area could not only avoid such innovations, but to eradicate and ameliorate the effects of such innovative practices among the Muslims in the study area and beyond.

The Concept of *janāzah* in Islam.

The Arabic word *janāzah* or *Salat al-Janāzah* is a part of the Islamic funeral rites. It is a prayer observed in congregation to seek pardon for the deceased and all Muslims dead or alive (Steingass, 1978). *Salat al-Janāzah* is a collective obligation upon Muslims that is *Fardal-Kifāyah*, which is, if some Muslims take the responsibility of doing it, the obligation is fulfilled, but if no one fulfills it, then all Muslim will be accountable (Ibn Rushid, 1975).

The issue of death which leads to the practice of *janāzah* has been properly addressed by both the Glorious Qur'āan and *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him). Some of these are the saying of the Almighty Allah:

Everyone shall taste death. And only on the Day of Resurrection shall be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a deceiving thing) (Qur'āan 3:185).

In another verse Allah says:

Tell those who are running away from death that one day they will be trapped unaware and you will be produced before the Almighty. They will be called upon to answer for their action by Him Who is All-Knowing (Qur'āan 62:8).

By these two verses, the Almighty Allah is confirming to us, absolutely and inevitably that every soul (*nafs*) shall taste death. But each has a fixed time in which death shall come to it. When the time comes nothing will prevent it from returning to its Creator, Allah. Death can occur in sickness or in a state of health. But whenever it comes, Islam has provided comprehensive guidance for the dying person as well as those present at the time of the death, and what is obligatory on them up to the time of burial. On this, it is reported that Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), the beloved wife of the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) said:

Allah's Messenger (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) used to recite (the Supplication) as the words of incantation; "Lord of the people, remove the trouble, for the cure in your Hand,

none is there to relieve him (the burden of disease) but only you (Sahih Muslim, Book 39, Hadith 74).

From the above teachings, once death has occurred the following is required for a proper funeral rite:

The Shahadah

It is required that those present at the time of the death of any member of their family/relatives should encourage the dying person to say the Kalima al-Shahadah until he/she passes away. This is by repeating to him/her the statement: ‘La ilāha illā Allāh’ (there is no god but Allah). This is according to a Hadith reported by Abu Sa’id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) which says the Messenger of Allah says:

Exhort to recite: ‘*There is no god but Allah*’ to those of you dying (Sahih Muslim, Book 11, Hadith 1).

As for those who received the news of the death of their relatives or friend are encouraged to invoke the Name of the Almighty Allah. Thus, Allah says:

Those who when afflicted with calamity say: "To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return" (Qur'aan; 2:156).

After this is observed, those around the dead person should do their best to see that they did not mishandle the corpse. They should close the eyes of the deceased and straighten the limbs to avoid stiffing (Ibn Rushid, 1975). Islam permits the announcement of the death to far and near relatives, friends and the generality of the Muslims in order to let good people among them to attend the funeral prayer and the burial.

Washing of the Corpse

The next step is the preparation of a corpse for bath. Once a Muslim die, male or female, Islam commands that he/she should be washed and prepared for burial without delay. It is reported that Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her), the wife of Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) said:

Once the Messenger of Allah (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) returned from Baqi’ and found me suffering

from headache and I was saying: “Oh my head!” on that he said: “Nay! It is I, Oh Aisha who has more claim to say: O my head”, then the Messenger of Allah (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) further said: “What is harm on you, O Aisha if you died before me, so that I would stand upon you, in order to wash your (dead body), shroud you, offer funeral prayer for you and then bury you (Sunan Abi Dauda, Hadith No. 3162, vol. 3).

It should be noted from the above tradition that once a Muslim dies it is upon his/her close relatives to prepare for his/her burial by first washing his/ her corpse. It is permitted that Muslim men should be washed by men, and women by women. But a husband is permitted to wash his wife and vice versa. But a husband is permitted to wash his wife and vice versa. If the man pass-away and no mem around him to wash the dead person...it is permitted his wife to wash him, but as long as there is a man ready to wash him then no need his wife to wash him. The bath is not obligatory but a recommended act of worship (Al-Jazayri, n.d.). Concerning the number of washing, the corpse is suggested to be washed three times, and camphor should be used at the last washing. The idea behind the command for washing is for hygienic measures to protect one against contagious disease (Bello, 2010).

