

THE INVOCATION OF BARAKAH AS A POTENT FORCE OF WELL BEING AMONG THE YORUBA MUSLIMS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explores the invocation of Barakah, a significant aspect of Yoruba Muslim spirituality in Nigeria, and its role as a potent force of well-being. Barakah is a concept deeply rooted in Yoruba Muslim culture, symbolizing divine blessings and spiritual abundance. This study aims to investigate how the invocation of Barakah contributes to the holistic well-being of Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria. Drawing upon qualitative research methods, including interviews, observations, and textual analysis, this study offers an in-depth understanding of the spiritual practices and beliefs associated with the invocation of Barakah. It explores the reasons behind its significance and the impact it has on individuals' well-being, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional dimensions. The study explores how Yoruba Muslims invoke Barakah through specific rituals such as prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, supplication, seeking intercession of saints and acts of charity. Furthermore, it delves into the belief that Barakah manifests in various aspects of life, including personal relationships, health, finances, and overall success. The findings of this study reveal that the invocation of Barakah acts as a dynamic force in Yoruba Muslim communities, providing spiritual solace, guidance, and a sense of purpose. It emerges as a tool for navigating life's challenges, fostering resilience, and cultivating gratitude. Moreover, the study brings into fore some anomalies and abuses associated with this practice of invoking Barakah and its implications in the Shari'ah.

Keywords: Invocation, Barakah, Well-being, Yoruba Muslims, Islamic Theology

Introduction

Barakah is a term used to describe blessings and divine grace in Islamic theology. For Yoruba Muslims, who form a significant portion of Nigeria's Muslim population after the Hausa/Fulani stuck, the concept of *Barakah* is deeply embedded in their religious practices and cultural traditions. The invocation of *Barakah* is seen as a potent force that brings happiness and fulfillment into their lives. In Yoruba culture, *Barakah*, also a loan word (*Alubarika*) from Arabic language is believed to be an essential aspect of creating harmony and happiness in life. It is seen as a divine gift from Allāh, and its presence is perceived as an indication of Allāh's favour and protection. The invocation of *Barakah* is a way for Yoruba Muslims to seek blessings and divine intervention in their daily lives. For Yoruba Muslims, the invocation of *Barakah* is prevalent in various aspects of life, including health, wealth, relationships, and career development. In times of difficulty, Yoruba Muslims rely on *Barakah* to navigate challenges and find solace. They believe that the blessings of *Barakah* not only provide them with material and spiritual prosperity but also bring inner peace and satisfaction. By seeking *Barakah*, Yoruba Muslims develop a sense of trust in Allāh's wisdom and guidance, which contributes to their overall sense of happiness. This study guides us into the belief that *Barakah* is not simply a result of external factors or luck, but is ultimately granted by Allāh according to His wisdom and will. As such, Muslims seek to invite *Barakah* into their lives through devotion, supplication, obedience, and gratitude, recognizing that it is ultimately a gift from Allāh. In this work, effort shall be made to explore the significance of *Barakah* and how it serves as a source of well-being among Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria.

Understanding the Concept of *Barakah* from the Islamic Framework

In Islamic theology, *Barakah* refers to a spiritual and divine blessing that is believed to enhance and multiply the goodness and benefits of something or someone. It is often associated with the idea of divine grace and favour bestowed by Allāh, through various means. The concept of *Barakah* from the Islamic framework revolves around multiple of meanings and dimensions.

The Linguistic Meaning of the Term *Barakah*

The word *Barakah* (بَرَكَه) etymologically is from Arabic language, and has three meanings: The first one is النَّمَاءُ وَالزِّيَادَةُ which means “growth and increase”.¹ So when something has *Barakah*, it increases. The second meaning is الاستِمْرَارِيَّة meaning “continuity”.² The Arabs say ابْتَرَكَتُ السَّمَاءَ when the rain keeps on coming and coming. This is a verb taken from the noun *Barakah* (بَرَكَه). The third meaning of *Barakah* is, ‘Something that remains in its place as though it sticks. So it’s not only increasing and continuing but it remains as well. This is why the words ابْتَرَكَتُ الْجَمَلَ “the camel has kneeled” is used for the camels when they kneel, they stay in their place.’³

Barakah in Daily Usage

The plural form of the word *Barakah* is *Barakāt* (بَرَكَات) and we use it in the greeting, ‘*assalāmu ‘alykum wa rahmatullāh wa*

¹ Ibrahim Anis et al, *Al- Mu’jamul Wasit*, (Cairo: n.p., 1972) 72

² See Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad Bin Makram. *Lisan al-‘Arab*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2nd edition., 10/395), Al-Fayrūz Ābādī, Muḥammad Bin Yaḳūb. *Al-Qamūs al-Muḥīṭ*, (Bairut: Muassasat al Risālah, 1974) 1204

³ See, Ibrahim Anis et al, *Al- Mu’jamul Wasit*, 72; J.M. Cowan, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, (India, Modern Language Services, 1960) 54; Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (London, Stacey International, 1989) 64.

barakātub’, which means “May the peace, mercy and blessings of Almighty be upon you”. Muslims greet each other as they gather, they meet each other, or they leave a place with this greeting which is a wish for peace, tranquility and happiness. The one who greets wish peace and happiness for the other from Allah whose one of the beautiful names is *as-Salām* which means “peace.

