

Discourse on Blasphemy In Ibn Abdulwahhāb's *Kitabut-Tawhid*, Vis-À-Vis Non-Muslims' Attack on Islam In Yorubaland

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Abstrak

Blasphemy has become a common practice among non-Muslims in Nigeria, most especially among the people in the northern part of the country. Muslims in the north are commonly reacting to this act. Their actions include the killing of the perpetrators. The thrust of this work is to discuss the relevance of the discourse on the blasphemy of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn AbdilWahhab in his book of *Tawhīd*. The methods employed are analytical and historical. The analytical method helped in analyzing the issue as rampant in the country, most especially in the north and how is tremendously uncommon in Yorubaland. The historical method also assisted in tracing the histories of blasphemous cases in Nigeria. The major findings in the work include the concept of blasphemy in Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism, among others. So also, the cases of blasphemy in Nigeria: Yorubaland in focus, however, includes the current issue i.e. the case of Abdul-Azeez Adegbola and *TaloLohun* (who is God). More so, the work encapsulates the punishment of blasphemy in Islam. However, the statements of scholars of Islam are mentioned. The work was concluded and certain recommendations were mentioned, to curb the menace of blasphemy in Nigeria and also a way of advising the Muslims in doing away with jungle justice but rather referring the cases to the appropriate authorities.

Keywords: *Islam, Blasphemy in Islam, Abdulwahhāb's Kitabut-Tawhid*

A. Pendahuluan

Blasphemy is an act of insulting or showing contempt for God, often claiming the attributes of a deity. Originating from the Greek word "blasphēmia," it is generally defined as speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things, synonymous with irreverence and disrespect towards God or Christ. The term has been translated from Latin to Old French to Middle English. Blasphemy, in a religious sense, refers to great disrespect shown to God or something holy, or to something said or done that shows this kind of disrespect; heresy refers to a belief or opinion that does not agree with the official belief or opinion of a particular religion. Both words are also sometimes used in general, not necessarily religious contexts. Although in certain senses of the word, it may be more common to use blasphemy about speech, it may also be applied to writing. The word has broadened in meaning beyond "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God"; it is now also used with the meaning "irreverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable. The synonyms for the word blasphemy include the following: defilement, desecration, impiety, irreverence, profanation, sacrilege¹

Blasphemy, as defined in some religions or religion-based laws, is an insult that shows contempt, disrespect or lack of reverence concerning a deity, an object considered sacred or something considered inviolable. Some religions regard blasphemy as a religious crime, especially the religion of Islam including insulting the prophet Muhammad. In the early history of the Church, blasphemy "was considered to show active disrespect to God and to involve the use of profane cursing or mockery of his powers. In the medieval world, those who committed blasphemy were seen as needing discipline. By the 17th century, several historically Christian countries had legislation against blasphemy. Blasphemy laws were abolished in England and Wales in 2008, and in Ireland in 2020. Scotland repealed its blasphemy laws in 2021. Many other countries have abolished blasphemy laws including Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland, Norway and New Zealand. As of 2019, 40 percent of the world's countries still had blasphemy laws on the books, including 18 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, or 90% of countries in that region. Dharmic religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, have no concept of blasphemy and hence prescribe no punishment.²

Christian theology condemns blasphemy "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain", one of the Ten Commandments, forbids blasphemy, which Christians regard as "an affront to God's holiness". Leviticus 24:16 states that "anyone who blasphemes the name of Yahweh will be put to death". In Mark 3:29, blaspheming the Holy Spirit is spoken of as an unforgivable and eternal sin. Blasphemy has been condemned as a serious sin by the major creeds and Church theologians, along with apostasy and infidelity [unbelief]. The Book of Concord calls blasphemy "the greatest sin that can be outwardly committed."³

B. Research Methods

This paper explores the relevance of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn AbdilWahhab's discourse on blasphemy in Kitabut-Tawhid, a seminal work in Islamic theology. The analytical method was used to examine the patterns, root causes, and impact of blasphemous acts in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region. The study also employed a historical method to contextualize the discourse within the broader framework of Islamic teachings and jurisprudence. The analytical method provided valuable insights into the dynamics of blasphemy in the Nigerian context, while the historical method traced historical precedents and theological underpinnings of Ibn AbdilWahhab's discourse. The study highlights the importance of upholding the purity of faith and protecting it from desecration in the context of non-Muslim attacks on Islam in Yorubaland

