



Ebo (Sacrifice) in Ifa Religious Tradition of the Yoruba, Southwestern Nigeria and Its Implications for Public Health

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ABSTRACT

Ebo (sacrifice) is the feeding of spiritual entities such as gods, witches, and other energies believed to maintain equilibrium between the physical and spiritual worlds. It is an integral part of the Ifa divination system, a religious tradition in Yoruba society, southwestern Nigeria, which provides solutions to various problems. The materials for Ebo range from food items and animals to mineral and natural resources, including both living and nonliving things. Depending on the dictates of the Ifa oracle, Ebo can be offered at any time and placed in locations ranging from private spaces to public areas such as roadsides, rivers, gutters, or canals. Public reaction to the indiscriminate placement of Ebo is predominantly negative, except among practitioners or those offering it. This negativity stems from exposure to western education, foreign religions, and modern civilization. Common societal concerns include whether Ebo, beyond being an eyesore, contributes to air, water, and soil pollution, thus endangering public health. This paper aims to address the public health implications of Ebo placement. To explore these issues, interviews were conducted with 10 Babaláwo-Ifa priests, 10 men, and 10 women in Ibadan who had participated in offering Ebo. The content analysis of their responses revealed no consensus. Opponents of Ebo offerings cited speculative dangers, religious sentiments, and western education as factors shaping their views. This study highlights the complex interplay between traditional practices, modernity, and public health concerns, calling for further dialogue and solutions to mitigate potential risks.

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INTRODUCTION

Ebo-sacrifice is a major factor in the belief system of the Yorùbá. This is so because human beings are bound to have problem and the major way of setting off such a problem is to offer Ebo, by a competent Babaláwo- Ifá priest. Ebo is the essence of divination because it is the fundamental solution to almost every problem that takes a client to a Babaláwo. Ebo has procedures and technicalities that must be strictly followed if positive result must be achieved. However, despite its importance, many people still look at it scornfully particularly in big cities in Yorùbáland. They look at it with disdain and argue that it could jeopardize human health. They are of the opinion that Ebo that is placed beside the river, if animals like goats and fowls pushed some of the rotten items inside the river could constitute danger for human.

While many of these ecologists who believe that Ebo can endangered human health based their arguments on

civilisation, exposure to western education and religious sentiment, those who believe that Ebo is not harmful (Revivalists) also argued that it can revitalize the land and prevent deforestation and help feed animals, humans and spiritual agents. Thus, provide equilibrium and holistic healing for the world at large. The questions are, can rotten and bad smelling Ebo, revitalize the earth as postulated by the revivalists or pollute the earth as proposed by the ecologists? Besides Ebo-sacrifice being an eye sore to behold, does Ebo not constitute air, water and soil pollution thereby endangering public health in a given society where Ebo is being offered regularly? What are the implications for the general public? These are some of the questions this paper set out to address.

THE YORUBA AND HER RELIGIOUS TRADITION

The Yorùbá, like every other people around the world believe in the existence of the Supreme Being called Olorun

in Yorùbá who is believe is responsible for the creation of the heavens and the earth. He lives in the seventh heaven where he does wonders. He is the head of all the Awo- initiates in heaven where he oversees all the Aare-wonders that he created through his word and made Olódùmarè who lives in the sixth heaven to manage the affairs of all that Olorun created Lijadu (2001, p.1-2) is of the opinion that Yorùbá religion revolves round *Ifá*. This is so because there is no shrine, temple, grove or sacred places where *Ìwùre*- prayer takes place that *Ifá* will not feature in Yorùbáland. This is to confirm whether the *Ìwùre* offered had been accepted or not. That was the reason why it was a must in the past before the advent of colonial masters for every Yorùbá to learn *Ifá* for a period of five to seven years and have one hand of *Ifá* both male and female (Abimbola, 1997). This is what is consulted on behalf of the person whenever he/she desire to consult *Ifá*. This is the reason why *Ifá* priesthood is held in high esteem and *Ifá* priests important personalities in Yorùbáland. According to Abimbola (1997, p86), they (*Ifá* priests) are the intellectuals of their society. As a result, they enjoyed some freedoms, part of which was wearing of beaded objects like beaded crowns shoes, necklace and staff like kings. According to Falola (2022, p27), the esoteric nature of the *Ifá* cult and the diviners' profession hinges on the African traditional belief system, religion and belief in the existence of supernatural beings discussed below.