Another derivative is *Tabārah* تَبَارَكَ which is a verb meaning, ‘blessed’ and it is used only for the Almighty to denote that Allāh is “the Blessed One” and He is the one Who bestows benediction and goodness, like we have it in several places in the Qur’ān (9 places). Two chapters open with the word *Tabārah* (تَبَارَكَ). They are *Sūratu’l-Furqān* (Q. 25) and *Sūratu’l-Mulk* (Q. 67).

Bārah بَارَكَ is another verb which is used to convey the meaning that Allah, the Almighty, has showered His benediction on something. For example the saying *بارك الله في المال الحلال* (Allāh has blessed wealth that is lawful) and also as a well-wishing prayer like: *بارك الله فيك* (May Allāh bless you).⁴

Mubārah مُبَارَك is a participle noun taken from *Barakah* which means a thing that is full of blessings and goodness. As in the saying *رمضان شهر مبارك* (Ramaḍān is a blessed month). It is used also to ask *Barakah* for someone while congratulating them. For example, *زواج مبارك* (Have a blessed marriage).

The Usage of *Barakah* in the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*

The Qur’ān refers to itself as *Mubārah* (Blessed) in several verses, for example Allāh in *Sūratul An’ām* says, *وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ وَمُبَارَكٌ* {and this is a Book which We have sent down, blessed} (Q. 3:92). *Laylatul-Qadr*, the night in which the Qur’ān was sent down is referred to as *Mubārah* as well. Allāh says, *إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ* {Indeed, we sent it down during a blessed night} (Q. 44:3). And the

⁴ Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 64

word تَبَارَكَ *Tabārah* is also used several times, for instance the beginning of *Sūratul Furqān* states, تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ, {Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion} (Q. 25:1). The word بَرَكَات *Barakāt* which is the plural form is likewise used in the Qur'ān, where Allāh says, وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ {And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allāh, we would have opened upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they denied so We seized them for what they were earning} (Q. 7:96). And the verb بَارَكْنَا *Bāraknā* is used in several chapters, like سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا *{Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Harām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, whose surroundings We have blessed}* (Q. 17:1).

In the *Sunnah* or *Hadīth*, the word *Barakah* is used, where the prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had asked Allāh *Barakah* for Madīnah, Anas bin Mālik (may Allāh be pleased with him) reported that Allāh's Messenger (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: "O Allāh, increase in Madīnah twice the blessings (showered) on Makkah".⁵ In another tradition also narrated by Anas, the Messenger of Allah (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) commanded him as: "My dear son, every time as you entered in to your house salute everyone; thus may your *salām* (i.e.: salutation) becomes *barakah* upon you and your family".⁶ Also, Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was given the first fruit of the season and he said: "My Almighty Allah, show your blessings upon us in our city, and in our fruits, in our mudd (two standards of weight and measurement) and in our sa's, blessings upon *barakah*, and he would then give that to the youngest of the children present there".⁷ Again, in another tradition by Abu Hurayrah, the Messenger of Allah (may

⁵ *Sahih Al Bukhārī*: 2/666, *Sahih Muslim*: 2/994.

⁶ See, *Sunan Tirmidhi*: 268

⁷ *Sahih Ibn Hibbān*: 11/62, hn. 4754; *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*: 3/35, 2606; *Sunani Al-Bayhaqī Al-Kubrī*: 5/258,

the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) congratulates the newly married couple as: “*May Allah bless your wedding, may He brought barakah upon it, may your lives come together in a good deed*”.⁸

Multifaceted Meanings of *Barakah*

The multifaceted meaning of *Barakah* encompasses spiritual blessings, material prosperity, gratitude, contentment, and righteous disposition. It is a concept that reflects the belief in the existence of divine intervention and the transformative power of spirituality in all aspects of life.

At its core, *Barakah* refers to divine blessings, abundance, and prosperity granted by Allāh. It is believed to be a spiritual energy or a divine essence that brings goodness, success, and the multiplication of blessings. This concept is present in Islamic theology, where *Barakah* is seen as the source of spiritual well-being and fulfillment. It is considered to be an important aspect of a person’s faith and is sought after by believers.