C. Results and Discussion

Life and works of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdil-Wahhāb

He was Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdil Wahhāb Ibn Sulayman Ibn Aliyy Ibn Musharraf: Āli Mi‘dād Al-Wuhaybī (The family of Mi‘dād, the Wuhayb group). It is however established that the Wuhaybis are from Hanzhalah Ibn Mālik At-Tamīmī.⁴ He was born during the reign of ‘Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Ibn Mu‘ammar under whom his father was a judge. The Shaykh was born in the year 1111AH/1703CE. While other researchers maintain that he was born in the year 1115AH 1707CE.⁵ He was born in the village known as ‘*Uyaynah* a city in Najd. He grew up among the scholars of *Hanābilah* even though the environment was bad then by immorality and superstitions. He was reported to have started his education at an early age primarily under his father, as it was revealed that he had memorized the Glorious Qur’an at the age of ten. He was grounded in the knowledge of Islāmic Jurisprudence according to the *Hanābilah* School of Law. He was very studious and religious to the extent of excelling over his contemporaries. His father found him capable of leading the congregational prayers before the age of twelve and decided to get him married at an early age.⁶

His quest for knowledge made him travel far away from his home town, Najd to Hijaz, *Basrah* and *Al-Ahsa’*.⁷ He was reported to have gone to Makkah and Madinah to perform Ḥajj after which he stayed there to learn from different scholars. Moreover, he directed his attention toward *Fiqh* of *Hanābilah*, *Tafsīr*, *Ahādīth*, *‘Aqīdah* and particularly to the writings of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibnul-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. He was influenced by the books of these two scholars. It was from them he took the significance of taking religious law directly from the text of the Qur’an and Sunnah and also tried to formulate law based on reasoning first, without these two sources is risky and dangerous. However, in the absence of direct evidence from the Qur’an and *Sunnah*, the law can be based on *Qiyās* (Analogical Deduction).⁸

The Shaykh returned home to meet his people in the year 1740 CE. By then, he analyzed the conditions of his town and the people that they were full of superstitious and erroneous beliefs. He also discovered backwardness in the moral standard of the people which was equivalent or similar to the pre-Islāmic era (neo-*Jāhiliyyah*). Based on this analysis, he decided to reform his society and its people by calling them to Islāmic monotheism free of superstition and immorality according to the first generation of Islām. It is pertinent to mention the disposition of the Shaykh. By disposition, the researcher intends the character and behavioural activities of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdilwahhāb. He was known as an intelligent and diligent person. This helped him acquire more knowledge even right from a tender age. It is also recorded by the researchers and scholars that he was religious and of a high standard of behavioural activities which include honesty, truthfulness, mercifulness compassion, generosity, forbearance, patience, foresightedness and purposefulness, among others.

However, these qualities are contrary to what was upheld by the enemies of Shaykh Muhammad and how they portrayed him publicly among the people.⁹ A huge number of students studied under him, who later became scholars and propagators. Some of them include the following:

1. Imam Mujāhid: Abdul ‘Azeez Ibn Muhammad Ibn Su‘ūd (1218AH).
2. Al-Ameer: Su‘ūd Ibn AbdilAzeez Ibn Muhammad (1229AH).
3. His children: Shaykh Husayn (1224AH), Shaykh ‘Aliy (1245AH), Shaykh ‘Abdullah (1243AH) and Shaykh Ibrahim.
4. His grandson: Shaykh ‘Abdur-Rahman Ibn Hasan the author of *Fat’hul-Majīd*.
5. Shaykh Hamd Ibn Nasir Ibn Mu‘ammar (1225AH).
6. Shaykh AbdulAzeez Ibn ‘Abdillah Al-Ḥuṣayyin (1237AH).
7. Shaykh Husayn Ibn Ghannām (1225AH).
8. Shaykh AbdulAzeez Ibn Abdillah Al-Husayn.
9. Shaykh Sa‘īd Ibn Hijjī
10. Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Rashid Al-Uraini. Among others.¹⁰

The most notable among them was Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Abdillatif Ibn Abdur-Rahman Ibn Hasan, who was the grand *Mufti* of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the Shaykh’s *Da‘wah* was built on Islāmic teachings, as the Shaykh believed strongly in preaching pristine Islām, by making the Qur’an and Sunnah as the guide and manual, based on the understanding of the righteous and pious predecessors (*As-Salaf As-Ṣālih*). Shaykh Nāsir Al-‘Aql said regarding the methodology employed by Shaykh Muhammad in carrying out his *Da‘wah* activities:

لقد كان منهج الإمام في نفسه ودعوته وفي أتباعه ومع مخالفيه منهجا سلفيا شرعيا نقيًا خاليا من الشوائب، يتسم بالأصالة والثبات واليقين والوضوح والشمولية والواقعية والأهلية لإقامة مجتمع مسلم يتسم بالتدين والطهر والأصالة والحيوية والرقى والأمن.

Verily, the methodology of the Imām (Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Abdil-Wahhāb) in his *Da‘wah* was that of righteous and pious predecessors (*As-Salaf As-Ṣālih*), not only him but also his followers. The methodology was pure and safe from any ambiguity. He employed this methodology to build a Muslim Society symbolized by religion, purity, good foundation, promotion and tranquillity.

He also said:

"لقد اعتمد الإمام في دعوته منهج السلف الصالح في كل شيء، وبذلك تميّز منهجه بالأصالة والشمول والواقعية والثبات واليقين. وكان من ثمرة اعتماد هذا المنهج، أن قامت شعائر الدين وأصوله على أتم وجه وأكمله من التوحيد والصلاة والجهاد والأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر والحدود والقضاء والعدل والأمن وظهور الفضائل واختفاء الرذائل، وشيوع الدين والعلم في كل بلاد وصلتها الدعوة واستقرت فيها دولتها (الدولة السعودية)

The Imam employed the methodology of *Salaf* not only in his *Da‘wah* activities but also in all aspects of his life. Based on this, the methodology was distinguished as being original, encyclopedias, firming and certain. However, among the fruits of using this methodology were the standing of symbols of religion and its roots completely, based on *Tawhid*, *Salat* (prayer), *Jihad*, encouraging virtues, discouraging vices, *Hudud*, *Qadā’u* (Judgement), Justice...¹¹

More so, Shaykh Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdil Wahhāb authored a lot of books, attesting to his expertise in the fields of *Tawhīd*, *Tafsīr*, *Hadīth* and *Fiqh*. Among the books authored by him were the following:

1. *Kitāb at-Tawhīd*.
2. *’Usūl al-Īmān*
3. *Muḥīd al-Mustaḥīd fī Kufr Tārik at-Tawhīd* or commentary on Hadīth related by ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abasah.
4. *Kashf ash-Shub’hāt*.
5. *Thalāthat al-Usūl*
6. *Mukhtasar as-Sīrah*.
7. *Mukhtaṣar Fat’h al-Bāriy* (Manuscript).
8. *Mukhtasar Zādil Ma’ād*
9. *Masāil al-Jāhiliyyah*.
10. *Faḍa’il as-Ṣalāh*
11. *Kitāb al-Iṣṭinbāt*
12. *Ādāb al-Mashy’ Ilās-Ṣalāh*
13. *Majmū’at al-Hadīth*
14. *Al-Qawā’id al-Arba’ah*
15. *Faḍa’il-al-Islām*
16. *Faḍa’il al-Qur’ān*
17. *Kitāb al-Kabāir*
18. *Mukhtasar al-Inṣāf washarh al-kabīr*.¹²

On a final note, he died in the year 1201AH / 1787CE according to a narration while other scholars maintained that he died in the year 1206AH at the age of 91 and was buried at *Dir’iyah* graveyard.¹³

Kitabut-Tawhid of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdil-Wahhāb

Kitab at-Tawhid authored by Shaykh Muhammad Ibn ‘Abdiwahhab is a concise book which comprises and encapsulates vital information concerning the oneness of Allah which is the right of Allah to His servants. The book is made up of sixty-six chapters. The first chapter is entitled the significance of *Tawhid*, while the last chapter is about the explanation of the verse:

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَالسَّمُوتُ مَطْوِيَّتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“They made not a just estimate of Allah such as is due to Him. And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth will be grasped by His Hand and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand. Glorified is He, and High is He above all that they associate as partners with Him!”

It is pertinent to mention that the book discusses various branches of *Tawhid*, like love of Allah, fear of Allah alone, putting trust in Allah, forbearance with what has been decreed, etc. The book also discusses different ways in which people commit *Shirk*, be it major or minor.

