

Pragmeme of *Waka* Chants in selected *Fidā'u*

Tolulope Oluremi¹, * [toluoluremi@gmail.com]

¹ Osun State University, Nigeria

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Abstract: The paper examined the discursive structure of *waka* chants as performed by Islamic clerics among the Yoruba Muslims at the event of *fidā'u*. This attempt considers *waka* chants as pragmeme, with particular attention on the language and extra-linguistic cues deployed within the chants, and how the entire situational contexts which condition the *waka* chants regiment the language use. Eight documented *waka* chants in honour of some deceased Muslims in South-western Nigeria were sampled. The *waka* chants which were mainly in the Yoruba language as rendered by Muslim clerics were transcribed and translated to English language for the purpose of analysis. With insights from Mey's theory of pragmeme, the paper ascertained that *waka* chants at the event of *fidā'u* possess inherent pragmatic forces beyond their invocation to elucidate sermons and lives of a deceased Muslim. Such chants, this paper argues, perform socio-religious actions which are of immense benefits to the living.

KEYWORDS: *Fidā'u*, pragmeme, Yoruba Muslim, *waka* chants

1. Introduction

The deed of invocation that seeks to initiate a communication with a figure of worship is a fundamental aspect of human existence and the most enduring manifestations of the human soul. With a critical examination of the trajectory of humankind, it could be well affirmed that prayer and the act of worship have survived with humankind. The only variance in this act of invocation could be seen in the religion, purpose and the deity invoked. In terms of religion, there are legion of religions with disparate perspectives to prayers. However, this paper only refers to two; with particular focus on one out of the two. In the Christendom, prayer is the privilege of touching the heart of the father through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. It is the needful practice of Christians and one, which involves faith and hope (Slick 2020).¹ In Islamic religion (which is the main concern of this paper), prayer simply means *du'ā'*. *Du'ā'* portends worship. In the words of Stacey (2010), *du'ā'* is the act of supplication, calling out to God; it is a conversation with God, the Creator, All Knowing and All Powerful. And according to Prophet, Prophet Muhammad, (may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him), *du'ā'* is the essence of worship.

In Islam, dual is of two categories. Iyaad (2010) identifies the *du'ā'* of need and the *du'ā'* of worship. The *du'ā'* of need comes in the form of explicit request for certain needs, and it is referred to as the invocation of need. The *du'ā'* of worship signifies the invocation of worship which “covers every act of worship ..., whether it is inward, outward, verbal or non-verbal, then even if you are not expressing it explicitly with your tongue, you are nevertheless, by way of the performance of that

* Corresponding Author: toluoluremi@gmail.com

¹ Slick M. (2020) “What is Prayer?” Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry <https://www.carm.org> (Accessed 2nd February 2020).

action, asking from Allah” (Iyaad 2010, 3). From these categories, purposes of du‘ā’ are well defined and stipulated. While the latter is designed to worship Allah, stating what Allah is pleased with and loves, the former simply makes requests from Allah. It is, therefore, within the ambit of the former that the du‘ā’ for the dead lies.

Du‘ā’ for the dead falls within the invocation of need and not that of worship. Death simply means the permanent end to life that human beings experience at a point in lifetime. Death is both a traumatic and cathartic experience. For the loved ones left behind, it is essentially traumatic and grievous. However, for the departed soul, it is cathartic given that the dead experiences greater placement. Upon the departure of a loved one in Islam, du‘ā’ is made, especially by the children of the departed to request for forgiveness from Allah for the departed soul. Al-jibaly (2001, n.p.) states that Allah’s Messenger, *sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, affirms that “When a human being dies, all of his deeds are terminated except for three types: an ongoing *sadaqah*, a knowledge (of Islam) from which others benefit, and a righteous child who makes du‘ā’ for him”. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) seals the purpose of du‘ā’ when He says, “a man’s status will be raised in paradise and he will ask, ‘How did I get here?’ He will be told, ‘By your son’s du‘ā’ (prayers) for forgiveness for you”.² Du‘ā’ for the dead is simply a period to supplicate for forgiveness from Allah.

Over the years, innovations as regards du‘ā’ for the dead have sprung into existence. One of such innovations is common among the Yoruba who occupy mainly the southern part of Nigeria. The Yoruba typifies du‘ā’ for the dead as *fidā’u*. *Fidā’u* has been widely debated as a phenomenon that has no bases in Islam (for instance, Oseni 2014). However, such event remains a major practice among the Yoruba Muslim as a mark of prayer and respect for the dead. *Fidā’u* among the Yoruba Muslim is an event that comes with different programmes. Very unique and informing among the programmes is sermon. Within the sermon is another distinctive communicative art known as *waka*. *Waka*, a lexicon of Hausa origin, often times stands as a preface or epilogue to a sermon or as linguistic interjection recurrently deployed to validate a particular verse of the Quran or Hadith while a sermon progresses. It is also used to expose the earthly life of a deceased Muslim. *Waka* in *fidā’u* sermon is often chanted by a Muslim cleric who submits himself to Allah. In addition, it is typical of such *waka* to “contain Islamic religious teachings concerning the frailty of this world; it contains prayer for the dead” (Abubakre 1990, 179).