In a broader context, *Barakah* extends beyond spirituality and encompasses various aspects of life. It refers to the notion of increased productivity, success, and flourishing in one’s endeavours. It signifies that something is blessed and carries a sense of favour, goodness, and positive influence.⁹

In other words, *Barakah* as a concept deeply rooted in Islamic belief has multiple dimensions, which include,

1. **Spiritual Blessings:** *Barakah* is seen as a source of spiritual nourishment and growth. It is believed that through sincere worship, righteous actions, and adherence to Islamic teachings,

⁸ *Sunan Abu Dāwūd*: 2/241; *Sunan Tirmidhī*: 3/400

⁹ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, “Concept of Barakah in Qur’ān and Sunnah: Towards its Realization in Modern Discourse”, *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2 Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf Üniversitesi, Turkey, (2015) 268

individuals can attract and sustain divine blessings in their lives. This can manifest in increased contentment, inner peace, and a closer relationship with Allah.¹⁰

2. **Material Blessings:** *Barakah* is also associated with material prosperity and abundance. Muslims believe that by seeking Allāh's guidance, working diligently, and being grateful for what one has, they can experience an increase in material resources such as wealth, health, and provisions. For example, in business, a productive and profitable venture may be seen as having *Barakah*, suggesting that it is touched by divine blessings.¹¹
3. **Time and Effort:** *Barakah* can be understood as the amplification of the impact of one's time and efforts. With *Barakah*, individuals can achieve more in a given amount of time, experience deeper fulfillment, and witness the positive outcomes of their endeavours. It is believed that when actions are aligned with Allāh's will and done with sincerity and integrity, they are blessed with *Barakah*.¹²
4. ***Barakah* in Relationships:** *Barakah* is believed to extend to relationships as well. When people treat one another with kindness, respect, and generosity, their relationships can become sources of joy, tranquility, and growth. The presence of *Barakah* in relationships fosters love, harmony, and mutual support.¹³
5. ***Barakah* in Places and Objects:** *Barakah* can also be associated with certain places, objects, and practices. For instance, mosques are considered to be blessed places where believers can

¹⁰ See, Ibn Qaiyyim al-Jawziyah, Abi 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn Abi Bakr al-Dimashqi, *Badā'i' alFawa'id*, (Misr: Maktabat al-Qāhirah, 2nd edition, 1972) 186-7.

¹¹ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 267.

¹² Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 267.

¹³ Zarabozo, Jaml al-Din M. *Commentary on the Fourty Hadith of al- Nawawi*, (Boulder,U.S.A.:Al Basheer Company for Publication and Translation, 1999).

experience spiritual rejuvenation and divine connection. Similarly, certain objects such as Qur'ans, and other religious artifacts are believed to hold *Barakah*.¹⁴

Juxtaposing the Contemporary Period with the Era of the Prophet as Regard *Barakah*

Juxtaposing the contemporary period with the era of Prophet Muḥammad allows us to reflect on the significance and understanding of *barakah* in both times. While the Prophet and his companions experienced abundant blessings, present-day societies face challenges in harnessing the divine favour- *barakah*. In other words, the times that are not dominated by modernity, *barakah* was more abundant. After modernity *barakah* became an alienated concept. Thus humanity suffers the results together.¹⁵

In actual fact, if you were to compare the era that we live in today to the era of the Prophet (SAW) and his companions, one finds a stark difference in *barakah*. So for example, you will find that the Prophet (SAW) would find a great deal of blessings in just a small piece of bread that would suffice for him and all of his companions. The era of Prophet Muḥammad was a period characterized by countless examples of *barakah*. Despite facing numerous challenges and trials, the Prophet and his companions experienced immense blessings in their lives. This era witnessed the transformation of a small, persecuted community in Makkah into a major force that spread across the Arabian Peninsula and beyond.¹⁶ The blessings bestowed upon the Prophet and his companions were not limited to matters of material wealth but also extended to their spiritual development, moral conduct, and societal well-being. For example we see the companion, ‘Uthmān

¹⁴ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 268

¹⁵ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 268

¹⁶ Ibn Kathīr, Ismāil. *Al- Bidāya wa an- Nihāyah*. (Beirut: Maktabah al- Ma‘ārif, 1979) 218

ibn ‘Affān, Allāh blessed his wealth and by his wealth, he was able to provide and sustain a whole army.¹⁷ And likewise we have the example of Zubair ibn Awwām, when he was on his death bed, he advised his son to pay back his debt. His debt reached one million and two thousand dīnār, so he was in a great amount of debt. So in paying back the debt, he said that if you are unable to pay back the debt then seek help in my freed slave and he will help you. There was a piece of land he had which grew date palm trees and so his son was able to use this land and cultivate it and therefore the value of this land reached great amounts. In fact it reached millions of dinars and he was able to pay back his debt and he also left behind four wives and he was also able to give each wife a million dinar. So look at how *barakah* occurs.¹⁸

One of the key elements that led to the abundance of *Barakah* during the Prophet’s era was the recognition and adherence to divine principles and laws. The Prophet Muḥammad held a deep connection with his Creator, which allowed him to serve as a conduit for divine blessings. His actions were guided by a profound understanding of God’s commands, and he implemented them in his personal life, as well as in the larger society. The emphasis on following these principles created an atmosphere conducive to the manifestation of *Barakah*.¹⁹

In contrast, the contemporary period faces many challenges in harnessing the blessings of *Barakah*. Technological advancements and modern conveniences have brought about numerous benefits, but they have also disconnected individuals from their spiritual roots. The focus on material wealth and personal gain has often overshadowed the pursuit of divine

¹⁷ al- Jawziyyah, Shams ad- Dīn Muhammad Ibn al- Qayyim. *Zād al- Ma‘ad*. (Beirut: Maktabah al- Manār al- Islamiyyah, 1987) 345

¹⁸ Ibn Kathīr, Ismāīl, 219

¹⁹ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 268

blessings. As a result, many societies have become consumed by materialistic desires, leading to a decline in the understanding and application of *Barakah*.²⁰

Additionally, the erosion of moral values in the contemporary period has contributed to a lack of *Barakah*. In the Prophet's era, honesty, integrity, and fairness were highly valued, and their absence was seen as an impediment to divine blessings. However, in today's world, dishonesty, corruption, and injustice have become rampant, leading to a spiritual void and a diminishing of *barakah*. Without moral conduct, societies struggle to establish an environment that invites divine blessings and prosperity.

The Biggest Factor That Declines *barakah* in the Human Life is sin. The life style designated for the man by modernity renders sin a common occurrence. Some even says that all punishment is itself a crime. As the virus-infected modern mind persuades man to underestimate sins, sins themselves become smaller and insignificant, whereas the relevant punishment for these sins according to the Islamic Law seems bigger and bigger in our eyes resulting in the lack of a proper intervention that is inevitably stored in the depths of our perception of the world³⁶ As long as man commits sins, the *barakah* in his/her life will diminish.²¹

Signs and Effects of *Barakah* in Islamic Teachings

Barakah is a manifestation of divine blessings and grace in Islamic tradition. Its signs include ease and success, multiplication, effective time management, and preservation. The effects of

²⁰ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 270

²¹ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 271

Barakah encompass spiritual growth, material prosperity, contentment, and the ability to influence and impact others. So blessings is not just about attaining great amounts of wealth, rather it is a value which Allāh has given to particular deeds. Thus it is a blessing which leads to tranquility in the soul and also to be contented. In this discourse, we will delve into the signs and effects of *Barakah* as described in Islamic teachings.

Signs of *Barakah*

One of the most apparent signs of *barakah* is abundance and increase. This can manifest in material wealth, such as the growth of one's assets or the inexplicable multiplication of provisions. Additionally, it can be seen in personal and social domains, where an individual experiences an increase in wisdom, knowledge, and influence. *Barakah* also extends to relationships, where individuals find that their connections and bonds with others strengthen and grow over time.²²

Another sign of *Barakah* is the ease and success that accompanies one's endeavours. Whether it is in the pursuit of personal goals or communal objectives, *Barakah* can be observed in the smooth progression and achievement of tasks. It is manifested through the removal of obstacles, the facilitation of solutions, and the timely realization of aspirations. Efforts undertaken with *Barakah* are often more fruitful and efficient, leading to accomplishments that exceed expectations.²³

Furthermore, *Barakah* can be recognized through the preservation and longevity of blessings. It is observed when things or situations endure and remain highly beneficial for extended periods. For instance, a physical object or property that continues to serve its purpose in excellent condition despite wear and tear.

²² Syed Amir Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1998), 146

²³ <https://myislam.org/meaning-of-barakah-in-islam>, retrieved 28/01/2024

Similarly, the effects of *Barakah* are seen in relationships that thrive and remain harmonious throughout the challenges of life.²⁴

Effects of *Barakah*

The effects of *barakah* are not limited to the individual level; they extend to communities and societies as well. When communities collectively strive for goodness and adhere to Islamic teachings, *Barakah* becomes evident in their increased prosperity, unity, and tranquility. The collective effort to seek divine blessings leads them to establish systems based on justice, compassion, and mutual cooperation.²⁵

On the other hand, the lack of *barakah* can also be observed in various forms. Its absence is witnessed in difficulties and hardships that persist despite continuous efforts. An individual may find themselves in a constant struggle, despite efforts to accumulate wealth, knowledge, or success. Relationships lacking *Barakah* may be marked by constant conflict or lack of growth.²⁶ Societies devoid of divine blessings may face widespread corruption, instability, and inequality.

In essence, *barakah* is a profound concept in Islamic teachings that highlights the blessings and increase of goodness that Allāh bestows upon individuals, places, and actions. It is recognized through signs of abundance, ease and success, preservation and longevity, and collective harmony and prosperity. By adhering to the teachings of Islam, individuals and

²⁴ <https://myislam.org/meaning-of-barakah-in-islam>, retrieved 28/01/2024

²⁵ al-Tirmidhi, Al-Hakim . *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*. Trans. Bernd Radtke. and John O'kane. (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996) 87

²⁶ Serdar Demirel and Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, 265

communities can seek and cultivate Barakah, leading to a more blessed and fulfilling life.

Ways and Means of Attaining *Barakah* According to Islamic Teachings

The person who wishes to attain the blessings in his life, then he must observe and be aware of those things which bring about these blessings. It is, if a person contemplates, he will find that he will be able to find the blessings in life by completing the following things.