Discourse on blasphemy as contained in Kitabut-Tawhid

The chapter is very important, most especially because it talks about a current affair among Muslims in the Northern part of the country. However, Muslims in Yorubaland cannot be ruled out as it affects them also. However,

making a mockery of anything about Islam or anything brought by the prophet is a great sin, which can drive one out of the fold of Islam. The author in his book mentioned a verse and a *Hadīth*, buttressing this point. The verse is in *Suratut-Tawbah* and reads thus

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ۚ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ نَعْفَ عَنْ طَائِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ يُعَذِّبُ طَائِفَةٌ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ

If Thou dost question them, they declare (with emphasis): "We were only talking idly and In play." say: "Was it at Allah, and His Signs, and His Messenger, that ye were mocking?". Make ye no excuses: ye have rejected Faith after ye had accepted it. If we pardon some of you, we will punish others amongst you, for that they are in sin.

Hadīth narrated by Ibn ‘Umar was mentioned in a way to explain the content of these verses:

Ibn ‘Umar, Muhammad Ibn Ka’b, Zaid Ibn Aslam and Qatadah (may Alla be pleased with them) narrated the following *Hadīth*: In the course of the campaign of the battle of *Tabuk*, a man came up one day and declared: “We have seen no people with greater appetite, more lying, more cowardly in battle than those people, he meant Allah’s messenger (may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) and the reciters (of Qur’an) among his companions. ‘Awf Ibn Malik rose and said, “In fact, you are a liar and a hypocrite. I will inform Allah’s Messenger (May the peace and blessing be upon him) about your words. “so he went to Allah’s messenger but by then he was already informed through a revelation. Meanwhile, the hypocrite also approached Allah’s Messenger when he started his journey and was already on his camel. He pleaded: “O Messenger of Allah! We were only joking and trying to pass the time while travelling. Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “As if I see him that he was clinging to the saddle belt of the Messenger of Allah’s Camel as it ran and his legs were being battered by the rough ground and even then he continued pleading (i.e we were only joking). “Allah’s messenger said, “Was it that Allah and His Ayāt (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) and His messenger that you were mocking? Make no excuse, you have disbelieved after you had believed”.¹⁴ (Q9:65-66) Neither he looked forward him nor spoke anything further.

Cases of blasphemy in Nigeria

It is indispensable to mention that, the cases of blasphemy are common in the Northern part of the country, as it is tremendously uncommon in the Southern part of Nigeria. By the cases, we mean a way in which blasphemy resulted in murdering or injuring the perpetrators of the evil act. It is against this background that the researcher mentioned in the subsequent paragraphs the cases of blasphemy in the country, which include the following:

On 14 July 1999, in the village of *Randali* in Kebbi State, a Muslim mob beheaded Abdullahi Umaru for alleged blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad. On 20 November 2002, Muslim and Christian mobs rampaged in the cities of Kaduna and Abuja. The rampage began after an article in a daily

newspaper, Thisday, suggested that prophet Muhammad would have approved of a Miss World pageant that was taking place in Abuja. Today columnist Isioma Daniel wrote that the prophet Muhammad would probably have taken a wife from among the contestants. Muslim mobs accused the newspaper of blasphemy and burned down its office building in Kaduna. Then the mobs attacked churches and properties owned by Christians. Christian mobs confronted the Muslim mobs. Soldiers and police intervened. About two hundred and fifty people died. Daniel fled Nigeria ahead of a *Fatwa* that called upon Muslims to kill her.

In February 2006 in Bauchi State, Florence Chuckwu, a Christian teacher, confiscated a copy of a Quran from a pupil who was reading it during an English lesson. The incident provoked rioting by Muslims. The riot killed more than twenty Christians and destroyed two churches. In February 2006, thousands of Muslim rioters went on rampages in different states. The rioters burned churches, torched Christian shops and homes, and killed Christians. On 21 March 2007, a mob of Muslim students and neighbourhood extremists beat to death Christianah Oluwatoyin Oluwasesin, a mother of two and a teacher at the Government Secondary School of Gandu in the city of Gombe. A student complained that Oluwasesin, a Christian, had touched a bag which allegedly contained a Quran, and had thereby defiled the Quran.