Shrouding of the Corpse

Shrouding is an important aspect of funeral rites in Islam, where the body of a deceased is to be covered. It should be noted that shrouding is obligatory in Islam. This is based on the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) which says:

While a man was riding (his Mount) in `Arafat, he fell down from it (his Mount) and broke his neck (and died). The Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) said, "Wash him with water and Sidr and shroud him in two pieces of cloth, and neither perfume him, nor cover his head, for he will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection saying, 'Labbaik,' (i.e. like a pilgrim) (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 23, Hadith 26)

It is also important to note that the shroud should be clean, most preferably white, thick and long enough sheets to wrap him/her up. The shroud should be bought from the wealth

left by the deceased and should not be too expensive and lavish. The shroud should be sufficient to cover the whole body (Sabiq, 2011).

The Funeral Prayer

The last but one stage of *janāzah* is the observance of prayer called *Salah al-Janāzah*. The prayer is an obligatory act upon the entire Muslim community (*Fardal-Kifāyah*) (Sabiq, 2011).

There is consensus among Muslim Jurists that funeral prayer is to be offered for all Muslims, male or female, young or old.

Funeral prayer differs from the prescribed regular prayers. It has no fixed time but can be offered at any time. However, in performing *janāzah*, certain conditions must be met and where any of the conditions is not met, the prayer is invalid. The conditions are:

- i. Intention: There must be an intention and it should be said silently. This is according to the tradition of the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allah be with him) which says:

Verily, all deeds (of a person) will be judged in the light of the intentions behind them, and every person will attain what he intends (*Riyadh al-Salihin*, Hadith No. 2).

- ii. Standing in Prayer: The majority of the scholars regard it as an essential condition for a person performing funeral prayer to stand while praying, except where one is physically challenged.
- iii. Four *Takbir*: This is according to a report transmitted by Imam Al-Bukhari and Muslim: “On the Authority of Jabir who said: “Allah’s Messenger, peace upon him, offered a prayer for Najashy (Negus) and said four *Takbirs*”.

- iv. Raising of One's hands during the *Takbirs*: it is *Sunnah* to raise one's hands while saying the *Takbir*. This is only required during the first *Takbir*, while it is only recommended during the remaining three, except when one changes from one posture to another as in regular prayer.

Recitation: it is required that *Surah al-Fatiha* must be recited as reported from authentic *Hadith*. Talha, the son of Abdullahi bn Awf said: "I prayed the funeral prayer behind Ibn Abbas for a dead person and he recited (aloud) the *Fatihah* and said you should know that (what I have done) is the *Sunnah*" (Sabiq, 2011: 526-528).

After the second *Takbir* it is required to recite *Assalatul-Ibrahimiyyah* (Salutations on The Prophet (S) (*Durood-e-Ibrahim*) all *Madhabs* agree upon this. After the third *Takbir*, then make *dua*' (Supplicate) for the deceased. And after the fourth *Takbir*, then make *dua*' (Supplicate) for all dead Muslims. In the case of a dead baby or young child, make *dua*' (Supplicate) for his parents. Then say, "Assalamu alaykum" like you say in other Salats. Tasleem could be said only once.

Burial

The final stage of *janāzah* in Islam is the burial.

Burying Everyone - Muslims are obliged to bury everyone who dies in areas under their jurisdiction.

Muslims Buried Separately - Muslims should not be buried beside non-Muslims, nor non-Muslims beside Muslims; each should have their own separate graveyard.

Burial in the Graveyard - It was the Prophet's *sallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* *Sunnah* to bury the dead in the graveyard of Madinah, known as *al-Baqî*. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.2, p.156, Hadith 280]

Depth of the Grave - The grave should be dug deep and wide, and be well-prepared. (*Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, Vol.2, p.425, Hadith 1560]

Shape of the Grave - The grave may be dug straight down (*shaqq*) with a burial chamber in the middle or with a niche (*lahd*) to create the burial chamber on the side. However, in both cases, a burial chamber is created from the earth, and sealed with bricks of unbaked clay. Both methods were practiced in the time of the Prophet *sallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. However, the Prophet *sallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* favored the *lahd* style. [*Sunan Ibn Majah*, vol.2, p.423, Hadith 1557]

Number of Bodies in a grave - Two or more bodies may be buried in the same grave. This may be due to the large number of dead resulting from a natural calamity or plague, or dead may be from the same family (*Sahih al-Bukhari* Vol. 2, p.239, Hadith 427).