Firstly, by believing in Allāh, and believing in His Messenger and adhering to the law of Allāh and His Messenger. This is in line with what Allāh says:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ ءَامَنُوا وَأَتَّقُوا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded (against evil) We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they rejected, so We overtook them for what they had earned. (Q.7:96)

Secondly, a person has to be grateful towards Allāh, for his blessings. As Allāh says,

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

If you were to be grateful to Allāh, he will increase your blessings, but if you are ungrateful, then indeed my punishment is severe. (Q.14:7)

The Messenger of Allāh (SAW) also said, “Whatever blessings Allāh sends down from the skies you will find a group of people denying this blessing.”²⁷

The third means of attaining *barakah* is having a *ḥalāl* source of income. As Allāh says:

يَمَحُوقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرِي وَيُصَدِّقُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ

Allāh does not bless usury, and He causes charitable deeds to prosper, and Allāh does not love any ungrateful sinner. (Q. 2: 276)

Elsewhere, Allāh says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

O mankind! eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Shayṭān; surely he is your open enemy. (Q. 2:168)

In the same vein, avoiding actions that are *ḥarām*, such as engaging in unethical practices, consuming alcohol and drugs, engaging in interest-based transactions, and other sinful acts, is believed to invite *barakah*.

And the fourth means of obtaining *barakah* is by staying away from *isrāf* (extravagance) in spending. Allāh in this regard says,

وَلَا تُبَدِّرْ تَبْدِيرًا إِنَّ الْمُبَدِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا

²⁷ *Sahih Al Bukhārī*: 345,

And do not squander wastefully, indeed those who spend lavishly and extravagantly, they are the brothers of the devils and the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord. (Q. 17:26)

And likewise, another means is by being truthful and straight as well. As the Messenger of Allāh (May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said two people who are involved in a transaction they will have a choice to go back on their deal as long as they do not separate, if they are truthful then indeed they will be blessed in their trade.²⁸

Another means of attaining *barakah* is to engage in supplication to the Lord over whatever favour bestowed upon him, as we saw in the case of Zubair ibn Awwām before as well. The Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has enjoined us to always offer prayers on any new things given to us.

Recommended Invocations of *Barakah* in Accordance with the *Sunnah*

Our beloved Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has emphasized on *du'a'* and *dhikr* as main parts of the believers' daily routines. He taught us many *adhkar* (remembrances of Allāh) that are easy to do and also bring immense *barakah* into one's life. Some of the recommended invocations of *Barakah* (blessings) that can be found in the *Sunnah* are as follows:

1. اللهم بارك لنا فيما رزقتنا وقتنا عذاب النار " *Allāhumma bārik lanā fī mā razaqtanā, waqīnā 'adhāban-nār*". (Oh Allāh! Bless us in what You

²⁸ *Sahih Muslim*. 2/454.

have provided for us and protect us from the punishment of the Hellfire)."²⁹

2. اللهم بارك لنا في اعمالنا ورزقنا “*Allāhumma bārik lanā fī ‘amalīnā wa riḥqinā*” (O Allāh, bless our deeds and our provisions).³⁰
3. اللهم بارك لي في رزقي وبارك لي في أهلي وبارك لي في عملي “*Allāhumma bārik lī fī riḥqī wa bārik lī fī ahli wa māli*” (O Allāh, bless me in my family and my wealth).³¹
4. اللهم بارك لنا في اسماعنا وابصارنا وقوتنا “*Allāhumma bārik lanā fī asmā’inā wa abṣārinā wa qawwatinnā*” (O Allāh, bless us in our hearing, sight, and strength).³²
5. اللهم بارك لي في سا عدي وصائمنا ومزد في رزقنا “*Allāhumma bārik lī fī sā’idī wa ṣā’iminā, wa muḥīd fī riḥqinā*” (O Allāh, bless me in my riding and fasting, and increase my provisions).³³

These invocations can be recited before or after any action you engage in, such as before eating, before starting any work or activity, or even when receiving any blessing from Allāh. By seeking the blessings of Allāh in our provisions and asking for protection from the punishment of Hellfire, we acknowledge our dependency on Allāh’s mercy and desire to earn His favour and safeguard ourselves from any harm. Remember that these invocations should be recited sincerely and with a humble heart, seeking Allāh’s blessings and acceptance in all aspects of life.

²⁹ *Sahih Al-Bukhari*: 234

³⁰ See *Sunan Ibn Majah*: 145

³¹ See, *at-Ṭabarani*: 321

³² *Sahih Al-Bukhari*: 423

³³ *Sunan At-Tirmidhi*: 198

The Relationship between *Barakah* and Well-Being among Yoruba Muslims

In the context of Yoruba Muslims, there is a strong belief that seeking *barakah* through acts of worship, such as prayers, fasting, and giving to charity, leads to a sense of contentment and happiness. Yoruba Muslims acknowledge that *barakah* comes directly from Allāh, and it is an essential part of their religious practice to strive for it.

The pursuit of *barakah* is seen as a means to attain a state of happiness that goes beyond material possessions. It is believed that when an individual or a family experiences *barakah*, they feel more satisfied, content, and grateful for what they have. This gratitude, in turn, contributes to a higher level of happiness and overall well-being.³⁴

Yoruba Muslims also associate *barakah* with harmonious relationships, particularly within the family and the community. They believe that when there is *barakah*, there is an abundance of love, understanding, and support within these relationships. This positively affects the overall happiness and mental well-being of individuals. Furthermore, the practice of seeking *barakah* encourages Yoruba Muslims to lead a morally upright life. This includes treating others with kindness, honesty, and respect. By adhering to these principles, they believe that they are more likely to receive divine blessings and, consequently, experience higher levels of happiness.³⁵

It is important to note that happiness or well-being, in the context of Yoruba Muslims, is not solely focused on individual pleasure or personal achievements. Rather, it is deeply rooted in

³⁴ Personal communication withj Shaykh Abdul Hakeem Salahudeen, aged 58, the Mudir (Proprietor) of Markaz al -Hidayah was-Sa'adah, Ifo, Ogun State, Nigeria, 12/01/2024.

³⁵ Personal communication withj Shaykh Abdul Hakeem Salahudeen.

the concept of *barakah* and the pursuit of spiritual and moral goodness. The relationship between *barakah* and happiness among Yoruba Muslims is intertwined, with one reinforcing the other.

Role of *Barakah* in Yoruba Muslim Ceremonies, Rituals and Everyday Life

Barakah plays a crucial role in Yoruba Muslim culture, shaping ceremonies, rituals, and everyday life. It is seen as a divine blessing that brings spiritual fulfillment, prosperity, protection, and various other forms of blessings to individuals, families, and communities who seek it with sincerity and piety. In ceremonies, *barakah* is invoked and sought for various purposes. During weddings, for example, it is customary for the bride and groom to seek *barakah* from Allāh for a harmonious and happy married life. The presence of *barakah* is considered essential for the success and longevity of the union. The officiating Muslim clerics led by the Imam during the marriage solemnization usually render invocation of *barakah* on the couple using prayer formulations revealing how Allāh has ordained and blessed the marriages of past prophets, such as Ādam and Ḥawā', Ibrāhīm and Sārah, Yūsuf and Zulaikhā and Muhammad and Khadījah. Such prayer goes thus:

اللهم بارك فيهما وجمع شملهما ووفق بينهما كما
وفقت بين آدم وحواء وكما وفقت بين إبراهيم وسارة
وكما وفقت بين موسى وصفورة وكما وفقت بين
سليمان وبلقيس وكما وفقت بين سيدنا محمد صلى الله
عليه وسلم وخديجة وعائشة وميمونة وصفية وسائر
أمهات المؤمنين وكما وفقت بين علي وفاطمة بنت
رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم برحمتك يا أرحم
الراحمين يا رب العالمين

O Allāh, bless them, reunite them, and grant them success, as You have made successful (the marriage) between Ādam and Ḥanwā', and as

You have made successful (the marriage) between Ibrāhīm and Sārah, and as You have made successful (the marriage) between Mūsā and Şaffūrah, and as You have made successful (the marriage) between Sulaimān and Bilqīs, and as You have made successful (the marriage) between our Master Muḥammad, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, and Khadijah, A'ishah, Maimūna, Şafīyyah, and the rest of the mothers of the believers, and just as You have made successful (the marriage) between 'Ali and Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allāh. By Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the Merciful, O Lord of the Worlds.³⁶

At some points, *waka* songs³⁷ are also used to invoke *barakah* on the marriage, thus:

Olobun F'alubarika si o e (2ce)

Chorus: Falubarika si (2ce)

Igbeyawo (name of couple)

Chorus: Olobun falubarika si

Meaning:

O Allah, bless it (the marriage)

Chorus: Bless it

The marriage of (name of couple)

³⁶ This prayer is a common inscription in the marriage certificate issued to the couple, popularly referred to in the local parlance as *Wasika*.

³⁷ *Waka* is derived from an Arabic word *waqa'a* meaning an incident, a happening or anecdote. It is a Muslim type of song which corresponds in some way to Yoruba Christian hymns. *Waka* songs are always simple and philosophical with varying wordings to suit each occasion. It contains stories of life of the Prophet, his admonitions, stories of the *Sahabah*, praises of Allah and His Prophet, several Islamic exhortations, maxims and even contain Arabic statements. *Waka* songs are sung at different Islamic ceremonies, such as *Nikkah*, *Aqiqah*, *Walimah* etc.

Oh Allah, Bless it

In addition to weddings, *barakah* is also sought in other religious ceremonies and rituals. For instance, in naming ceremonies for newborns, *barakah* is invoked to bless the child with good health, protection, and a pious life. Such invocations as rendered by the officiating clerics during the naming rites include:

جعله الله مباركا حيثما ما كان وجعله برا لوالديه
وبارك في ثدي أمه ورزق أبيه وطول الله عمره و عمرنا جميعا وسائر
المسلمين الحاضرين والغائبين

*May Allah make him blessed wherever he is, make him honourable to his parents, bless his mother's breast, and provide for his father, and may God prolong his life and the lives of all of us and all Muslims, present and absent.*³⁸

It is also a common practice to seek *barakah* during Islamic festivals such as *Īd al-Fiṭr* and *Īd al-Adhā*, where prayers are offered for blessings, forgiveness, and spiritual fulfillment.