On 28 September 2007, a Muslim mob rioted at *Tudun Wada* in Kano State. The mob killed nine Christians, burned several churches, and destroyed the homes and businesses of some non-Muslims. The Muslims complained that Christian students had drawn a picture of the prophet Muhammad. The Christians reported that the violence erupted after they had prevented one of their members from converting to Islam. In October 2007, a *Shari'ah* court convicted Sani Kabili, a Christian and a father of six in the town of Kano, of blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad. The court sentenced Kabili to three years in prison. In February 2009, an appeal court overturned the conviction. On 4 February 2008, a Muslim mob besieged a police station and set it on fire in the city of *Yano* in Bauchi State. The police station was the refuge of a Christian woman whom the mob accused of desecrating the Quran. One report said that the woman had spurned an offer of marriage from a Muslim man and that he and his companions had seized the opportunity to riot. In the ensuing violence, five churches were set alight by Muslims, Christian shops were torched, and policemen's homes were attacked. The police arrested 1000 children.

On 9 February 2008, a Muslim mob rioted in the town of *Sumaila* in Kano State. The mob acted upon the alleged distribution of a leaflet that allegedly slandered prophet Muhammad. The mob killed a Christian police inspector and two civilians and wounded twenty others. The mob set fire to vehicles and destroyed the police station. On 20 April 2008, Muslim rioters in the city of Kano burned the shops and vehicles of Christian merchants after one allegedly disparaged the prophet Muhammad. On 9 August 2008, a Muslim mob in Kano State beat to death a fifty-year-old Muslim man who allegedly blasphemed the prophet Muhammad.

On 19 June 2009, a Muslim mob in the town of Sara in Jigawa State burned a police outpost and injured about twelve people over alleged

blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad. The mob complained that someone was distributing blasphemous pamphlets, and it demanded that the police give up a madman who had sought safety at the police outpost. On 10 August 2020, a Kano State Shari'ah court sentenced two people for the offence of blasphemy against the prophet. Yahaya Sharif (22 years old) was sentenced to death by hanging. He was accused of having blasphemed in his song which he circulated on WhatsApp in March 2020. Following this incident, his family home was burnt down.

Omar Farouq (13 years old) was sentenced to 10 years in prison for blasphemy. His lawyer appealed on 7 September, saying that his sentence violated the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of a Child and the Nigerian constitution. In April 2022, a Nigerian atheist in Kano received a 24-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to blasphemy charges. On 12 May 2022, Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a second-year college student, was killed by a mob in Sokoto after being accused of blasphemy. On 25 June 2023, Usman Buda of Sokoto was stoned to death by a mob, accusing Buda of blasphemy.¹⁵ On a final note, the cases of murdering or injuring the blasphemers are tremendously uncommon in Yorubaland, contrary to its occurrence in Hausaland. However, it is germane to bring to the limelight the historical background of Yorubaland, the sub-topic with the heading Yorubaland before and at the advent of Islam.

Origin and Background of Yoruba People

The Yoruba people and descendants are black people who occupy the South-western area of Nigeria in Africa. The origin and existence of the Yoruba race can be traced to their ancient father- Oduduwa who was reported to have migrated from the ancient city of *Makkah in Saudi Arabia*. Oduduwa's father: Lamurudu and most of their Arabian relatives were Muslims but Oduduwa was an idol worshipper, they revolted against him and he fled from *Makkah* to *Ile-Ife*, an old township of western Nigeria. The Yoruba race began to grow through the expansion of Oduduwa's sons and daughters and they formed people and languages.¹⁶ It is difficult to trace the origin of the Yoruba people. There are several theories some of which are based on legends. Samuel Johnson believed that the origin of Yoruba lay in obscurity but suggested that the Yoruba sprang from Lamurudu, one of the kings of *Makkah*. Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yoruba, as Johnson conjectures, was one of the three offspring of the king of *Makkah*. The other two sons were the kings of Gogobir and of the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country. The most surprising narration of his legendary theory comes when he says that Lamurudu's period of reign appears to have been a considerable time after Prophet Muhammad.¹⁷

Johnson was not alone in suggesting the eastern origin of the Yoruba. Sultan Muhammad Bello (1779 – 1837), the son of Shehu 'Uthman Dan Fodio (d.1817) wrote in his famous book *Infāq al-Maysūr* that the Yoruba have descended from the *Bani Kan'an* and the kindred of *Nimrud*. He suggests that Ya'rub ibn Qahtan drove them out of *Iraq* westwards. They travelled from there to Egypt (*Misr*) and Ethiopia (*Habashah*) until they reached Yorubaland.¹⁸ Dr. Lucas has examined the similarity of language, religions, beliefs and customs of the Yoruba with the Ancient Egyptians and suggests

that the Yoruba originated from Egypt. He thinks that the name 'Yoruba' is derived from 'rpa' or 'rba', a king of Northern Africa who later became a feudal prince in Egypt. The Yoruba migrated from Northern Egypt to Southern Egypt and then to Sudan until they reached their present home in Yorubaland.¹⁹