Waka chants in the place of *fidā’u* are worthy of serious linguistic analysis because they are a type of elegiac arts which communicate certain spiritual edifying messages. However, the messages the *waka* chants convey are not realizable at the surface without recourse to the context in which they are rendered. Thus, *waka* chants in *fidā’u* events are affirmed by this paper as linguo-sociocultural arts with implicit social intent. On account of this affirmation, *waka* chants are regarded as pragmemes. That is speeches, when situated, implicate clear-cut social intentionality. With this background, therefore, this paper examines the pragmeme of *waka* – assortment of linguistics and extra-linguistic cues used to bring the living to the consciousness of the various aspects of life – in some selected *fidā’u* prayers in the Yoruba society. Considering the paper’s preoccupation, it claims that much of the discursive linguistic structures that make up *waka* chants in a *fidā’u* event are actual forms of social actions instantiated to edifying the earthly deeds of the families and well-wishers of the deceased.

² Asifat, T. and Abubakar, R. 2013, September 17. “Fidau has no place in Islam.” Encomium <https://www.encomium.ng> (Accessed 9th February 2020).

1.1. Yoruba Nationality, *Fidā'u* and *Waka*

The continent of Africa is a home to many distinct nationalities and cultures. In view of these diversities, Africa is uniquely one of the continents with distinguishing and disparate beauty, nature and ethnic groups. Among the groups in Africa which has gained popularity both locally and internationally by virtue of its art, music, custom, religion, and role in African history is the Yoruba. In sub-Saharan Africa, the Yoruba people are one of the most populous ethno-linguistic groups found in Nigeria, Benin Republic and Togo, and though they constitute a fulcrum of Nigeria. The Yoruba occupy Nigerian states such as Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Lagos and Ekiti. The Yoruba also inhabit some parts of Kwara and Kogi States. As an ethnic nationality, they share a common language known as Yoruba language but with distinct dialects percolating their entire universe. The Yoruba are religious and mainly practise Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. These religious practices have distinct beliefs and ways of approaching life events. There is quite a number of life events among the Yoruba which are approached based on religious sensitivities. For instances, major life events such as birth, birthdays, weddings and death are celebrated based on religious inclinations.

Death is an example of life event, which is very crucial among the Yoruba and their major religions. At death, it is generic for most Yoruba Christians to commence burial rites with a wake. A wake, as performed by Yoruba Christians, is a watch and prayer, not necessarily a vigil, done in respect of a person who died a Christian. The traditional religion, as practiced by the Yoruba, on its part, engages in seven days of rituals (*etutu*) to successfully send a deceased person's spirit to its ancestral realm (Drewel 1992). The Muslims, in particular, the Yoruba Muslims, upon funeral rites for their beloved, "organize special prayers ... on the 7th and 40th days. On such occasion, Muslims ask for Allah's pardon for the deceased Muslim and pray fervently for Allah's mercy on him or her" (Oseni 2014, 184). Such prayers by Yoruba Muslims in honour of a deceased Muslim is popularly known as *fidā'u* prayers.

On *fidā'u*, Oseni (2014) presents a contrary opinion to its naming as a prayer for the dead. He argues that *fidā'u* is a wrong nomenclature for prayer for the dead. Based on his submission, the word *fidā'u* as it is used in the Quran means placing a *ransom* by hypocrites towards Allah against the torments of the Day of Resurrection. According to Oseni (2014, 190) "it is anomaly to use it (*fidā'u*) as a nomenclature for the prayers for a deceased Muslim. ... Muslims who have faith in Allah, worship Him and are morally upright would be admitted into Paradise by Allah and would not need any *fidā'* (ransom) to get there". Oseni (2014) refers to prayers for the dead as *special prayers*, with no specific time, organized to remind the dead of his or her pledge to worship Allah, and be a sincere follower of Prophet Mahammad.

With Asifat and Abubakar (2013, n.p.), though their research does not involve the wrong use of *fidā'u* as prayers for the dead, their interviews with Islamic scholars on *fidā'u* reveal that:

... *fidā'u* can be performed at any time, either on a daily basis or at any time whether specified or not. The practice is not new in Islam. It has been in existence for long. The essence of corporate prayer is to earn the deceased bountiful reward. One of the greatest scholars in Misra, Egypt, Imam Shuyuti supported even the idea of 8th day and 40th day *fidā'u* (not in this century). So, *fidā'u* is Islamic. However, the aspect we need to address is the way people have turned it to elaborate celebration where they give their guests alcohol, which is forbidden in Islam. ... *Fidā'u* is a prayer for the deceased who was a Muslim until he died. It's just like a sacrifice you make on behalf of the dead and the reward of such goes to the dead. But what brought in disparity among scholars is the way

some clerics have turned it to business. Some will even fight over the money realized at such occasion.³

From the two scholarly aforementioned points of views, it is an established fact that there is a prayer for a deceased Muslim. Either it is called a *special prayer* or *fidā'u*, the fact is that there is a prayer that accompanies rites of passage. Generally, it is known as *fidā'u*, and the preoccupation of this paper is not to research in the scholarly contestation of this. *Fidā'u* often provides the possibility for general sermon offered by a cleric. This sermon is repeatedly accompanied by funeral dirge known as *waka*. In Abubakre's (1990, 179) words, "much of *waka* on the theme of funeral dirge would appear to contain Islamic religious teachings concerning the frailty of this world. It also contains prayers for the dead". *Waka* could therefore be said to be an integral part of *fidā'u*. However, there are varieties of *waka* for different ceremonies.

Waka has its linguistic and functional origin from the traditional and religious culture of the Hausa. In the Hausa culture, "waka only means song, any song, in the Hausa language" (Na'Allah 2010, 161). This portends that *waka* is a Hausa word for song, just as we have *orin* in Yoruba language. However, as transcultural activities set on to get thickened, different words begin to advance into another culture. *Waka*, a Hausa word has been borrowed by several other cultures. Among the tribes that have borrowed *waka* is Yoruba. *Waka*, with the Yoruba people, has been identified to have developed into varieties (Ogunbiyi 2003; Sanni 2011; Saadudeen n.d.) such as the *Islamic waka*, *Ilorin waka* (which could be both Islamic and cultural), *Ijebu waka*, *Ikale waka*. Sanni (2015) further identifies other subgenres such as *madahi*, *seli*, *senwele* (which include Iya Laduke, Odolaye Aremu's Dadakuada, *Senwele Jesu*), and a new type of *waka* identified with Batile Alake, Salawe Abeni, among others. These kinds of *waka* are played with musical instruments. Majority of these varieties are deployed for entertainment and teaching. Of utmost concern therefore in this paper is the Islamic *waka* which Yoruba Muslims use, not just for the ordinary purpose it was attached to at its origin but deployed to serve certain religious functions in ceremonies. This type of *waka* is created in the Islamic setting and it appears as a generic term covering many types of Muslim songs and poems in Yoruba language (Abubakre 1990). This form of Islamic *waka* is mostly used by Islamic clerics. It is chanted by Islamic clerics without any form of accompanied musical instruments. Saadudeen (n.d., 350) confirms the purpose and users of such *waka* when he states that "waka, regardless of the language and culture adopted, is a special song used by the clerics in sermons to buttress a particular point, verse or teachings in Islam". Abubakre (1990, 179) further gives credence to this assertion when he submits that "one who chants the *waka* is one who submits himself to God, one who accepts the decree of God". Islamic *waka* may be chanted in various events such as wedding, birthday, *fidā'u*, among others.

A number of scholarly considerations have been directed to Islamic *waka* (which as indicated earlier is inclusive of *Ilorin waka*). Dare (2019) investigated *Ilorin waka* from its pragmatic perspective. Using as data, a snippet of *waka* rendition from the *waka* exponents, late Alhaji Imam Laro Muhammed as documented in Jimba (1997), the study examined how *waka* performances serve as acts of doing things. From its findings, the study established that such *waka* performs multiplicity of activities, and thereby validated the fact that beyond the entertainment value of any typical *waka* rendition it is characterized by several pragmatic acts in which both the speaker and the hearer are implicitly engaged. In a similar study, Saadudeen (n.d.) probed into the challenges of modernization

³ Asifat, T. and Abubakar, R. (2013) September 17. "Fidau has no place in Islam." Encomium <https://www.encomium.ng> (Accessed 9th February 2020).

and civilization on *Ilorin waka* as an instrument of socio-cultural development in Ilorin. In this study, Saadudeen (n.d.) claimed that the major objective of *Ilorin-Waka*, as a religious song used to reinforce sermons, is to propagate Islam as a way of life such as lifestyle, character, and mode of dressing including ceremonies such as wedding, naming and others. However, the study asserted that modernization has altered how the song is being practiced among the clerics and the entertainers alike. In this regard, the paper examined the attendant impact of modernization on the acceptability of *Ilorin-waka* among the younger generations despite its usefulness as a potent instrument of socio-cultural development in the society. The paper discovered that *Ilorin waka* is an act of propagating religion and socio-cultural values. It also found out that the influence of globalization on *Ilorin waka* is both positive and negative. It is negative on the account that globalization has made *Ilorin waka* unattractive to the teaming young people. It is positive because, with the advent of globalization, women were liberated to be performing *waka* alongside their men counterpart. Lastly, social media platforms were suggested to be used to preserve and promote *Ilorin waka*. The paper recommended among others that the ministry of Culture and Tourisms and all other stakeholders in the state should as a matter of urgency constantly promote the use of *waka* among the youth in the state. In addition, that *waka* should be preserved with the help of Information and Communication Technology.

These aforementioned scholarly works have examined Islamic *waka*, especially the form typified as *Ilorin waka*. While one appraised Islamic *waka* used relatively for entertainment and education in festive ceremonies, the other evaluated the sustenance of Islamic *waka* amidst globalization. Though there are other works on *waka* (such as Sanni 2015; Frishkopf 2013; Na'Allah 2010; Abubakre 1990), such works have only treated *waka* as an aspect of their research. This current endeavour, therefore, concentrates on *waka* chants in the event of *fidā'u* given that sufficient scholarly attention has not been shown to this aspect of Islamic *waka*. These are elegiac Islamic *waka* chants in the occasion of *fidā'u* among the Yoruba Muslim.

2. Theoretical Insights

The theory of pragmeme offers the adequate affordances in explicating the implicitness in situationally conditioned chants such Islamic *waka* rendered in *fidā'u* events. The notion of pragmeme is the theoretic creation of Mey (2001). Mey is of the opinion that “no speech act is viable by itself. Speech acts as such do not exist, unless they are situated, which means they cannot be said to have a unique reference” (2010, 2882) or that situated illocutionary force required of a well setup utterance. To therefore portray a unique reference or matters of illocutionary force, the speech act theory is not viable. What is practical is the theory of pragmatic act. As pragmatic act, there is heavy reliance, “if not exclusively, on the situation of use, that is to say, on the situation where the users of a language unite in a ‘linguistic compact’ that encompasses both themselves and their respective acts, as well as the entire situation” (Mey 2010, 2883).

In view of this thought process, the emphasis is not placed on rules for grammaticality or felicity conditions for a speaker’s speech acts but on characterising a general situational prototype, capable of being executed in the situation. Such a generalised pragmatic act is referred to as pragmeme. Pragmeme, from Capone’s (2005) perspective, is situated speech act, which synergises the rules of language and that of a society in determining meaning; a meaning intended as a socially recognised object, sensitive to social expectations about the situation in which it is to be interpreted. As a situated speech act, a pragmeme undergoes transformations having been acted upon by the forces of a regimented situation. Mey (2010, 2883) adds his voice to ‘situation’ as “the place where the linguistic interactants meet, not as disembodied ‘talking heads’, but as agents on the societal scene,

bringing along their entire baggage of world knowledge: tacit and explicit presuppositions, expectations, and prejudices, as well as prior linguistic experiences". This contextual situation reshapes the original illocutionary value of a speech act by adding contextual layers of meaning, or even may change the illocutionary value of the speech act (Capone 2005).

The theoretical insights considered here are deployed in this paper taking into consideration that the discursive linguistic structures to be subjected to examination exemplify the pragmeme of *waka* chants in the event of *fidā'u*. The social and religious intentionality of *waka* chants in the event of *fidā'u* is driven to be an integral part of the request for forgiveness for the dead Muslim. But with the ideas of pragmeme, *waka* chants in the event of *fidā'u* are instantiated to edifying the living on the futility of life.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Materials

The materials used for this paper were eight (8) well-documented *waka* chants within the selected *fidā'u* in honour of some (names withheld) deceased Muslim Yoruba in South-western Nigeria. The names of these late Muslim individuals have not been included in this paper to avoid the levitation of forgone memories. One of the *waka* chants was rendered in English language. The others, which were mainly in the Yoruba language as rendered by the clerics, were transcribed and translated to English language appropriately for the purpose of analysis.

3.2. Procedure

The *waka* chants were non-randomly selected in view of their relevance to have been painstakingly deployed to elucidate the sermons and lives of the deceased in the selected *fidā'u*. Second is the fact that the *waka* chants sound pragmatic nuances capable of enhancing the perception of *waka* chants in the event of *fidā'u* as social and religious action that is of great benefits to the living. Accordingly, the collected *waka* chants were analysed with the theoretical insights of pragmeme. We have analysed such *waka* chants as a genre given that they are marked with symbolic language and extra-linguistic cues as convincing techniques, and they also embrace pragmeme to reflect proper reading of implied message.

4. Result and Discussion

Dealing with death among the Yoruba as stated earlier is based on religious inclinations. From Christianity to Islam and to traditional religion, various approaches to funeral ceremonies have been recorded. However, the event of loss of a dear one is always a sore experience. It is a painful experience because once the death of a (beloved) person occurs, every interaction with such individual ceases, and such loved fellow goes into permanent nonexistence. The reality of transition to after-life breeds sorrow, mourning and grief among the immediate relatives and other extended families. At such time, people initiate different visits to accord the bereaved some cloud of solace and succour. They are never left alone. "The ritual explicitly allows ample slots for conversation, thus the close relatives of the deceased are never left alone, but are offered solace through talking" (Capone 2010, 8) after the mourning episode comes the burial though with mourning fading away gradually.

For a Muslim, he or she is interred amidst mourning the same day death occurs. After the interment, the *fidā'u* is done. This could be either after the third day, seventh day or fortieth day, depending on

the leading of the first child, family and cleric. The *fidā'u* service's sermon is often accompanied with dirgy Islamic *waka* chants as led by the cleric. Apparently, such Islamic *waka* chants are intentionally motivated to buttress the sermon and expose the earthly life of a deceased fellow. However, with the incorporation of the ideas of pragmeme, Islamic *waka* chants in the event of a *fidā'u*, as affirmed in this paper, are chants instantiated to edifying the living on the entailment of life and death. From the data before us, it is shown that Muslim clerics offer the following:

Cleric One:

Omo Adamo o o, o si fun ra

Omo Adamo o o, o sir o ra

Aso aye to wo yen ko nip e de ki sa

Ipo aye to di mu, o o pa da j uu le

To re ni kan lo di de ti wo fi jo ko n be

O le pe o le ya o o pa da k u ro

Ise mi ile aye ini ra ni

Igbadun ile aye ini ra ni

La fi ni ogun mot to ba wu e o o gun po si

Ba sa lailu ba pe e pe wo lo ro kan

Translation

Son of Adam, be sensitive

Son of Adam, be careful

The clothes you are clad in will soon turn to shreds

The position you occupy, you will soon jettison

Because a fellow occupies the position before your assumption

Either sooner or later, you will leave the position

Living is not palatable

Pleasures of life are not palatable

Ride your car but remember you will end up in the coffin

When death calls ...

Cleric Two:

Nn kan to n tan laye

Asan ni ile aye, ye saare to ria san,

Ye daamu to ri owo...

Ki ni faari re? Se oruko ti aye so e?

Ma so aye di ile

Oruko to ri o je, Iku ni yi o bo ru ko je

Oku ni wo yio pe o to bay a

Translation

Life comes to an end

Life is futile, stop running after futility

Cease your struggle for money

What is your pride? Is it the name you bear?

Do not make this world your abode

Whatever name you bear, death will destroy such name

You would be called death at some point in future

Cleric Three:

Ye saa re aye, ye sa ni yan aye

Moto to ra, aso too ra, oun je to je, du kia

O n gbogbo ti o ni, ile tio ko, ile ti o ni

Won ma ba ye lo. E ja fun oro Anabi!

Translation

Stop panting after life, stop running after life

Your fleet of cars, clothing, food, chattels

All that you have, your house, landed properties

All will end with the world. Fight for the word of Allah

The above are the elegiac Islamic *waka* poetic chants offered by Muslim clerics within the selected *fidā'u* used in this paper. Though the *waka* chants reflect in a way what life is, and pose, in a generic sense, the mind-set that human beings have towards life, they (the chants) have other inherent pragmatic messages for the living. Taking a close examination at the body of the Islamic *waka* chants above, the first cleric makes a referential allusion to creation, to the first human created by God, called Prophet Adam in Islam; who in Arabic means 'one who has tamed skin'. With the use of 'Son', every one present at the *fidā'u* is referred to as descendants of Adam. Adam as a name alludes to the pitfalls we must avoid. It describes our lower side, the tremendous downward pull (Baron 2016) we are plunged into as a result of the forbidden fruit Prophet Adam ate which introduced death to the world. With this knowledge, the cleric charges Muslim faithful present at the *fidā'u* to be sensitive and be careful taking into consideration that the actions of Prophet Adam has eternally condemned them to earth from which they were created. In the cleric's call for earthly

sensitivity, he makes references to *clothes, position, car* and *living* which are symbolic of material pleasurable things which man puts all his blood and sweat to obtain but which only exist for a short period of time.

Further still, the cleric declares that life is not pleasant and even at that, those materials of life that we labour after do not, if truth be told, give us the life satisfaction we think they give. In similar opening, cleric two portrays life as a phenomenon that has span: beginning and ending. Through this, the cleric still alludes to human Adamic nature – a nature that comes to an end, a kind that will go back to mother earth. The cleric also charges Muslims at the *fidā'u* on the futility of life, and makes symbolic representations in *money* and *name* as evanescence that people toil for and take pride in. According to the cleric, people should not take permanent residency in this world as the world is also transient. Lastly, the cleric personifies death as a destroyer who would usurp any name given to us. This thus portends the short-lived nature of our names and the fact that death is the only name that is long-lasting. The third cleric's submission is not far from the rendition of the first and second clerics. The cleric, in the same vein, beseeches the people present at the *fidā'u* not to labour for life due to its limited span. While he does this, he makes references to fleet of *cars, clothing, food, chattels, house* and *piece of land* as symbolic of temporal materials human beings struggle for but which will also wind up with the world. In summation, the cleric admonishes the gathering at the *fidā'u* to fight for the word of Allah as that is the only piece that will forever be in existence.

In reality, the three clerics have, at the beginning of the dirgy *waka* chants, literarily exposed human beings' attitude towards life and the fugacity of life based on the events of the demise of fellow Muslims whom *fidā'u* have been organised in their respect. However, to completely comprehend the associated intent of their speech acts as regards life, the idea of pragmeme is quite vital. Typically, the Adamic appetite for acquisitiveness is integral to life and life's purpose, and without any misgivings, this characteristic situation is intrinsic in the living who attend *fidā'u*, and even the dead. It is not unfounded that those who attend the *fidā'u* view life as a space, where endless discontentment is gratified, and egos are bolstered. In view of this knowledge, the content of the *waka* chants offered by the clerics are apt as far as the living present at the *fidā'u* are concerned. At funeral ceremonies such as *fidā'u*, avoidance of *waka* chants which pertain to the transience of life is not actually possible. Such *waka* chants are always present. However, they are meant to create certain effect beyond the evocation. In a discourse slot that involves forgiveness for the dead, life cannot be interpreted as a subject that shows responsiveness towards comfort, ease, warmth and satisfaction, but as a matter inevitably subject to termination and demise. The truth is that the dead, in question, while on earth must no doubt have inclined towards creature comforts as inherent in the symbolism – the *position, clothes, money, name, house, land, cars*, among others. The dirgy *waka* chants, we can affirm are both for the deceased and the people present. The pragmeme of the dirgy *waka* chants is to constantly remind us of our Adamic nature which if well searched was implicit in the lives of the deceased. This is a nature that is well engrossed in super ambitious idiocy which makes humans not to acquire what is needed but often times to acquire ego-inflating thrill that becloud us of ephemerality of the entire life we live in as depicted and updated through the departed souls.

