

EXAMINATION OF OJUDE OBA FESTIVAL AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MUSLIM UMMAH IN THE LIGHT OF *MAQASID ASH-SHARIAH*

By

Azeez, Lihabeeb Hamod & Rahmon Tunde Abolore
Department of Religious studies, College of Humanities,
Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun,
PMB 2118, Ijebu-ode Ogun State, Nigeria
azeezlh@tasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Historical account revealed that the celebration of *Ojude Oba* festival in Ijebu Ode, played a significant role on widely acceptance and consolidation of Islamic faith in Ijebuland. The event which is usually celebrated annually on the 3rd day of *Eidul Adha* (Ileya) festival translates that it has Islamic foundation cum affiliation, and it has attracted influential personalities with significant sponsorship home and abroad which boost hospitality, businesses and other petty tradings in Ijebu Ode and its environs. However, the recent criticism even among the Muslim ummah had posited that Ojude Oba festival needs to be fine-tuned and redesigned in order to sustain the objectives of achieving the path of development as well safeguarding the lives and properties in line with the central objectives of *Maqasid as – shariah*. Record had shown that apart from extravagant lifestyles (*Israf*) which Islam prohibited, the organization of 2025 Ojude Oba perceived to be a threat to collective security and public safety as a result of inadequate crowd control which made the festival a similitude of sacred art of making chaos that portrays the 2025 celebration. The event gathered anarchy in colourful and radiant traditional attires (*agbadas*), choked by canopies like mushrooms on tar roads, sea of humans moving without direction, roads blocked by carnival bands and procession with no sense of space or safety. The study adopted qualitative socio-legal research design as it is suitable to investigate Ojude Oba social practices, lived experiences and religious implications among the Muslims in Ijebu ode, Ogun State. Likewise, the socio-legal lens creates an interplay between Islamic legal framework and social realities being experienced during the annual festival by employing archival inquiry, participant observation and structured interviews. The findings revealed that the potential of Ojude Oba festival has not been sufficiently harnessed towards infrastructural development across critical sectors such as health, education, roads, employment and other social amenities in Ijebuland against public display of extravagant lifestyles (*Israf*) and threat to public safety. The study recommends among others that Ojude Oba stakeholders should prioritise Ijebu Ode infrastructural development across all sectors, finance should be channeled towards youth empowerment through establishment of manufacturing companies, factories and other social services to engage the youths and sustain public safety.

Keywords: Ojude Oba Festival, Impact, Muslim Ummah, Exhibition of *Israf*, Public safety

Introduction

Historical account revealed that the celebration of Ojude Oba festival in Ijebu - Ode, Ogun State plays a significant role on widely acceptance and consolidation of Islamic faith in Ijebuland. The historical account could be traced to the foundation led by Oba Eleshi and Sanni Kuku (the 2nd Balogun of Ijebuland) in the 20th century. However, the modernization of the festival that put Ojude Oba on global space and recognition was achieved by the late Oba Sikiru Adetona (the Ogbagba II)- the Awujale of Ijebuland who under his leadership mobilized both local and international support to put Ijebu-Ode on the centre stage during annual Ojude Oba festival (Yusuf, 2021).

The festival has attracted influential personalities with significant sponsorship home and abroad which boost hospitality, businesses and other petty tradings in Ijebu-Ode and its environs. The Islamic heritage of Ojude Oba festival in Ijebu Ode is affirmed by its timing in the *Eid al-Adha* season, reinforcing social solidarity, religious tolerance and spirituality among Muslims in Ogun States and its environs (Areo, 2016).

The festival Islamic affiliation necessitates the need to address the criticism and sustain the objectives of achieving the path of development as well as safeguarding the lives and properties in line with the central objectives of *Maqasid as -Shariah*.