It is believed by some scholars that the term 'Yoruba' for all people who know themselves by that name was first brought into common use by the church missionary society. Jonson in his classic work History of the Yoruba which was completed before 1900 equated the word 'Yoruba' with 'Oyo' which was the largest of the Yoruba sub-groups ruled by the *Alafin* of Oyo.²⁰ Sultan Bello in his account of the Yoruba calls them *Ya'raba*. Since they were driven by Ya'rub Ibn Qahtan out of Iraq, perhaps they reached *Ya'raba* where they fixed their residence. Whatever may be the merit of this theory, some modern Nigerian Arabic Scholars like Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori maintained that the word Yoruba comes from *Ya'raba*.²¹ The earliest reference to the Yoruba and Yorubaland is also found in the work of Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu (d. 1627) entitled *Kashf at Bayan li Asnaf Majlub as-Sudan* which puts Yorubaland among the area where unbelief predominates and Islam is rarely found. Shaykh 'Uthman Ibn Fūdī made use of this book and quoted Ahmad Baba in the book to show the authority of a learned scholar who suggested that the people of Sudan were unbelievers and against whom Jihad should be launched. Thus, the word *Ya'raba* was certainly used for a very long time in history and the Yoruba people were also known by the scholars of the western Sudan, particularly in the scholarly circles of Timbuktu.

Yoruba before and at the advent of Islam

It is difficult to suggest the exact date when Islam was first introduced in Yorubaland. It seems that Islam, in whatever syncretic form or however scanty in its following, did exist in Yorubaland when Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu was writing his work *Kashful- Bayan Li Asnaf Majlūb as-Sūdān*. Since Ahmad Baba died in 1610CE. Islam was already introduced to Yorubaland in the early 17th century. Ahmad Baba mentioned Yorubaland as an area where "unbelief predominates and Islam is rarely found". This would seem to imply says Al-Misri, "that some Muslims had by this time penetrated Yoruba country, perhaps from Hausa country in the north".²² Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori suggests an even earlier date for the introduction of Islam to Yorubaland. He thinks that it was during the period of Alhaji Mansa Musa (d. 1337) that Islam spread to most parts of Nigeria including Yorubaland. Muslims in Yoruba called *Imale* which Al-Ilori thinks is a reference to the religion of *Mali* (or from Mali), "Since they came to know about Islam from its first day from the traders and ambassadors of Mali present in Yoruba especially Mali in Old Oyo, the capital" there were likely Muslim traders from Mali in Old Oyo and thus Islam was introduced in Yorubaland. Emperor Mansa Musa *Kankan* of Mali was an illustrious son of West Africa who put Mali on the map of the world.

Abdul-Azeez Adegbola (Talo Lohun) a blasphemer

Abdul-Azeez Adegbola was a converted Muslim, who left Islam to African Traditional Religion, popularly known as Isese. He was from Oyo State, Ibadan city precisely. His parents are Muslims. His mother whose name is Nafisat Adegbola is a devoted and practicing *Muslimah*. She was a

knowledgeable woman, who was reported to have taught her husband Islamic knowledge, this is based on an interview conducted with her in the Ilorin Magistrate court. Based on a video shared by Abdul-Azeez on his Facebook page, he tore both the Qur'an and the Bible and burnt them into ashes, claiming that, if the Qur'an were to be a divine word it would have not been turned into ashes, as claimed by many Muslims. However, the evil act done by this *Isese Man* generated hullabaloo and Muslims reacted to the act.²³

In addition, based on News being reported by Punch Nigeria and many others, *Talolorun* (who is God) was not only accused of burning the divine book of God but also charged to the court because of defamation of notable and distinguished character in the city of Ilorin, including *Mai Martaba Sarkin Ilori*, the distinguished Emir of Ilorin.²⁴

The Punishment of Blasphemy in *Sharī'ah*

The following are the statements of the Islamic scholars regarding the punishment of the blasphemers whether Muslim or non-Muslim, based on the evidence given both in the primary and secondary sources of *Sharī'ah*

قال الإمام أحمد: "كل من شتم النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم وتنقصه مسلماً كان أو كافراً فعليه القتل وأرى أن يقتل ولا يستتاب".