Injunctions Concerning Placing the Body in The Grave:

Men and Not Women - It is preferable that only men should be responsible for placing the dead body inside the grave, even if the dead person is a woman. This is due to the fact that it has been the custom among Muslims from the time of the Prophet *sallallâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* until today. The process requires a certain amount of strength, and men are generally stronger than women.

Near Relatives - The blood relatives of the dead have more right to place the body in the grave, based on the general meaning of the following Qur'ānic verse:

Blood relatives have more right to one another in in the
Glorious Qur'ān (*Surah al-Anfāl* (8):75).

Narrated 'Aisha:

The Prophet used to love to start doing things from the right side whenever possible, in performing ablution, putting on his shoes, and combing his hair. (Al-Ash'ath said: The Prophet used to do so in all his affairs (*Sahih al-Bukhari* Vol. 7, Book 65, Number 292).

With this hadith in mind: Place the dead body in the grave on its right side with the face of the dead person towards the *qiblah* (Makkah).

Du'â - While the body is being lowered into the grave it is recommended that the worshippers recite: “With the Name Allah, and according to the Millah (belief and

religion) of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah praise and venerate him and grant him perfect peace. Allah, surely our companion has come to You, leaving the world behind his/her back and he/she is very poor for what You have. O Allah, give him/her confidence when he/she will be asked, and don't try him/her in his/her tomb, which is above his/her ability, and join him/her with our Holy Prophet, the praises, and veneration and peace be upon him." This is to be repeated until the tomb is closed. The open grave is then filled in, another *du'ā* can be offered for the deceased, and the people depart. Throwing Dirt on the Grave - It is recommended for those near the grave to throw three double-handfuls of dirt into the grave after the burial chamber has been sealed. To help bring closure.

DISCUSSION

***Janāzah* among Muslims in Katsina State, Nigeria**

Katsina is a predominantly Muslim society and its people are diverse in their knowledge and practice of Islam. There are those who are educated or have good Islamic knowledge and tried to implement Islamic teachings in all their dealings including taking care of the sick at the time of dying. On the other hand, there are those who are less knowledgeable about the religion and their practice of religion is a mixed bag of traditional syncretism and innovations, even in their performance of the funeral rites. Such people used to treat their sick persons in ignorant ways or based on the tradition of the people or the environment in which they live devoid of any Islamic guidance.

Katsina's Treat the Dying Person

Thus, despite the comprehensive teachings of Islam concerning *janāzah*, it is not difficult for one to observe that in some parts of Katsina, people use different ways of conducting the funeral rites. Some are in tandem with Islamic teachings, while some deviate from the actual teachings of Islam. For instance, some relations of the sick, upon realizing that the sick is making unusual behaviour while dying, they hold tightly onto the dying the person in order to quieten or calm them, while some will decide to keep away from the sick at that moment in the belief that the Angel of death shies away from taking the life of children in the presence of their parents (Ade Mamman, 2019). After sometimes, they

will return to confirm whether the sick breathed their last. In doing that, some used cowries (*wuri*) by shaking it near the ears of the sick, to see whether they will respond by rising up their head. If the sick moves their head, it indicates that the sick is still alive, but if they did not respond, then they will be presumed dead. There are those who used coins instead of *wuri* because of the belief attached to the love of money by human beings. At other times, they relied on the mucus coming out of the nose or inaudible speech for confirmation (Malam Tukur, 2019). Others used either a stick (*tsinke*), by putting it into the nose of the dying or hair of the toe, or blowing the nose, or scratching the sole of the feet to confirm if the sick were actually dead, or sometimes await a doctor's confirmation. And once the sick is confirmed dead it will be announced to the relatives, friends and neighbours. Soon after the corpse will be prepared for funeral prayer and burial (Malam Lawal, 2019).

Katsina's Mourning the Dead Person

At that moment, some will resort to respond in a manner Islam teaches by doing the *Istirja'* and mentioning the testimony. Others will respond negatively by wailing, crying loudly and beating parts of their bodies. Some will continue eulogizing the good qualities of the dead such that the listener would comprehend the lost person through such incantation like *Sun ra bangon guga*, and *sun bani sun lalace* which signifies that they are now finished. Some even tear their clothes, beat their faces, roll on the ground and pluck at their plaited hair (*Kitso*). All these practices are aimed at heightening the pains and sorrow accompanying the death, and this Islam strictly forbids.

Katsina's Application for Funeral Prayer

As for the funeral, some used to stick to Islamic teachings by quickly preparing the dead and taking him/ her to the grave. Others used to delay the process, by keeping the corpse in the mortuary for some time/days so as to allow people to gather for a grand burial (Malam Lawal, 2019). Some from that moment abstain from eating until the dead is buried to indicate signs of grief and mourning and anyone who eats before burial is considered mindless and not mourning the dead. Once the corpse is taken to the grave, women would gather to pound millet and prepare porridge (*gumba ta biyan gawa*) which would be served to the people who conveyed the body to its grave as well as those who

come for condolence. The millet-cake (*Gumba*) is meant to cool down the heart of the bereaved and to provide solace for those close to the deceased (Ayayi, 2019). Another thing that is rampant and is related to funeral rites in Katsina is the mounting of canopies in and outside the house of the deceased. These canopies are often rented, and they are usually mounted whether there is the need for them or not.

In respect to funeral prayer and burial, it is not difficult to observe certain innovations that are being practised by some people of Katsina and particularly in Local Government Areas of Charanci, Dutsi and Batagarawa.

Katsina's Innovations on Funeral Prayer

One of such innovations is the insistence that the person to lead funeral prayer must be older than the dead person, and in case where the eldest person of a village died, the most elderly person must be sought from nearby villages (Malam Chindo, 2019). This innovation is based on the assumption that elderly persons are the most knowledgeable in the society. In the aspect of the burial, it is also learnt that certain practices of some people of Katsina deviated from the core teachings of Islam, among which is the practice of placing a corpse in the western end of the outside of the grave before putting the corpse inside, They do this in the belief that the corpse is tired and therefore needs to rest before it is finally put to rest (Malam Nura, 2019).

Similarly, one of the innovations that some people of Katsina used to observe as part of their funeral rites is keeping away from doing anything once a corpse is taken for burial until a bier or coffin is sent back from the grave to indicate the completion of the burial. According to Malam Zubairu, soon after other activities would then continue including the condolence greetings (Malam Zubairu, 2019). Some people also believed that the bier or coffin is medicinal and as such they used to sniff it to supposedly cure dizziness, forgetfulness (*makuwa*), obtain blessings (*tabarruki*), particularly if the deceased is a prominent scholar or an *Imam* or a noble from a royal family. Moreover, some used to, at the moment of the burial, bury the corpse with the stick or the thread with which the measurement of the corpse was taken so that nobody picks them, for they are believed to be used for magic to kill members of the family of the deceased. Some members of the

deceased family used to incarnate at the moment of the burial in order to prevent the deceased from transforming into a ghost. In some villages certain seeds (*Gurguzu*) and hundred needles are planted in the grave to stop the deceased from re-incarnating as a ghost (Malam Hassan Galadanci, 2019).

From the above practices of some Muslims in Katsina, one can see that there are lots of innovations that the people of the area introduced into the funeral rite which are not in conformity with the teachings of Islam, and their effects are pervasive in various aspects of the life of the Muslims in the area. To clearly understand the extent of the effects of the innovations in funeral practices in Katsina, the next pages address those effects.

Effects of the Innovations attached to *Janāzah* (Funeral Prayer) by the Muslims in Katsina

Generally, the teachings of Islam on every aspect of life are blessings to the entire humanity on earth and way of salvation in the hereafter. Straying away from those teachings is an act of disobedience and innovation in the view of the religion. Such disobedience or innovations cannot continue without consequences on the life of those practising them. The consequences are the negative effects affecting the life of the Muslims. Therefore, the effects of the innovations in funeral rites by the Muslims in Katsina include the following:

Religious Effect towards Muslim Katsina

It is a clear teaching that the dead are tortured in their graves for the wailing of their living ones. Therefore, the way and manner some Muslims in Katsina were heedless of this guidance and continued to wail and cry loudly and sometimes mourn by slapping their cheeks or pulling on their hairs was as if they have given permission for the torturing of their deceased and a sign of being sinners on earth (Malam Hassan Galadanci, 2019).