Going beyond the narration of life in the selected Islamic *waka* chants, there is also the account of death. On the version of death, the clerics have the following to say.

Cleric One:

Gun moto to ba wu e o o gun posi
Gun oko to ba wu e o o gun posi
Ba sarailu ba pe o pe wo loro kan
Ba ba ti gbe o bilo bilo o de ni agbegbin
O le je ite, a bi la gba la e, a bi ilu oke
O le pe o le ya, o o pada kuro
Omo Adamo o o si fun ra
Aisi lawa ede ka to waye
Aisi latu pada je ti ojo ba pe
Bi emi ba n be lara e ko se aye je je
Ko ran ti ojo kan ta pe o to ni je mo
Saare saare sa ni ile igbe igbeyinwa...

Translation

Acquire your car of choice; you will definitely acquire your coffin
 Acquire your car of choice; you will acquire your coffin
 When death calls that you are the next
 Once you are carried lifeless, you are gone for interment
 This may be at a grave yard, your compound or off town
 It may be later or now
 Son of Adam be sensitive
 Son of man was once in the state of nonexistence
 It is in the state of nonexistence that we will enter into when it is time
 If you are still living, live accordingly
 Remember a day you shall be called and you will not answer
 Grave, grave is the last house

Cleric Two:

One day, you will be no more
 So, there is the need to change your life
 The day you were born is the day you equally start dying..

Cleric Three:

Adupe fun Olorun

Awon to ba pa Abdulfatai, won o yaa ni were

Gbogbo panipani ko se suuru, eni na yio ku

Ijo ti Olorun ti kadara pe yio ku naa ni yio sele

Bi won o ba pa, iba gba ona ibo mii

Bi o se se le yi, ema je ki moni yin kio ba je

Gbo gbo wa ni yi o lo

Translation

We thank God

Those that murdered Abdulfatai did not inflict madness on him

If all murderer could be patient, all to be murdered will surely die

The day God has appointed for him to die is the day

If he was not murdered, death would have come from another area

As it has happened, do not mourn

All shall die

Within the context of *waka* chants, the issue of death with pragmemic implicitness also resonates among the clerics who chant the elegiac *waka*. For instance, cleric one brings to the minds of individuals present at the *fidā'u* that though they may have a preference for *car*, they are bound to end all preferences with coffin. *Car* in this discourse is symbolic of all life conveniences that come before death. Further to this is that death in this context is embodied as possessing the aptitude to call. Once death beckons, whoever is summoned is reserved for interment. Such entombment occurs at a graveyard, or the deceased compound or anywhere. Death may be later or now but it is a necessity. Having said this, the cleric obliges the descendants of Adam to be sensitive; knowing fully well that their adamic flaws recline in the penchant for the trivialities of this world. The cleric underscores the fact that human exists in nonexistence. Before birth, they were not in existence; and at death, nonexistence sets in too. He charges the living to live accordingly; with the consciousness that a day of lifelessness is assured. In a corresponding line of thought, the second cleric charges people at the *fidā'u* on the truth that there will also be a time of nonexistence for them, just as the present state of the deceased being prayed for. With this knowledge, he admonishes that they have to live right if perhaps they have been living in despicability before now. Just like the first cleric accentuates on birth and death, he also stresses that birth is just next to death. This suggests that there is a connection between birth and death through a natural chain of event. As soon as man is birthed into this world, gradually, s/he comes close to his/her death. In like manner, the third cleric is privileged to have conducted prayer for a fellow Muslim who was murdered by unknown assailants. Unlike the first and second clerics who conducted forgiveness prayers for Muslim fellows who died of non-violent means. The third cleric gives thanks to God and mildly conceals the weight

of the loss by appreciating the assailants for not inflicting madness on him. Madness in a way would have been worse than death. He acknowledges that assassination or no assassination, man is bound up to die. He avows that death is resolved to strike even if assassination did not ensue. Lastly, the cleric is of the view that all human are scheduled to die; it is only the appointed time that is vague.

The dirgy *waka* chants offered by the three clerics are no doubt well understood as rendered. The chants apparently through linguistic structures such as – ¹*It is in the state of nonexistence that we will enter into when it is time*, ²*one day, you will be no more*, ³*all shall die* unfold the fact that death is a constant phase that human beings will certainly experience. It is a universal law that every human creature will obey death but that the moment of obedience is uncertain. However, beyond the constancy of death as seen in the prayers, there is another implicated social intentionality to the prayers that could be well understood when the workings of pragmeme are applied. It is evident that death conveys unbearable sadness and a great sense of loss in particular, when such separation between the body and the mind happens to a beloved. This is evident in the contexts of the *fidā'u* being observed here. There is the sense of loss, disappointment, frustration and fear. There is the sense of bewilderment that shows that it is over amidst the hope and activity that probably pervaded the salvaging of lives of the departed – a sense of being bewildered and deceived by life permanency. Nevertheless, within the context of the *waka chants* offered above, a number of linguistic structures were used by the clerics to divert the bereaved families and generally the people's attention from the permanence of life. For instances, linguistic structures such as – ¹*acquire your car of choice, you will definitely acquire your coffin*, ²*the day you were born is the day you equally start dying*, ³*as it has happened, do not mourn, all shall die* and others, are subordinated to the pragmeme of *waka* chants, which are oriented largely to alleviating the grief of the immediate families, who have suffered loss by intimating them with the reality of death; by awakening them to everyone's mortality and the impermanence of the life they live in; teaching that life yearnings which are symbolically depicted in – *cars, houses, positions, name*, among others are not permanent, but that human egoistic longings for these things are so strong that knowledge of transience does not play any part. With the *waka* chants creating a deep sense of awareness for the living, that life is a cycle which has completion and the fact that there is a time humans are embodied and another time to be permanently disembodied eases the profound sense of loss the people present at the *fidā'u* may have felt.

The last insightful issue in the selected *waka* chants is the exposition of the karmic lives of the deceased which also exhibits its pragmemic significance. Let us examine how these are presented by the clerics.

Cleric One:

Abdulfatai o ki n se togi

Abdulfatai ki n binu, be e ni ki ja

Abdulfatai ti se ise kike, o ti se ise gig e

Ki Olorun ba wa ke, ba wa ge e May

Ko ki n se olorelu, O bu ni lowo gigi,

Ose fun onile, o se fun alejo

Fatai o kin fi oro baba re se re

Translation

Abdulfatai was not a tog

Abdulfatai was calm, and hardly got angry and fight

Abdulfatai was a care giver

God should help care for him too

He was not a politician; he gave money at will

He was good to all and sundry

He took his father's affairs at heart.

Cleric Two:

Olorun bawa ke mama

Olorun bawa se mama pelepele

Amope, a ofe ki won kuro laarin wa

To ri mama daa si gbogbo eniyan lopolopo

Sugbon a ri ogbon da si

A o fe ki iya o lo

Translation

God help us to care for our mother

God help us to comfort our mother

We do not want Amope to leave us

Our mother was good to everyone

However, there was nothing we could do

We do not want our mother to leave

Cleric Three:

Baba je asiwaju rere

Eniyan rere ni won je

Ki Olorun fun won ni alujana onidera

Ta ni Balogun? Se eni to ni ode ori ni Balogun?

Ka da ni lona, ka pa eniyan, kii ma se Balogun

Balogun ni eniti gbogbo eniyan ye lati are re

Ti o baje pe Dagunro ba ana je, e ni oni ri bi o tin ri

Muhammad Fasai o se n jan ba enikeni

Dagunro la ona fun gbogbo eniyan

Dagunro, eniyan daa daa ni

Translation

Our father was a great leader

He was a good human being

May God grant him comfortable Aljanna

Who is Balogun? A lunatic?

A reveller in killing people is not Balogun

Balogun is that person that everyone survives through him

If Dagunro had destroyed his yesterday, today would not have been pleasant

Muhammad Fasasi did not harm anyone

Dagunro was a pathfinder for everyone

Dagunro was a pleasant human being

Cleric Four:

Mama Adejumo da a lololopo

Ta ba n so di da eniyan, mama Adejumo dara

Mama o dite enikeni

Mama o soro enikeni lai da

Mama ki ja, kii bi nu

Mama da a lopolopo

Translation

Our Mother, Adejumo was so down-to-earth

If we talk of human goodness, Adejumo was good

Our mother did not involve in connivance or conspiracy

Our mother did not speak ill of anyone

Our mother never fought and got angry

Our mother was good

The *waka* chants above are the karmic expositions of four deceased persons during their *fidā'u*. The chants expose mainly their accomplished positive and quality deeds known by people, while they were here on earth. It is a common practice within *fidā'u* to speak of the karma of a departed fellow. Often times, the positive karma takes discourse dominance in the prayer than the negative karma. For a dead Muslim who was indeed benevolent while here on earth, his/her benevolence are revealed in the body of the dirgy *waka* chants said in his/her honour. However, for the malevolent ones, often, their negative deeds are seldom exposed in the chants. In the above *waka* chants, two karmic deeds have therefore been identified. They are the human nature karmic deeds and the societal nature karmic deeds. The human nature karmic deeds are those that manifest as a result of the up-bringing of a person and the societal karmic deeds are those that manifest due to a person's chosen relationship with his immediate society. These two karmic deeds can be positive and negative depending on the individual.

The positive karmic deeds reflect in the *waka* chants above. As exemplified in the chants above, the first and fourth clerics appropriate the human nature karmic conducts of the deceased into the body of the *waka* chants. Through this, they allude to their nature as human beings. According to the first cleric, "*Abdulfatai (the deceased) was calm, and hardly got angry and fight*", and the fourth cleric intones, "*Our mother (Alhaja Adejumo, the deceased) never fought and got angry*". It is in human nature to engage in struggles that involve conflicts and the exhibition of displeasure or hostility towards another. But a life lived without others experiencing the aforementioned human components shows imprints of positive karma. On the other side of the human nature karmic deed is the societal karmic deed. The four clerics make allusion to this in the dirgy *waka* chants. Cleric one offers his *waka* thus: "*Abdulfatai (the deceased) was a care giver, he was not a politician; he gave money at will, He was good to all and sundry*". The linguistic indices such as *a care giver, offering money at will though not a politician and being good to all and sundry* underscore the deceased's societal responsibilities and goodwill while on earth. His societal karmic deeds, as presented in his *fidā'u*, leave the impressions of *giving* (such as care, personal resource and goodness) in the minds of the people he related with. In a similar presentation, cleric two accounts thus, "*We do not want Amope (the deceased) to leave us, our mother was good to everyone.*" From these lines of *waka*, it is evident that the deceased while on earth exuded positive societal karmic deed of absolute cordial relationship with everyone. This is affirmed in the linguistic keys such as – *not wanting her to leave* and her *goodness* to others. Cleric three, in the same manner, offers the societal karmic endeavours of the departed within his *fidā'u* thus:

Our father was a great leader. Who is Balogun? A lunatic? A reveller in killing people is not Balogun. Balogun is that person that everyone survives through him. If Dangunro had destroyed his yesterday, today would not have been pleasant. Muhammad Fasasi did not harm anyone. Dangunro was a pathfinder for everyone

Good karma is portrayed in outstanding leadership. A person described as *great leader* does not exhibit outstanding leadership in isolation; he does this with his immediate society being a beneficiary. The deceased was a great leader. Being a *great leader* ascribes to him the title *Balogun*. *Balogun*, in Yoruba parlance means a great man/warrior. Muhammad Fasasi (the deceased) was a *Balogun* while on earth. The fact that he was so described did not intoxicate him to have caused him to conduct himself negatively in his society. He was *harmless*. The deceased led aptly, and others followed suitably because he was good. Lastly, in comparable conduct, cleric four depicted the dead in a *waka* this way – "*if we talk of human goodness, Adejumo was good, our mother did not involve in connivance or conspiracy, our mother did not speak ill of anyone.*" Goodness, connivance, conspiracy and speaking-ill of others are human deportments that are susceptible to human society.

The deceased, Alhaja Adejumo, demonstrated positive karma in her society by virtue of being good. While living, she was not drawn in in connivance, conspiracy and ill-speaking of anyone.

Indeed, the four clerics incorporate both the human nature and societal karmic deeds of the deceased Muslims into the dirgy *waka* chants within the events of *fidā'u* in their honour. However, situating this aspect of the *waka* chants into the entire situation of conducting the *fidā'u* for these departed souls has further social intentionalities than just the exposition of their human nature and societal karmic deeds for the living present at the *fidā'u*. At these moments of death, and at these events of *fidā'u*, the allusions made by the clerics to the karmic deeds of the deceased; which in these events are positive karmic deeds have characterised the *waka* chants to have certain pragmemic effect on the living. The events where the departed souls distinguished themselves while alive through their gentleness, receptiveness and selfless leadership are subordinated to the pragmeme of *waka* chants, which give the living, in particular, the families of the deceased, the assurance and the consolation that their people who passed away have been launched into wonderful existence and a peaceful and restful awakening in *Aljannah* (Paradise). Secondly, the event of *fidā'u* without any reservations is always an occasion that brings together the good and the bad in the family of the deceased, and the society, where the departed fellow is well known. In this present context where the clerics exposes positive karmic deeds within the *waka* chants, these karmic deeds of gentleness, receptiveness and selfless leadership are subordinated to the pragmeme of *waka* chants, with the intention of bringing the living who perpetrates negative karmic deeds to the consciousness of turning a new leaf, since all negative deeds that make people suffer and experience pain may in a way deny the living who is cruel to his/her fellow human beings the bliss of re-existence and awakening.

5. Conclusion

Essentially, a number of scholarly works (such as Dare 2019; Saadudeen (n.d.); Sanni 2015; Na'Allah 2010; Abubakre 1990) have investigated Islamic *waka* chants, but very little attention has been directed towards Islamic *waka* chants in the event of Yoruba Muslim rites of passage popularly known as *fidā'u*. This paper has examined the pragmeme of *waka* chants in some selected *fidā'u* in the Yoruba societies. In interpreting the selected *waka* chants, this paper engages the theoretical workings of the theory of pragmeme. Through the theory, it is ascertained that *waka* chants, though are invocations deployed to elucidate sermons and lives of a deceased Muslim at the event of *fidā'u*, they, as a matter of fact, uncover actual embedded pragmatic forces. These include bringing to the fore constant realization of human adamic nature; alleviation of the sorrow of a deceased family by virtue of the certainty that life is impermanent; assurance and the solace that a deceased Muslim makes *Aljannah* (Paradise) due to positive karma, and lastly pressing on the living with negative karmic deeds to imbibe positive karmic deeds. These findings, therefore, are intended to enhance the perception of *waka* chants as socio-religious actions, which are of immense benefits to the living.

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