Imam Ahmad said anyone who abuses and downgrades the Prophet, whether a Muslim or non-Muslim is compulsory to be executed. I view that he should be killed and he shouldn't be given the chance of making repentance..." Abdullah Ibn Umar said: I asked my father about the one who abuses the prophet, should he be given the chance of making repentance, he ('Umar) said: he should be executed compulsorily; because Khālīd Ibn al- Walīd wasn't given the accuser of the prophet the chance of making repentance".²⁵

قال ابن المنذر أجمع عوام أهل العلم على أن حد من سب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم القتل ومن قاله مالك والليث وأحمد وإسحاق وهو مذهب الشافعي...

In his own words, Imam Ibn al-Mundhir said: the totality of scholars agreed that, anyone who abuses the prophet should be executed. Among those who said this were Mālik, Layth, Ahmad, Is'hāq, and this is the *Madhhab* of Ash-Shāfi'iyy..."²⁶

وقال الإمام إسحاق بن راهويه أحد الأئمة الأعلام أجمع العلماء على أن من سب الله أو سب رسوله صلى الله عليه وسلم أو دفع شيئاً مما أنزل الله عز وجل أو قتل نبياً من أنبياء الله عز وجل أنه كافر بذلك وإن كان مقراً بكل ما أنزل الله

According to Imam Is'hāq Ibn Rāhawayh, a distinguished figure among the scholars: the scholars unanimously agreed that anyone who abuses Allah, the Exalted and the Almighty or the prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), or rejects (denies) anything revealed by Allah, or killed anyone among the prophets of Allah, (such a person) is a

disbeliever, even if he (claims) to be a believer with what all the Revelations of Allah".²⁷

Al- Imām al- Khattabi said:

لأعلم أحدا اختلف في قتله

I don t'know anyone who disagreed on his execution i.e (killing of the abuser of the prophet)

وقال محمد بن سحنون أجمع العلماء على أن شاتم النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم المنتقص له كافر والوعيد جار عليه بعذاب الله له وحكمه عند الأمة القتل ومن شك في كفره وعذابه كفر

Imam Muhammad Ibn Suhnūn (a *Malikite* scholar) said: that the scholars unanimously agreed that the accuser and the deprecator of the prophet is a disbeliever and the menace to be executed upon him is the punishment of Allah, while his judgement among the nation (The Muslims) is execution. Anyone who doubts his disbelief and his punishment is a disbeliever"²⁸

Imam Ibn Taymiyyah said, having mentioned the above statements:

The accuser (of the prophet) is a disbeliever and should be executed without any disagreement among the scholars, and it is the *Madhhab* of the four Aimmah and others. It is mentioned earlier that among those who viewed that the abuser should be executed were Imām Is'hāq Ibn Rāhawayh and others and if he is a *Dhimmi* disbeliever, he should be executed also. This is based on the view of Imam Malik and the people of Madinah and I shall mention their statements. So also, this is the *Madhhab* of Imam Ahmad and the jurists among the scholars of Hadīth".²⁹

It is pertinent to mention at this juncture that the Al-Ijmā' (unanimity) of scholars on a judgement is evidence, which should be followed by Muslims. The following Quranic verse lends credence to this fact:

ومن يشاقق الرسول من بعد ما تبين له الهدى ويتبع غير سبيل المؤمنين نوله ما تولى ونصله جهنم وسأت مصيرا

D. Conclusion

The research work explored the relevance of the discourse of Shaykh Muhammad Ibn 'AbdilWahhab on blasphemy in his work, entitled: Kitābut-Tawhid. So also, the issues and cases of blasphemy in Nigeria are analysed, taking Yorubaland as a case study, to curb the evil act in Nigeria and restrain the Muslims from taking laws into their hands, as many evils might be arising in doing so. Although, the punishment of the perpetrator in this life is to be executed. Certain evidence is mentioned in the body of the paper and it is also revealed that some scholars like Imam Is'hāq Ibn Rāhawayh, Imam Ibn al-

Mundhir and Muhammad Ibn Suhnūn, viewed that the '*Ulamā*' unanimously agreed the fact that the perpetrators should be executed.

Recommendations

1. The non-Muslims are enjoined to take to the act of religious tolerance and imbibe the act of respecting other people's religion.
2. Jungle Justice is to be curbed by the government.
3. The appropriate authorities are to be more serious and take the peace co-existence among the citizens as a priority.

E. Notes and References

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