The critiques even among the Muslim ummah has submitted that Ojude Oba festival needs to be fine-tuned and redesigned to meet international standards in order to facilitate desired results. Folorunso (2025), posited that apart from extravagant lifestyles (Israf) which Islam condemned, the organization of 2025 Ojude Oba was a threat to collective security as a result of lack of crowd control which made the festival a similitude of sacred art of making chaos that portrays celebration. He further submitted that Ojude Oba did not attract only crowd but as well gathered anarchy in colourful traditional attires (agbádás). He likened the situation to a sea of humans moving without direction, choked by canopies like mushrooms on tar roads blocked by carnival bands and processions with no sense of space or safety. The Holy Quran explicitly prohibited wasteful spending through textual injunction contained in *Suratul Israi*, Chapter 17 verse 27 which states that:

﴿إِنَّ الْمُبَدِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا﴾

Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.

The above quotation explained the need to utilise resources judiciously and productively by prioritising projects that could be beneficial to the large populace of the society. The verse further likened those who engage in extravagant lifestyles as close brethren of Shaytan (devil) who had been ungrateful to his Lord since time immemorial.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that it is the responsibility of pious Muslims to be prudent and proactive in spending by discouraging wasteful spending and advocate for community development through initiation of social amenities and projects that could have everlasting impact on citizens instead of promoting frivolities and extravagance spending which Islam prohibited.

It is imperative to note that Ojude Oba festival is not only an expression of religious identity in Ijebuland but a platform for cultural expression, interfaith relations and social cohesion among different religious and social groups (Ayandele, 2002).

The festival has attracted over 200,000 attendees from across Nigeria especially in Southwest geopolitical zones as well as people from diaspora, reflecting its national significance by affirming Islamic values through prayers and supplications for the well-being of the Awujale, the Muslim Ummah in the entire Akile Ijebu and beyond.

Socio-Religious Impacts of Ojude Oba Festival on Muslim Ummah in Ijebuland

Consolidation of Islamic faith in Ijebuland

The patronage of royal class facilitates the significant spread of Islam in Ijebuland. It symbolizes religious affirmation propagated by the Muslim leaders, the festival's timing reaffirmed wide acceptance of Islamic faith in Ijebuland which aligns with the central objective of *Maqasid ash Shariah* by protecting one's religion (*hifz al-din*) and fostering peaceful *dawah* activities. Likewise, the festival fosters religious peace and interfaith cooperation among diverse religious groups in which Christians and Muslim coexist without threats to collective peace and security through religious violence (Akinsola et al, 2022).

Enhancement of economic growth

The festival enhances economic activities through sponsorships from brands both from local and diasporas which generate economic boost and revenues for indigenes, local petty traders and hospitality, where businesses greatly benefitted from the festival which equally helps to fulfill societal welfare objectives preached by Islam (Yussuf, 2002).

However, there is ongoing criticisms among Muslim *Ummah* concerning the evolving extravagance of Ojude Oba festival without prioritizing core development of the town. The elites displayed wealth on the verge of *israf* (wasteful spending) which was prohibited under Islamic ethics.

Promotion of Religious tolerance and cultural values

The festival has been a veritable channel for all religious leaders and groups to promote religious tolerance and embrace healthy cultural practices and values that are not against the tenets of their religion. To substantiate this assertion, Sheikh Miftaudeen Ayanbadejo (the Chief Imam of IjebuLand) usually attends the annual festival with Kabiyesi Awujale to demonstrate that Islam does not forbid people's culture that are not inimical to the foundational teachings of Islam (Akinsola, et al 2022).

Negative Impacts of Ojude Oba Festival on Muslim Ummah in IjebuLand

The lack of crowd control and management threatens public safety as this contravenes *Maqasid ash-Shariah's* *hifz al-nafs* (protection of life) and *hifz al-mal* (protection of one's property). The Ojude Oba festival uncontrollable crowds, blockage of public roads by carnivals and canopies under the pretense of celebration necessitates the need for better planning and strategic organization (Nasir, 2016).