In everyday life, *barakah* holds a vital place in the lives of Yoruba Muslims. It is believed that individuals who possess *barakah* are blessed with divine favour and protection. Many Yoruba Muslims seek to establish *barakah* in their homes through daily routines of :

1. *Tilāwah* (recitation of the Qur'ān as an act of worship). They place great importance on the recitation, memorization, and understanding of the Qur'ān. They believe that reciting the Qur'ān regularly and understanding its teachings helps to invite divine blessings and *Barakah*.
2. *Tasbīḥ* (glorifying the Names of Allāh), Yoruba Muslims engage in regular and frequent remembrance of Allāh through the

³⁸ The prayer is an excerpt from the birth certificate popularly known as *wasika* in Yoruba parlance

recitation of specific glorifications (*dhikr*). This practice helps to focus their minds on the presence of Allāh and seek His blessings.

3. *Istighfār* (Seeking Forgiveness): Yoruba Muslims engage in seeking forgiveness from Allāh through repentance and asking for His mercy. They believe that seeking forgiveness is a way to remove obstacles and invite *Barakah* into their lives. This aligns with the Qur'anic reference in *Sūratul Nūh*, verses 11-12. The Prophet is also reported to have said, “if anyone keeps on seeking forgiveness God will make for him a way out of every distress and a relief from every anxiety and will provide for him from where he did not reckon.”³⁹
4. *Du'ā'* (Supplication): Yoruba Muslims frequently make supplications to Allāh. They believe that sincere and heartfelt prayers made in the Yoruba language or Arabic language are essential in seeking divine blessings and *Barakah*. This line of thought is premised on the fact that the Prophet of Allah embroidered his life with prayers for *barakah* and in every occasion He asked for *barakah* from Allah. And he taught this to the believers as he taught them the Noble Qur'an. As part of their engagement in prayer is reading the *Dalā'ilul Khayrāt* (a lengthy composition of prayers for the Prophet) and engaging in *Nawāfil* (superogatory forms of worship).⁴⁰
5. *Ṣadaqah* (Charity): Yoruba Muslims believe in the power of giving charity as a means to invoke *Barakah*. They give generously to those in need, both within their community and outside, with the intention of seeking Allāh's blessings and abundance. They take *Ṣadaqah* in form of food to the mosque and also to the needies in motherless babies homes and prisons. They align with one of the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in a narration by Abū Hurairah

³⁹ See, *Musnad Ahmad*: 167

⁴⁰ Personal communication with Imam Abdul Gafar Murtadol, aged 64, the State Missionary of Zumratul Islamiyyah Society of Nigeria, Lagos, 23/01/2024

that Allāh's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, "*Allah said, 'O son of Adam! Spend, and I shall spend on you.'*"⁴¹ According to this *hadith*, giving charity increases *barakah* in the money you possess. The Messenger said that "*Wealth is not diminished by charity. Allāh does not add anything to the servant for his pardoning except for honour, and none is humble for the sake of Allāh except that Allāh raises him.*"⁴² The statement "*Wealth is not diminished by charity*" stated in the *hadith* above can either mean that charity brings about *barakah* and repels harm or that if even in reality wealth diminishes by giving charity, the reward gained not only compensates for the diminished amount but also proliferates it.

Barakah is also associated with prosperity and success in livelihoods. People believe that by seeking Allāh's blessings and conducting their work with sincerity and integrity, they can attract *barakah* to their businesses and endeavours, leading to growth and prosperity.

Furthermore, *barakah* is believed to bring spiritual fulfillment and a deep sense of peace. By striving for moral excellence, cultivating good character, and following the teachings of Islām, individuals hope to attain *barakah* in their personal lives and relationships.

Anomalies Associated with Invocation of *Barakah* by Yoruba Muslims

While it is important to approach religious practices with respect and sensitivity, it is worth discussing some concerns that have been raised regarding the invocation of *Barakah* by Yoruba Muslims. It is crucial to note that any anomalies or abuses should not be generalized to the entire community, as these instances might be isolated and not representative of the wider Yoruba

⁴¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari: 2345*

⁴² *Sahih Muslim: 2588*

Muslim population. Nevertheless, here are a few potential anomalies:

1. Syncretism with traditional Yoruba beliefs: The Yoruba Muslims have blended Islamic practices with their traditional beliefs, which has resulted in the invocation of *Barakah* using some traditional Yoruba rituals. For instance, some Yoruba Muslims believe that the *Barakah* of a person can be enhanced by wearing certain amulets, talisman or charms. Their belief is that as long as the talisman or amulet is on the body of the wearer, it will serve as a spoken prayer serving the purpose for which it is intended, most especially for those who cannot recite portions of the Qur'ān. This practice is not consistent with Islamic teachings, which prohibit the use of amulets or charms for protection or good luck. The Prophet (SAW) was reported to have invoked Allāh's curse on those who wear amulet: *من تعلق تميمة فلا أتم الله له ومن تعلق ودعة فلا ودع الله له* "Whoever wears an amulet, may Allāh never fulfill his wish, and whoever wear a bead for protection, may Allāh never allow him rest."⁴³ Therefore, the invocation of *Barakah* using such practices raises concerns about the authenticity of the practice and its conformity with Islamic teachings.
2. Cultural practices influencing the understanding of *Barakah*: Yoruba culture plays a significant role in the lives of Yoruba Muslims, and some aspects of these cultural practices might influence their interpretation and invocation of *Barakah*. This may lead to deviations from mainstream Islamic teachings, resulting in concerns about the authenticity of their practices. In certain cases, Muslim clerics acting as spiritual consultants, with claims to possess the ability to deliver *Barakah* or perform miracles have been met with skepticism. These claims, which are not supported by traditional Islamic teachings, can

⁴³ See, Ahmad *Hadith* 154, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān*, Vol.8, *Hadith* 448.

potentially lead to exploitation or manipulation of vulnerable individuals seeking spiritual guidance.⁴⁴

3. Commercialization of *Barakah*: Some individuals acting in the capacity of Muslim spiritual consultants claim to possess *Barakah* and offer fake *Barakah*-related products or services for a fee. They promise to provide *Barakah* to those who seek their help and charge exorbitant fees for their services. These sets of people and their likes also sell items claiming to be infused with *Barakah*. These can range from water, soap, incense and oil to clothing and accessories. These fraudsters exploit people's trust and manipulate their religious beliefs for personal gain. There is concern that these claims might be used as marketing tactics to make profits, diverting attention from the true spiritual meanings of *Barakah* and potentially misleading consumers.⁴⁵ This practice is not consistent with Islamic teachings, which prohibit the commercialization of religion and the exploitation of people's beliefs for personal gain. Therefore, the commercialization and exploitation associated with the invocation of *Barakah* by Yoruba Muslims raise concerns about the authenticity and sincerity of the practice.
4. Another anomaly associated with the invocation of *Barakah* by Yoruba Muslims is the lack of clarity about the source and nature of the *Barakah*. Some Yoruba Muslims believe that *Barakah* can be obtained from certain individuals, such as scholars or pious people. Some, especially among the *Ṣūfī* sects have gone to the extent of bowing to the images of their late saints with the belief that *Barakah* can be transmitted through physical touch or proximity to the blessed individuals, even in death. It is also not uncommon to see some Yoruba Muslims seeking *Barakah* by touching or rubbing a revered object such

⁴⁴ Personal communication with Sa'id Timehin, aged 57, Professor of Arabic Language, Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria, 12/12/2024

⁴⁵ Personal communication with Sa'id Timehin,

as a holy book, a relic, or a sacred structure, or visiting tombs of their deceased scholars to invoke *Barakah*.⁴⁶ This is height of disbelief and polytheism which is not consistent with Islamic teachings, which emphasize that *Barakah* comes from Allāh and can be obtained through obedience to His commandments and good deeds. Islam teaches that divine blessings are not confined to specific locations or individuals but are accessible to all sincere believers. Elevating certain individuals to a perceived status of intermediaries for *Barakah* goes against the fundamental Islamic principle of the direct connection between believers and Allāh.

5. Another deviation from Islamic principles occurs when individuals engage in excessive rituals or acts of worship solely for the purpose of acquiring *Barakah*. While sincere devotion is encouraged in Islam, engaging in religious practices with the primary intent of material gain contradicts the essence of faith.⁴⁷ Islam emphasizes the importance of balanced and genuine worship, rather than performing rituals as a means to an end.

It is important to note that these cases are isolated, and the majority of Yoruba Muslims adhere to mainstream Islamic teachings and beliefs. The actions of a few individuals should not be generalized or used to discredit the entire community.

Conclusion

The Yoruba people of Nigeria possess a rich cultural heritage, embracing aspects of both religion and spirituality. Among the Yoruba Muslims, the invocation of *Barakah*, a divine blessing, has proven to be a powerful force of well-being. This research has been able to unravel the importance of *Barakah*, explored its impact on the lives of Yoruba Muslims, and delved

⁴⁶ Personal communication with Sa'īd Timehin,

⁴⁷ Personal communication with Sa'īd Timehin,

into the significance it holds within the Nigerian society. The invocation of *Barakah* plays a crucial role in enhancing the well-being of Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria, fostering spiritual connection, social harmony, and personal growth. Yoruba Muslims have harnessed the power of *Barakah*, allowing it to shape their lives positively and perceive each day as a divine blessing. As Yoruba Muslims continue to embrace their faith, invoking *Barakah* will undoubtedly remain a potent force of well-being for generations to come. The interplay between faith and well-being underscores the rich tapestry of Yoruba Muslim traditions, highlighting the enduring connection between spirituality and the pursuit of a fulfilled life.

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