Similarly, the practice of tearing one's clothes is against the teachings of Islam, and whoever persists in doing that despite clear warning against that in the religion, is not part of the *Ummah* (community) of Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of

Allah be with him) as mentioned in an authentic *Hadith*. Therefore, if people persist in not taking heed of Islamic guidance and continue to recklessly respond negatively by their actions towards showing their grief on the death of their relatives may greatly affect the quality of their *Iman*, because their actions run contrary to the teachings of Islam (Malam Lawal, 52).

Furthermore, the Islamic wisdom behind the processes of funeral prayer down to the burial is meant to instill in the minds of the Muslims Allah's consciousness and encouragement to do good deeds in what remains of their days on earth. But, looking at the innovations brought into every process of the funeral rites in Katsina, one may say that such wisdom is being perverted and thus adds less or no value to the actions of such people and their consciousness of the Day of Resurrection.

Social Effect towards Muslim Katsina

Death is certain and as such is meant to strengthen our unity and cement our relationships. But the innovations introduced into funeral rites are in one way or the other becoming factors of disunity and unhealthy relationships, thus weakening our cohesiveness as one family, one *Ummah*. For those who persevere to keep to *Sunnah*, their non-indulgence in such innovative practices in the course of mourning their dead may be perceived by other relatives as lukewarm or uncaring.

The manner some people of Katsina decorate places for receiving condolences and mourning through mounting canopies exclusively for the wealthy and well-to-do people of the society, devoid of consideration for others coming for the same purpose, is socially affecting the cohesiveness of the people of the area as one *Ummah* with one goal and aim, that is benefitting from one sign of Allah's existence (that is death). By this, some people of Katsina are losing one important avenue to use as means of uniting and strengthening the bond of their relationship. Instead, it becomes a means of showing off social and political status, and thus widen the gap that exists among the social strata of the society (Malam Tukur, 54).

Economic Effect towards Muslim Katsina

Taking into cognizance the simple way Islam commands Muslims to conduct themselves in observance of funeral rites and the way some people of Katsina are observing theirs, one must admit that there are economic effects on the practice of *janāzah* among the Muslims in Katsina State. This is of various dimensions. In the aspect of the deceased, his/her relatives may tend to over spend the wealth left in order to show his/her social status, knowing fully that once one dies all that he/she earned ceased to be important to him/her. The spending then becomes extravagant and meaningless. On the part of the heirs, they would be shortchanged if compared to what a heir could get if such spending did not occur (Ade Sa'adatu, 49).

Similarly, the innovations attached to funeral rites by some people of Katsina, and which has economic effects is the feasts allowed by the people to hold during the period of condolence. This seems to be a festivity instead of a mourning, and that gulps a huge amount of wealth whether from the estate of the deceased or that of the heirs. Also, the amount spent during the mourning period and the celebration organized by the family to mark the end of the period of *Iddah* (waiting period), where varieties of dishes and souvenirs are distributed, has equal economic effects on the deceased and his/her relatives. On the former, that may make the relatives refuse to take into consideration the *Shari'ah* legal requirements on the estate of a deceased and most importantly refuse even to pay off his/her debt and executing his/her wills (*Wasiyyah*), if he/she has any. That is why today, it is very difficult in most Muslim communities in Katsina to hear an instance where relations of a dead person seek and pay for the debt of their deceased or fulfill his/her will (Malama Ayiyya, 45).

CONCLUSION

Islam as a divine religion is meant to be practised as a whole and in all aspects of life without exception. Funeral rites are important aspects of life that require religious guidance for Muslims to benefit from the lessons embodied therein. Despite the clear teachings of Islam on that, it is observed that some Muslims in Katsina State do observe the funeral rite along the line of innovations they invented. The innovations are in all steps of the process of the *janāzah*, and vary from one community to another within the

area under study. Thus, such innovations, by their essence, are not in harmony with the teachings of Islam. The long history of holding onto these innovations is what prompted this paper to critically study the concept of *janāzah* in Islam and highlight the effects associated with such innovations. It is hoped that the study will help in reviving the proper way of Islamic funeral rites that will eradicate the innovative practices among the Muslims in the study area and beyond.

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