Maqasid ash-Shariah seeks to preserve five (5) central objectives which include life, religion, property, lineage and intellect. Although, the festival religious affiliation upholds *hifz al-din* (protection of faith) through Islamic supplications and other educative programmes, but the festival's encouragement of wasteful spending, extravagance and security threats to life and properties portends negative impacts on generality of Muslim *Ummah*. Hence, there is need for an urgent measure to be taken by stakeholders to recalibrate and re-design the festival according to the principles of *Maqasid ash Shariah* by limiting extravagant lifestyle and expenditure to

avoid *israf*, designing adequate crowd control and enhancing public safety measures. Likewise, the organizers and stakeholders should redirect all financial gains towards infrastructure development as well as youth empowerment programmes that uphold social welfare for the teeming population in Ijebuland (Nasir, 2016).

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study indicate the following:

- i. The Ojude Oba Festival in Ijebu Ode remains a vital religious and cultural event in Yorubaland that preserves Muslim identity and religious tolerance in Ijebuland.
- ii. The event promotes peaceful coexistence among different religious adherents as it propagates Islamic principle of communal peace and harmony.
- iii. The festival enhances economic activities as it contributes positively to local trades especially among small and medium scale businesses in Ijebuland.
- iv. Conversely, inadequate logistics during the Ojude Oba festival breeds threats to public safety and necessitates concern over the violation of Islamic principles of *hifz al nafs*.
- v. The current stakeholders prioritize frivolities over core infrastructural development such as roads, health and educational sectors.
- vi. The study findings indicates that Majority of *Regberegbe* (Age grade) groups especially among the female genders are dissatisfied with the current trends of threat to public safety in the annual Ojude Oba festival as they alleged incompetence on some parts of organisers and they are planning to vote current leadership out if proactive measures are not taken to address the impending security breach.

The above findings align with the theoretical guidelines of *Maqasid ash-Shariah*, in which religious and social welfare are paramount to the overarching goals in order to protect and preserve human life and properties.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- i. There is need to align Ojude Oba festival fully in line with the principles of *Maqasid ash-Shariah* regulating wasteful spending to curb *Israf* and promoting modest spending towards beneficial projects.
- ii. The concerned stakeholders should enhance public safety by improving crowd control, neutralizing security threats to safeguard lives and property during and after the event.
- iii. Resource and monetary gains should be channeled towards infrastructural development by establishing manufacturing companies and factories to pave way for youth employment and social services in Ijebu Ode and its environs.
- iv. The organizers and concerns stakeholders should collaborate with relevant government agencies to strategise for sustainable planning to curb impending disasters during Yuletide celebration.

Conclusion

The Ojude Oba festival in Ijebu Ode is deeply rooted in Islamic history and portends cultural significance which creates an interplay between different religions, culture, and social life in Ijebuland. Citing the Islamic background of the festival, there is need to re-design all relevant activities that could align with *Maqasid ash-Shariah* for the festival to serve as a beacon for Muslim communal identity, social development and harmonious cohabitation. Hence, providing last long solutions to current issues related to wastefulness, extravagance and threats to public safety will ensure that the festival continues to consolidate and uplift the relevance of Muslim *Ummah* in Ijebuland as well as promoting socio-economic advancement in Ogun East Senatorial District.

References

- Akinsola, A. et al (2022). Reinventing governance in Nigeria: The Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona Model. Published by Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- Areo, M. O. (2016). Multidimensional Impact of Cloth and Colour in Ojude Oba Festival. *International Journal of Humanities and Social sciences*, 5(5), 55-72.
- Ayandele, E. A. (1992). *The Ijebu of Yoruba land, 1850-1950: Politics, economy and Society*. Ibadan, Heineman Educational Books (Nigeria) Limited.
- Folorunsho, F. A. (2025). *Ojude Oba: The beauty, the Beast, and the Broken Bones of our Pageantry*. Published by The Punch newspaper, Nigeria.
- Nasir, M. A. (2016). Islam in Diaspora: Sharia Law, Piety and Brotherhood at al-Farooq Mosque, Atlanta. *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 54 (1).
- Yusuf, F. A. (2021). Oba Sikiru Adetona: The legendary Awujale at 87. *The vanguard Newspaper* May, 12, 2021.
- Yussuf, N. B. (2002). *Industrial Development in Ogun Area*. M. A. Dissertation submitted to the Department of History and Diplomatic studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye.