

Continuity and Change in Burial Rites among Sàngó Adherents in Ègbádò South, Southwest Nigeria (1960-2020)

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Abstract

Colonialism, missionary activities and modernity are given factors that constrained and almost erased the cultural practices, heritage and traditions of the colonised. In Ègbádò South, the people still held on to their cultural practices and traditions. While changes are noticeable, the belief in the gods, traditions and cultural practices continues despite the activities of the change agencies. This research, therefore, examines the continuity and change in the old-age burial rite traditions among the adherents of Sàngó worshippers in Ègbádò South area, Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria, 1960 - 2020. The study employed both primary and secondary sources. In carrying out this research, the primary sources made use of oral interviews and archival materials, while secondary sources, which included textbooks, theses, journal articles, and internet materials, were also adapted. The two sources were necessary for a balanced work. The researcher interviewed people, the majority of whom were adherents of Sàngó divinity, practitioners of Islam, Christians and traditional religions, bereaved families, as well as academics. Data were obtained through the use of purposive sampling in selecting respondents. On the whole, fifty-five (55) respondents were interviewed, who comprised Muslims six (6), Christians ten (10) and Traditionalists thirty-nine (39). Accordingly, data were descriptively analysed and presented qualitatively.

Keywords: Adherents, Burial Rites, Colonial Impact, Ègbádò Tradition, Sàngó Divinity.

Introduction

This is a study on the burial rites among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South area of Southwest Nigeria, from 1960 to 2020. Administratively, the region was divided into Ègbádò North and Ègbádò South in 1976. However, Ègbádò North was later changed to Yewa North while Ègbádò South was changed to Yewa South through a bill that altered the Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution of 1999 (Fifth Alteration, No 3) Bill, 2023 and signed into law by the President, Muhammadu Buhari on the 3rd of March, 2023. However, the names "Ègbádò" and "Yewa" shall be used interchangeably in the course of this research. The Ègbádò are of Yorùbá stock, and they occupied the Western part of the present Ogun State of Nigeria. Like other Yorùbá ethnic groups, they are rooted in Yorùbá traditional and cultural practices. One of such traditional practices is to accord their dead the last honour. However, the Sàngó adherents among the Ègbádò stand out in their burial rites to the dead because they have consistently and jealously protected the traditional

burial rites of their dead from being infiltrated by foreign cultures. This is the crux of the matter.

Burial Rites Practices

Burial rite practices remained an age long phenomenon the world all over. The practice cut across various societies, race, groups and families irrespective of geographical location. However, although, the customs of burial rites still remained universal, the methods used by each group or community to perform them vary. That is, the customs varied according to different societies, religions, age, modes of death, position, family and community traditions. For instance, the burial rites of the elderly were carried out differently from those of the children. Noteworthy also, the changes according to the period and time the society found itself. During the colonial intrusion, some of the burial rite conduct became variegated (Jefferson & Skinner, 1998) from the one carried out in the pre-colonial era. Funerals rite practices started to shift when missionaries arrived on the continent of Africa. This was because the practice came under attack (Onwuka, 2005).

Additionally, burial ritual customs were taken very serious in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society since it was thought that the deceased might plead on behalf of the living on a variety of life-related concerns through appropriate burial ceremonies (Okpalaeke, 2018). Thus, the Ègbádò (of Yorùbá descent), prior to the colonial intrusion, possessed distinctive burial customs that they used each time a member of their community died. In Ègbádò cosmology, it was widely accepted that there was life after death. For these reasons, the deceased were not taken out of this world in a thoughtless and casual manner.

Meanwhile, burial rite was a festivity associated with laying a dead person to rest with certain rituals as it is the custom of the people. It was performed in phases with each having its own significance (Nobafa, 2007) as passed down from one generation to another (Ovie, 2021). These rituals or rites were done before, during and after the burial. These last honours were ceremonies performed to bid the deceased a farewell, and to make his ways through to *Ọrun alákeji* (heaven) - the final destination for the dead. Ba-an (2023) asserted that funeral rite performance facilitated a closer bond amongst the living and the dead by bridging the disparity among the material and spiritual realms. That is, cementing unity between the living and the dead (Park, 2020). In addition, Van (2021) noted that burial rites were performed to show respect for the bereaved family members. Because it represented the intricacy of a culture's beliefs and customs surrounding the remembrance and respect of the deceased. Besides, burial rites had been associated with social and psychological well-being of individuals in the society (Mas'amah et al, 2023). It also shed light on the tradition, customs and beliefs. Besides, Sàngó adherents believed it also provided succour to the bereaved.

Burial rites were performed so that the deceased person continued to live in another world and environment. In essence, death was a passage to a different realm rather than an end of life (Lugira, 2009) or to go through the process of reincarnation. According to the Yorùbá belief, a deceased person knew all that happened upon burial and could turn towards the family and children if something went wrong (Imasogie, 1985). At the exact time, Mukuka

(2021) pointed out that mysterious death could result from not carrying out the mandatory funeral rites. Hence, care had to be taken to ensure peace and harmony with ancestors, and inadvertently, avoid trouble in the family and community. For the soul of the deceased could not be left to linger around the house. It then became “a haunting ghost” (Parrinder, 1972). Mbiti (1975) noted that there were many complex and even long rituals, rites and ceremonies associated with burial rites.

The distinct burial rite practices for the dead included, but not limited to the manner of announcement of the demise, washing (cleansing) of the corpse, digging of grave, weeping and dirge for the dead (including trained criers known as *abelekun-sokun*), burying personal belongings with the deceased, observed extended mourning periods, slaughtering of animals and fowls (especially, the use of blood), and of course, adoption of days for these rites and so on.

It was for these reasons, and many more, that the Ègbádò people of Southwestern Nigeria attached great significance to getting their dead ready for the afterlife. Glows (1837) also lent a voice by stating that he had watched the Yorùbá of Ègbádò burying their loved ones with deep mourning associated with rituals along the lines of beliefs of the departed souls. This involved the community and the family (Glows, 1837). While singing, dancing and weeping were some of the burial rite privileges enjoyed by aged deceased, young ones and babies were denied such burial rite privileges except weeping, mourning and few other things. The community strove to avoid celebrating these categories of young people at death because, majorly, funeral rite occasions were for celebrating the life of a person who had died, especially, one who had a long, successful life and left a good legacy or an initiate. However, the pre-colonial and colonial intrusion came with agents of change such as missionary activities, Western lifestyle (modernity), and education with which Ègbádò cultural heritage was subdued. With this, the Yorùbá tradition was caught between a past it could not completely retrieve and a future he could not fully comprehend. Writing on this, Idowu (1975) believed that where a traditional culture was powerful enough, it might use its power of rejection to cancel elements of the foreign culture that did not align with its own values. But it is noteworthy that Sàngó adherents held tenaciously to ancient burial practice in Ègbádò.

By and large, the focus of this work would be to unravel the effect and influence these agents of change instruments, introduced by colonialists, had on the traditional burial rite practices among Sàngó worshippers. Has there been continuity or change in cultural practices in the pre-colonial and colonial periods? What is obtainable in the contemporary time (1960-2020)? Do Sàngó adherents actually rebuffed and sustained the burial rite traditions and customs they inherited from their forefathers?

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study include to:

- i. investigate the relevance and beliefs surrounding burial rite practices among Sàngó adherents in Egbado South.

- ii. analyse cultural consequences of refusal to observe burial rites by Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South.
- iii. find out the effects of colonialism on the observance of burial rites practices among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South.
- iv. identify reasons why modernity and foreign religions have not totally uprooted the observance of traditional burial rites among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South.

Statement of the Problem

Colonialism and its change agents did not altogether erode the traditional burial practices, rather the people's cultural heritage continued as it were in the pre-colonial and colonial Ègbádò despite heavy external influence. This is one of the primary problems this work strove to address by looking at the change and continuity stemming from pre-colonial and colonial era, and what obtained in post-colonial Ègbádò. Secondly, a historical study of this nature with anthropological relevance had been evaded by many scholars. Hence, little historical works relating to rites of passage on Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò have been done. Nonetheless, the colonialists on "civilising mission" and other imperial agenda met the Sango worshippers in Egbadoland practising the religion of their forefathers with all its associated festivals, rituals and rites; but, the "visitors" appeared not satisfied with traditional cultural practices. As such, they initiated changes which resulted in modifications, physical alterations, new adaptation, and in some cases, total extinction of Yorùbá burial cultural practices.

In spite of colonial influence on traditional burial culture, many of these practices remained very much intact; a situation which called for scholarly attention to ascertain the reasons why colonialism, modernity, and foreign religions have not been able to consummately uproot the cultural practices of burial rites among the Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò, Southwestern area of Nigeria. Why the continuity and slight changes in burial rites practices in the post-colonial Ègbádò? Were there relationships between the pre-colonial and colonial practice of burial rites in Egbadoland? Has modernisation really affected the practice? These questions underscore the problems that informed this research.

Research Methodology

The study employed historical research methodology to explore the traditional burial rite practices among Sàngó worshippers. Historical methodology refers to the process by which historians garner materials and analyse data. It is from these materials that concrete evidence is formulated and conclusion drawn. Thus, both primary and secondary sources were used.

Primary Source: this source includes oral interviews, archival materials and unpublished materials. The oral interview guides were carefully developed focusing on key themes aligned with the study's objectives.

Secondary Source: in the case of secondary source, data are garnered from hard and electronic publications that include: textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, papers by scholars, and internet materials.

Also, information and materials from other fields of study complemented the historical methodology. Relevant information was sought from History, Anthropology, Sociology, Religious and Cultural Studies. The information derived from other disciplines allowed for an examination of the subject matter from various perspectives, which enhanced the quality of the study. These sources were required for a balanced work.

Data Collection: the study utilised a combination of data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. First, in-depth interview was conducted with key informants who were largely members of Ègbádò community. Secondly, focus group discussions were guided by administrative leaders of each sect. The research participants were chosen based on their unique capabilities. Thirdly, the researcher engaged in participant observation of contemporary burial rite practices among Sàngó adherents.

The study used a qualitative research approach. The target population was custodians of tradition, deity worshippers, religion practitioners, scholars, bereaved families, indigenous stakeholders, and persons who demonstrated good knowledge of Sàngó adherents' cultural practices of 50 years and above. Thus, the study employed a purposive sampling strategy to select fifty-five respondents in towns and villages in Yewa South (i.e Ìlàró Division & Ifekowajo Division). It is also important to note that a diverse mix of participants were selected taking into account factors such as age, gender, and religious beliefs. Ègbádò South has a population of about 168, 336 (Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2010).

Table 1.1 **Distribution of Respondents**

Age

Area	50-70	71-90	91- above	Total
Ifẹkówajọ	11	08	5	27
Ìlàró	13	11	4	25
Non-Resident	3	—	—	03
	27	19	9	55

Gender

	50-70		71-90		91- above		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Ifẹkówajọ	7	4	6	1	3	1	22
Ìlàró	6	7	8	4	3	2	30
Non- Resident	2	1	—	—	0	—	3
Total	15	12	14	5	6	3	55

Religion

	Christian	Muslim	Traditionalist	Total
Ìfẹ̀kówajọ	05	4	13	22
Ìláró	03	02	25	30
Non- Resident	02	–	01	3
	10	06	39	55

Occupation

	Civil Servant (Active & Rtd)	Farmers	Artisans	Traders	Total
Ìfẹ̀kówajọ	03	14	02	03	22
Ìláró	03	19	05	03	30
Non- Resident	03	–	–	–	03
	09	33	07	06	55

Age: results showed that interviewees were in the age range of 50 years and above. In addition, respondents were of sound mind. It was based strictly on recommendation and availability of these set of age groups. This implied that many of the respondents actively participated in various activities in their communities.

Sex: results revealed that majority of the interviewees were male while female respondents also took active part. This showed that male involvement in traditional burial rite activities was higher than that of their female counterparts.

Religion: Christians, Muslims and traditionalists were the respondents. This showed that each respondent belonged to one religion or the other. Therefore, there was no respondent who did not believe in God's existence and here-after.

Occupation: respondents were: traders, artisans, farmers and civil servants (active and retired). It showed that almost all human endeavours (undertaken) were captured.

Length of Residency: the interviews revealed that many of the respondents had resided in the communities for at least 30 years. Besides, many of the respondents grew up in the community. This made respondents to have enough experience and exposure about the traditional burial rite practices.

Note: the interviews were done in Yoruba Language for all the respondents. The researcher personally recorded and transcribed the interviews.

Research Questions

The work is geared towards finding answers to the following questions:

- What was the relevance and beliefs surrounding burial rite practices among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South?
- Were there consequences for not adhering to burial rites practices among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South?
- Was colonialism able to effect changes in the observance of burial rite practices in Ègbádò South?

- iv. Were the foreign religions and modernity able to totally uproot the observance of burial rites among Sàngó worshippers in Ègbádò South?

Scope of the Study

The study essentially covered selected towns and villages in Yewa South area of Ogun State, Southwest of Nigeria.. This comprised of towns and villages such as: Ìlàró, Ajilete, Owódé, Òkè Ọdàn, Olókùta, Ìwòyè, Ìwèké, Ìsàgbó, Ìlóbí, Ìjádò, Èrìnjà, Jájá, Owo, Ajise, Gbokoto, Olokuta, Olorulekan, Eredo, Idogo, Irogun, Asafo, Eyekanse, Abeokuta and Lagos. Although, burial rites practices were not peculiar to Egbadoland, the research site had been dictated by the availability of Sàngó adherents' considerable population and locations where people were able to feel the direct impact of new religions, Western education, and modern medical services. Thus, the work is limited to just a sub-cultural area in Egbadoland, and did not cover the entire Ègbádò.

Basically, this work is on the post-colonial Ègbádò. The colonial period was to understand the period of the bashing of the Yorùbá culture by the colonialists. The pre-colonial era was necessary because religion proselytisation predated colonial political control of Ègbádò. Though, it became more effective in the colonial period. The post-colonial (from 1960), Ègbádò witnessed increased number of churches and mosques. Yet, the burial rites among Sàngó adherents continued. Besides, in 2020, the agitation to change the name "Ègbádò" to "Yewa" was at its peak and this was the year when the adherents of Sàngó reaffirmed complete adherence to their burial rites at the king's palace.

Literature Review

Literature review is an integral part of research process that involves reading, analysing, evaluating, and summarising materials like books, articles, journals and theoretical report about specific research topic.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework serves as structured guides for the research, akin to a road map. It aids researchers in formulating queries, selecting methodology, and evaluating data, ensuring that every activity made is deliberate, and aligned with the study's objective (Oyewobi et al., 2024). The theories used for this study are:

Modernisation Theory

The theory asserts that underdeveloping countries can achieve economic prosperity by following the same path that developed nations took through industrialisation, technological growth, and adaptation of Western values (Mumuni & Abdulyakeen, 2025). The theory noted that every society must pass through similar stages of development i.e from traditional to modern. From oral interviews conducted, respondents believed that burial rite practices had helped to drive social cohesion, economic well-being, infrastructural development, and spiritual fulfillment for the local community. These had

led to ethical adjustments, increase participation in Sàngó burial activities, spiritual blessings and government intervention in social amenities.

Major weaknesses of the theory include: ignoring structural inequalities, such as those that arose from colonialism that was experienced in Yorubaland. Besides, the theory assumed that economic growth will naturally lead to social progress. Also, there appeared antagonism, specifically from the Christian and Islamic respondents (clerics) on the negative effect caused by the ancient burial practices. Furthermore, an increase in number of educated individuals, and exposure to embrace alternative perspective on religious practices made some respondents to critically evaluate traditional burial rite practices. These factors had resulted in resistance to and rejection of the idea of modernisation theory by many Sango adherents. For Sàngó adherents emphasised the richness and complexity of their burial practices. In all, despite slight changes caused by modernity and foreign influence, traditional burial rite practices among Sango adherents persisted.

Theory of Syncretism

Syncretism theory refers to the blending of different religions and cultural traditions resulting in a new practice and beliefs. That is, the fusion of heterogeneous irrational components into an integral worldview (Bezklubaya, 2021). In essence, cultural syncretism illustrates how distinct cultures blend, influencing each other to form a new dynamic cultural expression. This mingling occurs through various avenues, such as migration, colonisation, trade, and intercultural spread of religions.

However, most respondents, especially Sàngó adherents, believed that few religions were totally “pure” or homogeneous, and free from elements of syncretism or traces of encounter with other religions. For example, Sàngó adherents gave instances where local and foreign cultures blended when burial rites were done for persons killed by lightning in Ajilete and Asafo sometimes ago. It was also feared by many respondents that there would be repression of one of the two religions or a complete fusion of them. Furthermore, the result of syncretism might be grouped according to the degree in which the foreign elements were felt as essential or less essential. In another way, syncretism had transformed the contradiction between religio-cultural beliefs; thus, creating substantial unity of creativity forms (integration).

In fixing the universal values of culture, burial rite practices were acknowledged to have syncretic art that fixed the metaphysical meaning of transcendental being, in which natural things were not thought of as animate, but divinely felt. Many of the respondents gave examples of the beliefs in transmigration, local autopsy, and mystical danger in beliefs among Sango adherents. This showed intensive formation of universal human integrity which always stimulated interest. Additionally, syncretism was a way of mixing different types of primitive art (poetry, music, dancing) of Ogun, Oya, Osun, Sàngó divinities.

Strengths Perspective Theory

Strengths perspective theory focuses on individuals, families, and communities through a lens of abilities, talents, skills, possibilities, values, and aspirations that these entities may

have or that can use in transforming themselves (Joseph et al., 2022). The theory identified and leveraged on the inherent strengths, resources, resilience of individuals, family and community, and learn new strategies to overcome traumas, obstacles, illness or adversity. The theory noted that challenges and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of opportunity. In addition, the theory serves communities' interest through collaboration especially, when bereaved families were assisted, financially and morally, by communities they lived in. Sango adherents were noted for their readily assistance to the bereaved family.

Nevertheless, theorists have identified three main practical weaknesses of this theory: connection to contemporary neo-liberalism (Gray, 2011), lack of empirical support and applicability in the current market system (Cowger, 1998), and lack of spiritual focus (Lee, 2019). But still, Sàngó adherents and other respondents agreed that ancient burial rite practices continued to be relevant, and there were grave consequences for non adherence to the practices.

Early Sacrifices & Rites among Ancient Societies

Sacrifices and rite performance were as old as the Neanderthal predecessors who lived in Europe and Middle East many years ago, and might even reach back to Peking Man, almost one-half million years ago (Shapiro, 1974). Wallace (1966) described the rite handling of the human by the Neanderthals, suggesting that they buried their dead in caves. Grave goods were often placed with the deceased. A child's body was surrounded by a circle of ibex horns; a young man was buried with a hand ax, a flint scraper, and an assortment of animal bones; an old man was buried with an entire bison leg, tools, and lumps of red ocher. Burial with tools might have been related to the belief that the dead man required these implements for his journey to the other world. Furthermore, animal bones and skulls found near many of the graves suggested the possibility of funerary rituals (Wallace, 1966). In the same vein, Shaw (1970) noted that among the Igbo (Nigeria), burial chambers containing the remains of a ritual figure, possibly an Eze Nri, accompanied by a wealth of grave goods like bronze object, beads, ivory tusks, textiles, and other artifacts were found.

African Perspectives on Death and Burial Rites

Kayode (1984) noted that Africans lived with dead. For Africans therefore, ancestral spirits were ever present. Corroborating this, Banana (1991) noted that life was an endless enterprise. Ifie (1994) observed that Africans were able to go above in terms of burying their deceased and performing appropriate funeral ceremonies. The reasons for this included: the belief in the capacity of the deceased to bless or harm the living; the belief that the bodily death was not the end of life but an inauguration of life in another form; and the belief that if these rites were not performed there would be consequences. Meanwhile, Omoregbe (1999) noted that in Africa, the strong family ties continued beyond grave, and could not be broken. Also, Busia (1951) disclosed that Africans believed that ancestors were the custodian of the family and tribe. In addition, Ray (1979) noted that ancestors exercised

control typical between father and his son. Vaughan (1987) therefore agreed that the existence of clan ancestors assured the living that they would have an important “existence” after death.

By and large, Bascom (1969) and Ogbonna (2021) listed those who were not to be accorded appropriate burial rites to include: those afflicted with smallpox, women who died in childbirth, thieves, suspected sorcerer (bad death generally). Hence, if they were accorded appropriate burial, there would be negative consequences. Meanwhile, Idowu (1962) and Ogunbowale (1971) considered the process of sacrificing “the fare-fowl” (*adiye irana*), as being the one of the first step in burial rites to be performed (among Sàngó adherents) immediately a person died. The fare-fowl was meant to secure a right-of-way for the soul of the dead.

Burial Rites in Some African Clans

In his article on Delta State’s Itsekiri, Ogisi (1987) described a three-day ceremony that included a burial rendition of burial rites and non-ritual musical genres. While, Iniaghe & Obiakor (2024) noted that traditional burial rites among Isoko and Urhobo culture would last for about four days after the interment. On the fourth day, the wife(s), children and relatives of the deceased were expected to shave their heads in honour of the deceased. In the evening of the lying-in-state, a goat must be slaughtered. This was called *Evwieaghun* or *Evwe-inwwuin*. The goat was to be consumed by the children of the deceased. Among the Temne of Sierra Leone, when a person died, according to McCulloch (1950), the relatives mourned for four days, but the widows mourned for a longer time - between fourteen and forty days. Likewise, Nadel (1954) observed that the funeral ceremony among the Nupe began with the burial and followed by three funeral rites performed at the intervals of eight days, forty days, and one hundred and twenty days after the burial. It is imperative to note that among Sàngó adherents, days were also allotted for burial rites to be done. At least, seven days were for anyone killed by thunder lightning. This particular belief has not changed.

Among the Dagomba of Ghana, Agordoh (2002) reflected on music and dramatic display that occurred during burial ceremony which essentially helped to aid in uniting the people. Nketia (1975) maintained that music served as a means of communicating during funeral celebration. He further added that in some locations or villages in north Western Ghana, they used the xylophone to play and composed tunes at funeral ceremonies to make specific announcements. The music would reveal whether a man, a woman, an old person, or a child had died. This practice of rendering music and tones were relevant among Sàngó adherents. For example, music was meant to honour the dead and announced the death. Moreover, Bohannan & Bohannan (1953) noted that among the Tiv, burial rites generally took place within twenty-four hours after death. Some articles like cloth and ornament were placed on the grave. Here, Sàngó adherents believed that contamination was not only based primarily on hygiene, but on the view that the act was repulsive to gods. So, every article commonly used by the deceased must be buried with him. For example, the property (i.e house, personal effect) of the deceased were regarded as being polluted. Furthermore,

Little (1951) observed that among the Mende of Sierra-Leone, the spirit of the deceased, especially a chief, was believed to be crossing a river, or climbing a mountain, therefore, certain burial rituals were performed to enable him make the journey into a new land. Parrinder (1969) explained that in order to help him in his climbing, a little water had to be poured down his throat by a child. Other things done for the journey to the other world beyond included: the washing and dressing of the deceased, the plaiting of the hair, and the tying of money to the wrists of the dead. Awolalu & Dopamu (2005) noted that those who took part in the burial rites must be purified before they returned home. Nevertheless, the Igbo had two important kinds of funeral ceremonies for every adult who died a good death. According to Awolalu (2005), the first ceremony was the physical burial of the body. While the second was intended to make the deceased secured his place in the company of the ancestors which usually came up at a much later date. It is important to note therefore that Sàngó adherents had a belief in life beyond the grave. Hence, a transition from human to divine essence was relevant to worshippers.

Moreover, Snell (1986) narrated the way and manner in which the Nandi of Kenya handled the bodies of the dying and the dead. The dying and very sick were moved from the Nandi clan's residence and abandoned in a distance open field. They were willing to bring the sick person back into the homestead, if he overcame his hardship, but if he died, the body would be left for the hyenas to eat. This was one of the greatest felonies among Sàngó adherents. The effect of leave sick and dying human being unattended to was grave. Meanwhile, Chiefs oversaw the funeral rites in Okpoama in Bayelsa State according to Alagoa (1995). Wake keeps took place, which mostly consisted of female dancers (*sekiapu* dance). As part of the rites of *otititin*, elderly women sung and performed the unusual *ikpusu* dance in seven predetermined steps.

It is imperative to note that burial rite practices in each society or community studied shaped their beliefs; thus, different methods of burial rites were used by groups. Secondly, the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural practices, including burial rituals in Egbado were topics that had been neglected. The various work studied therefore, were not detailed enough to bridge the difference in burial rites beliefs among different guilds, subgroups, communities and all geographical areas. In essence, there is a need to reconstruct the ancient burial rite practices from the pre-colonial era. Thus, all the work examined could not provide detailed valuable insights into ancient practices of various communities. Importantly, traditional burial rites among guilds, deity worshippers, subgroups and others remained uninvestigated. Hence, the gap created on burial rites among Sango worshippers need to be studied in order to fill the gap.

Empirical Review

Davou & Davou (2022) work compared the burial practices from the past and the present in Berom area in the current Plateau State. The work noted that in spite of the modern-day, Christian burial system in Beromland still respects some of the traditions; such as, family greeting from the deceased's paternal and maternal homes, burying deceased in family

graveyards, and so on. On the other hand, Okpalaeke (2018) worked on the impact of colonialism with particular attention paid to continuity and change that colonial rule wrought on the funeral culture of the Umuna people. The study discovered funeral practices among the Umuna people, before the intrusion of the Europeans, were strictly in categories which held great cultural significance for the people. Nonetheless, the community witnessed changes in their traditional funeral practices when the colonialists came with their influence. However, some aspects of their traditional funeral practices continued to hold in certain key aspects of that culture. In the former, the study did a thorough job by investigating the past and present burial practices, but left a gap in analysing burial rites practices among different religious groups. Also, there was insufficient analysis of symbolic meaning. In the latter, the author though reconstructed burial rite practices before and after Europeans' involvement, but failed to discuss the significance of colonialists' influence using agents of change. Also missing was the distinct subgroups' unique burial rite practices.

Furthermore, Ogbonna (2021) x-rayed the burial rites in the three religions (African Traditional Religions (ATRs), Islam and Christianity). The study noted that each religion has its own way of according respect to the dead which had witnessed slight changes at the moment. Same as the work of Ndukwe, Ihechu & Ralph-Nwachukwu (2021) which noted that modernity had affected the Igbo cultural practices. While the two studies investigated the religio-cultural aspects of burial rite practices, there was lacuna in distinct practices of burial rite among subgroups.

Opoola (2019) worked on gender differentiation in Yoruba burial rites. The author noted that burial rite practices were done to mark the exit of aged men of Ogun adherents and the chief head of masquerades of women. However, the emergence of Western civilisation brought great changes both positively or negatively. While the work examined potential difference in burial rites practices among males and females; yet there was a gap in analysing symbolic meanings and cultural significance of specific burial rite practices.

In addition, Nwokoha (2020) worked on the socio-religious and economic implication of traditional burial and funeral rites using Ezzaland as its scope. The study proffered solutions to the burden of funeral rite borne mostly by the families and friends. Meanwhile, the study did not have an in-depth discussion on cultural significance of this burial rite practices which warranted the financial burden. In the case of Rongmei people in Northeast India, Gonmei & Gangmei (2024) explained the intricate relationship between tradition and modernisation. The study examined how modernisation had transformed the traditional Rongmei lifestyle. Also, it provided significant insights on cultural preservation and socio-economic change within indigenous groups. However, the study missed the distinct subgroups' unique burial rite practices. Also, Sàngó adherents' beliefs such as euthanasia practice, euphemistic expression, local autopsy, mystical danger, and deceased transmigration roles were missing in the study. This is a huge gap.

By and large, it is imperative to state that studies have delved with issues burial rites and funeral tradition among various societies. Indeed, studies abound in tradition and customs of the Yoruba which encapsulated the burial rite activities. Yet, this work has been devoted

to the study of burial rites among the Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò, a Yoruba subgroup society. Moreover, many researchers have often neglected the fact that adherents of a particular cult, group or religion have a unique burial rite for deceased members other than that of the clan or community; which so far, remained a gap. Nevertheless, the present exercise feels more challenged to investigate and discuss the issue that has created this lacuna.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that all the aforementioned works (earlier examined) have contributed in one way or the other in guiding the present study. These works have become materials that are much needed to face the challenge. Thus, it serves as a foundation needed upon which the superstructure of the line of thought in this study is built. In fact, this work would steer, persuade and encourage other researchers to contributing to historical and anthropological knowledge. Yet, the evolving knowledge which this work would provide does not only represent progress in academia but it also seeks to contextualise its findings within the larger body of research. Therefore, the study is a path-breaking effort in any discussion on burial rite among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South area of Southwest, Nigeria.

Analysis of Findings

The relevance and beliefs surrounding burial rites practices among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò

Jefferson & Skinner (1998) explained the relevance of deceased joining the ancestors hence burial rites were meant not to be carelessly and casually performed. To put it simple, funeral customs were thought to give the survivor a stronger sense of assurance. As an ancestor, the departed had transited to the afterlife and were going to be able to help the living in their lives. This was always the thought of the bereaved family, friends and community. Also, it should be noted that among Sàngó adherents, millet, maize or seedlings were taken to, and left for days on the grave of the deceased. This was done as a symbolic gesture to have high yield when the seedlings were eventually planted. This metaphoric gesture symbolised the belief that the dead, who had transformed to an ancestor, had the power to prosper his lineage. In spite of the colonialists' influence, this belief has not changed.

Furthermore, burial rite was relevant because it offered a respite, as the society and individual accommodate dramatic changes. The physical death of a person did not come immediately to convince others that they had passed away. Pictures of the dead continued to appear. There were too many ties to society for him to be cut off suddenly. It should be noted that the period of the traditional burial rite ceremony provided the opportunity for this social adjustment. In addition, similar to farewell ceremonies, burial rites were linked to concepts of totality of sequence in human events. Like past social transitions (rites of passage) that have occurred throughout the lives of the individuals, the last stage must be commemorated. Meanwhile, death was linked to feelings of loss and grief, agony, and sorrow. Therefore, funeral customs served as a reminded to Sàngó adherents that death and pain were natural occurrences.

Aside of this, funeral orations made over the dead served as a keynote as adherents' burial rite. Each speaker praised the deceased's deeds, virtues, and character; they talked of his noble trait, his exploits among his family and friends as a form of appreciation. These orations served as a means of submitting requests and supplications to the ancestors in some dire situations. In the meantime, the funeral rite served as a way to show devotion and adoration. In the context of atonement, this was important. It was understood that in order to show his commitment to make amends with his ancestors, the undeserving offender offered a gift to replace him. In this instance, the rite served as a purification method for the deceased. Nonetheless, findings through respondents interviewed revealed that practitioners of burial rites used offerings and sacrifices as a source of livelihood. For instance, among the Sàngó adherents demand were made of huge materials and money before a deceased member could be ritually buried.

Meanwhile, Sàngó adherents explained the general custom existed which prescribed that a deceased's homestead should be used as a final resting place. Special meaning was attached to dead persons being buried at homes. The respondents described this concept as "place identity" and this entailed the belief that there was an attachment to the clan or community which forms part of person's identity. This was exactly why the geographical placing of grave site and burial location were of utmost importance. Therefore, to have one's deceased buried away from home was to have "thrown" the dead away from their everyday life-contexts.

When analysing what other clans could learn from burial rites among Sàngó adherents, it was worth appreciating the immense community-based contribution and orientation. Members of the community promptly mobilised after a person had passed away. The physical work required digging up tents and structures for the death rite activities, as well as assistance with cooking and household tasks were done by family, friends and the community. Besides, beliefs such as euthanasia practice, euphemistic expression, conduct of local autopsy, ritual of averting mystical danger, deceased transmigration (metempsychosis), rite as a social construct (communal support), death as an entity, purification of bereaved, concept of reflexive shadow, life beyond the grave and concept of segregation in burial rites were few of many beliefs held by Sàngó adherents.

The cultural consequences of refusal to observe burial rites among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò

According to Imasogie (1985), a departed person knew all that happened during the funeral celebrations and might act the family and children if something went wrong. Therefore, it was a taboo among adherents if the deceased was not properly buried. Each family, no matter their financial status, struggled to bury their loved ones, and to retain and earn more values in the community. It was an embarrassment for the children of the deceased if proper burial rites were not accorded their parents; likewise, to a husband who refused to bury his wife according to the traditions. In the olden days, such defaulters would be ostracised from communal functions and responsibilities. The defaulter would not be able to fully associate with his age-group because people believed that the person had no regard for the dead and

the ancestors. To avoid this shame and devaluation, Sàngó adherents buried their dead according to socio-religious expectations.

In addition, the fear of social disturbance made people glue to Sàngó burial rites practices. If necessary, burial rites were not performed, the dead (ghost) could be seen frequently in the house or in the neighbourhood (Parrinder, 1972). Then, dead person would become “a haunting ghost”. *Oku igbe* (bush death) – which means: *may you die in the bush alone and uncared for, and so, receive no funeral rites* was one of the most frequent consequences of people who refused to provide their departed loved ones with proper burial rites.

Moreover, the fear of reciprocity made people not to jettison the idea of ancient burial rites; thus, sticking to the Sàngó traditional practice despite modernity introduced by the colonialists. The fear was that children would reciprocate the gesture if their parents refused burial rite in the traditional manner. Respondents based their submissions on the law of karma.

The effects colonialism brought on the observance of burial rites among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South

Oral interviews held revealed few changes in the conduct of burial rites among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò South. One instance was the technique of preserving corpse among worshippers. One of the methods was the use of local gin poured into the mouth of deceased or the use of pot with salt or an axe placed at the chest of the deceased. At times, the pounded stem of a plantain tree (like a sponge) was spread over the deceased's body. However, some Sàngó adherents' corpses were being taken for embalmment in hospitals nowadays. Respondents alluded to the fact that the modern method was healthy, and eliminated stress. Though, many Sàngó adherents continued to use the old method of preservation of corpse.

Besides, in modern days, family members of the deceased now used curriculum vitae of the dead as a means to be patronised during burial rite festivities. Advertisements were made on social media without delay. This was the popular means of sending information to family, friends and community. Though, few adherents of Sàngó worshippers instead continued to have sober reflection of the sad event that had happened without any form of announcement or invitation.

Among Sàngó adherents of ancient, burial rites were always done with the support of family, friends and community. People paid condolences and supported the bereaved family with money and materials to be used for rites and rituals. On the contrary, the number, rank and dress of the visitors were indications of the success of burial according to modernity. Hence, burial festivities were conducted with fun-fare as part of civilisation. Aside, the concept of professionalism had been introduced into burial rites among Sango adherents. The task carried out by the bereaved family members and friends were delegated to “outsiders” (professionals). In addition, there was a new vogue of commercialisation of burial. Burial rites practices were seen as a business. Highlife music had replaced traditional drumming, panegyric poems and dances used to appease the dead

spirit and comfort the bereaved. As a matter of fact, burial rite had assumed a “potlatch character” among the modern society. At times, requests were made that the burial rites be postponed until money was available.

Why modernity could not uproot the observance of burial rites among Sàngó adherents in Ègbádò

Kayode (1984), Vaughan (1987), Etuk (2002) analysed the importance attached to the existence of life after death in Africa. Specifically, Omoregbe (1999) noted that before colonialism, people treated their dead with great respect, and that strong family tie continued beyond grave. Many of the respondents agreed that a parent’s love for his children persisted after death. The bond was able to endure because of the notion that the parents who passed away had gone to a higher state of existence. Nonetheless, such death would persist within the family if the body was interred by family members without the consent and invitation of Sàngó priests. A man slain by lightening, for instance, would always witness such in his family if failed to perform the necessary rituals to avert such a terrible incident.

Additionally, burial rite practices were strongly believed to be important for spiritual upliftment of the bereaved. During the funeral ceremony, Sàngó devotees asked the gods and their ancestors for blessings. Essentially, funeral ceremonies gave Sango adherents a chance to reaffirm their commitment. Through prayers and offerings, people were able to communicate with their ancestral realm and experience spiritual rewards. The deceased person joining his or her ancestors implied that the family members could pray to him or her, because the deceased now served as intermediaries between humanity and divinity. Reason why it was difficult to totally uproot the observance of burial rite practices among Sàngó adherents for foreign religions and modernity. Hence, the dead were perceived as gods.

The economic impact of burial rites on the life of Sango adherents could not be over-emphasised. People trooped out to watch and participate in burial rituals of the departed. In the meanwhile, market women and other companies like transportation would witness high level of patronage particularly if the deceased had many siblings or was a well-known member of the community. For new outfits like *aso ebi* people were easily forced to sew in hurry. With the economic considerations discussed, modernity was not able to stop or bring total change in the Sàngó adherents’ burial rite practices.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Sàngó worshippers’ traditional burial customs were deeply ingrained. These burial rites practices and beliefs had witnessed little changes in spite of pressure from colonialists’ culture and modernity. Overall, these indigenous traditional practices remained formidable. Indeed, due to the negative consequences for non-performance of proper burial rites, socio-religion and economic reasons, Sàngó adherents had stuck to their burial rite traditions with slight changes.

Recommendations

On the indigenous burial rite practices among Sàngó adherents, the researcher suggested and recommended as follows:

- i. Sango adherents should remain steadfast in observance of their culture practices, especially, burial rites because of its relevance and beliefs surrounding them.
- ii. The implication and negative consequence of not adhering to traditional burial practice is huge. Therefore, Sango adherents, families and community should always abide by the dictates whenever death occurred. All the conventions stipulated must be performed in traditional form.
- iii. The little changes that colonialists had brought should be limited to positive ones that are meant to accelerate development. Thus, parents are challenged to take quality time in educating their children about ethnic customs and burial ceremonies.
- iv. More energy should be channeled towards raising awareness through publication of papers and books, establishing museums, documenting to protect traditional burial practices so as to showcase the relevance of the burial rite practices among Sango adherents. Of equal importance are: sponsored cultural programmes on radio, television and internet that are mainly exposition of Sango worship. Because it has been found that people's misconceptions about burial customs are a result of their inadequate indigenous religion and culture.

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Appendix

Part B (Oral Interviews)

S/N	Names of Respondents	Sex	Age	Occupation	Religion	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
1.	Aborode Olakunle	M	94	Farming	High Priest	Ajilete	26/2/24
2	Adegbite Fadipe	M	56	Farming	Muslim	Oke-Odan	4/11/25
3	Adegbodun Ademola	M	52	Artisan	Christian	Owode	26/4/25
4	Adewumi Saheed	M	58	Farming	Muslim	Isagbo	3/11/24
5	Adeyemi Suenu Wale	M	—	Academia	Christian	Lagos	3/8/24
6	Ajani Odewale	M	72	Artisan	Sango Adherent	Jaja	5/9/24
7	Ajeigbe Adunni	F	80	Farming	Traditional Chief	Ilaro	24/9/24
8	Akinjobi Alice	F	62	Artisan	Priest	Iwoye	19/10//24
9	Akinola Olamilekan	M	80	Artisan	Muslim	Ajise	3/11/24
10	Akinsanya Ramon	M	75	Farming	Sango Devotee	Eredo	29/8/24
11	Akintunde Asake	F	68	Trading	Sango Adherent	Jaja	29/9//24
12	Alagbe Opeyemi	M	82	Farming	Traditional Priest	Owo	11/9/24
13	Alibi Tajudeen	M	92	Farming	Indigenous Priest	Iweke	24/4/25
14	Amusa Raufu	M	69	Rtd Public Servant	Priest	Olorulekan	20/7/24

15	Ayinla Kayode	M	58	Farming	Sango Priest	Ajilete	29/8/24
16	Babajide Adebayo	M	71	Farming	Christian	Erinja	20/3/25
17	Bankole Mathew	M	72	Farming	Christian	Ilaro	17/10/24
18	Edun Keyinde	F	62	Farming	Chief Priest	Ijado	21/8/24
19	Edunjobi Taiwo	F	68	Rtd Civil Servant	Muslim	Owode	27/10/24
20	Egungbohun Adebo	F	78	Farming	Priest of Ogun	Ijado	28/8/24
21	Ewumi Afolabi	F	64	Farming	Muslim	Oke-Odan	26/4/25
22	Fagbohun Adejoke	F	96	Farming	Indigene	Eyekanse	1/12/24
23	Fajimi Bernice	F	97	Farming	Sango Adherent	Olokuta	1/12/24
24	Fashola Rukayat	F	65	Rtd Civil Servant	Chief (indigenous religion)	Eredo	6/4/24
25	Idowu Adejoke	F	55	Artisan	Sango Adherent	Idogo	28/9/24
26	Kosoko Rebecca	F	64	Rtd Civil Servant	Chief Priest	Olorulekan	1/12/24
27	Kudogbeni Omadedode	M	64	Farming	Sango Adherent	Irogun	27/10/24
28	Kudogbeni Setonji	M	94	Farming	Ifa Priest	Asafo	27/10/24
29	Malik Mary	F	63	Trading	Sango	Ilobi	6/11/24
30	Mulero Tajudeen	M	60	Farming	Sango Adherent	Olokuta	24/8/24
31	Muniru Durowoju	M	66	Rtd Civil Servant	Chief Priest of Ogun	Ajilete	29/7/24
32	Obanla Favour	F	52	Farming	Sango Adherent	Irogun	2/11/24
33	Odeboju Peter	M	63	Rtd Civil Servant	High Chief (indigenous)	Eyekanse	21/8/24
34	Oduniyi Eniola	F	65	Academia	Christian	Abeokuta	27/10/24
35	Ojo Mathew	M	93	Farming	Sango Adherent	Oke Odan	2/11/24
36	Ojubanire Opemipo	M	90	Trading	Muslim	Iweke	21/8/24
37	Ojulari Ayomide	F	60	Farming	Sango Adherent	Owode	17/11/24
38	Ojuotimi Durowoju	M	65	Farming	Sango Adherent	Ilobi	26/11/24
39	Olayode Israel	M	75	Farming	Christian	Ijado	22/10/24
40	Olorode Olaleye	M	82	Farming	Christian	Oke-Odan	2/11/24
41	Oloruntosin Serah	F	84	Trading	Christian	Ajilete	3/11/24
42	Olowode Akin	M	74	Farming	Christian	Erinja	6/11/24
43	Oludeyi Mary	F	78	Trading	Sango Devotee	Asafo	11/9/24
44	Olusi Bayo	M	86	Farming	Priest	Idogo	3/11/24
45	Opeisa Joseph	M	59	Farming	Chief Priest	Olorulekan	30/8/24
46	Opeoluwa Jonathan	M	86	Farming	Christian	Gbokoto	2/11/24
47	Otaoroju Kudirat	F	82	Artisan	Chief Priest	Iwoye	12/10/24
48	Salako Adelakun	M	99	Trading	Sango Devotee	Erinja	22/11/24
49	Salami Wale	M	—	Academia	Christian	Owode	26/4/24
50	Sangorinde Rasheed	M	82	Farming	Sango Devotee	Owode	24/8/24

51	Sonayon Dotonu	M	97	Farming	Priest of tradition	Gbokoto	27/10/24
52	Soyinka Ajadi	M	81	Farming	Sango Adherent	Iwoye	16/11/24
53	Tesilimi Biodun	F	100	Artisan	Sango Devotee	Eredo	22/10/24
54	Waheed Ajike	F	69	Farming	Chief Priest	Jaja	20/10/24
55	Zaanu Mathew	M	64	Farming	Traditional High Chief	Iweke	26/8/24

Ethical Consideration of the Study

In the conduct of the study, the researcher was guided by the following ethical considerations:

Vulnerability: the respondents of the study were majorly the people of 50 years and above, and above in Yewa South Local Government communities who were of legal age. The participation of respondents in this study was voluntary. They had the option not to participate in this study, and those who decided to participate were asked to sign a consent form. Even, after signing the consent/ assent form, they were still free to withdraw any time without giving a reason, and doing so would not affect the relationship they have, if any, with researcher.

Conflict of Interest: the researcher made the respondents understand that there was no conflict of interest or other potentially conflicting interests, including financial interests and relationships and affiliations between the researcher and the respondents in the different HEIs in the subject matter or material discussed in the research, especially since the researcher had no financial and personal gain from the study. This study was conducted solely for research and the professional advancement of the researcher. Since there would be no conflict of interest, the researcher indicated in the letter to respondents that he had no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

Informed Consent Process: the decision of the respondents to participate or not to participate in the study was voluntary. In addition, the respondents could withdraw their consent and their participation at any time without prejudice. Lastly, participants were made to sign the Informed Consent Form to attest their willingness to be part of the study before granting verbal interviews. They were made to sign the form as a manifestation that they have understood the instructions and have decided to participate in the study.

Review of Risks and Measure to Mitigate: no risks were involved in the respondents' participation in the study other than slight mental stress as they answer questions to measure their information literacy skills. The researcher made sure that all ambiguous questions were cleared and easily understood by the respondents. Moreover, the researcher gave enough time to the respondents to answer the questions.

Compensation: the respondents were not promised or given any reward or incentive for the research. Also, they would not get any direct or indirect benefit.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: to maintain the respondents' anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher ensured, and was guided against unauthorised access to data. Data from the study were discarded through shredding after the study would be bound, presented, and published. The researcher removed any identifying information after analysing the data, and all study results were reported without identifying information so that no viewing the result would be able to match anyone with the responses.

Privacy: the privacy was maintained since the verbal communication did not contain the real name (except for my two supervisors).

Justice and Fairness: for the principle of justice and fairness, the respondents were treated fairly. That is, they were given equal treatment without prejudice.

Community Consideration: the study results would be given to the library for use by academic librarians to initiate or improve their library orientation programmes. Also, the output would be used as

a manual for librarians to guide researchers in searching, evaluating information sources and websites for reliability, basis for ethical and legal use of information.

Benefit from the Study: this will benefit all students. Indirect benefit is when data from this study will provide baseline information for administrators to enrich the curriculum and enhance the facilities and services of libraries.

Result Communication: the researcher would ensure that the work is free of plagiarism or research misconduct and accurately represent the study result.