As said above, beside belief in Olódùmarè, the Supreme Being, Yorùbá religion is also anchor on their belief in the existence of divinities who are the ministers of Olódùmarè. According to the Yorùbá myth of creation, they were the first inhabitants of this world. They participated actively in the creation order as explained by Adeoye (2023, 11) and Idowu (1990, p70). The Yorùbá also belief in spirits who are believed to be in charge of all things that Olódùmarè created through his agents, divinities. They are of various types and shapes. There are nature spirits who inhabit mountains, rivers, groves, trees and so on. There are also sky spirits and spirits of the dead (Idowu, 1991). Another basic pillar in the belief system of the Yorùbá religion is ancestors who are believed to be the living dead. They are believed to be in the spiritual realm overseeing the affairs of the living families left behind. They are capable of rewarding and punishing offenders of the land. The Yorùbá also believe in the

existence of mysterious powers which include the power of magic and medicine, activities of witches and wizards alleged to be the major causer factor of human ailments (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979). These are five major beliefs that the religion of the Yorùbá hinged on.

EBO (SACRIFICE) IN *IFA* RELIGIOUS TRADITION OF THE YORUBA, SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPORTANCE

E, bo -sacrifice is defined in two ways, secular and religious. In the secular sense, *E, bo* means forgoing for a particular cause that which is precious. That is, denying oneself certain benefits and advantages for a particular purpose. In the religious way, *E, bo* is the destruction of a victim for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a right relationship of man to the sacred order (Awolalu, 1979). According to Elebuibon (2000, p11), *E, bo*-sacrifice is *Ètùtù*-propitiatory, an atonement and carrier of bad fortunes and mishaps that wards off all forms of adversaries on the path of man and nations and ushered in positive and fortunes of all kinds. In *Ifá* religious tradition, there are three major divisions which are *Dídá o, wó* -casting. That is, the use of any of these instruments; *Ò, pè, lè* -pod of schrebera arborea constructed with the use of strings or chains and must be eight in all with four on each side, *E, e, rìndìnlogún*-sixteen cowries that are very common among Orisa devotees. There is also *Olókun*-divination with shells picked from the atlantics and consecrated to become effective for the purpose of divination. The Yorùbá used kola nut as a means of divination. However, there are basically three types of kola nuts. There is one with two lobes called Gbanja. There is another one called *Àbidun*. It has four lobes but it is not used for anything beyond eating occasionally because of its slippery nature. Then there is *Àbàtà*. This is the kind of kola nut that usually have three, four, five six and seven lobes. Occasionally, we do have some without lobes at all that is called *Lákíríboto*. Though they are not used for divination, yet they can be used for prayers in the temples and shrines particularly of the male Orisa. They can also be requested for especially by *Ifá* as explained by *Irete Meji* (Adewale, 2017,) in *Ifá* divination system where *Ifá* says;

Òròrò ma rò fún' kin
Dífá fún Ò, rúnmià
Baba ns, awo rè' lú Gbànja
E, bo, ni wó, n ní k' ó s, e
Ó gb' E, bo níbè, ó rúbo,
Njé, ire o, lá ni mo nwá
Ma rò fún' pín mí
Òròrò ma rò fún' kin
Ire gbogbo ni mo nwá
Ma rò fún' pín mí
Òròrò ma rò fún' kin

In-depth discussion with Ikin
Ifá divination was performed for Orunmila
 Father was *Ifá* expedition to the city of two lobe kola nuts
 He was asked to offer sacrifice
 He heard and complied
 The blessing of riches that I want
 I will discuss it with my destiny
 In-depth discussion with Ikin
 All the other blessings that I want
 I will discuss it with my destiny
 In-depth discussion with Ikin

However, among these various kola nuts, the kind that is used is the *Obi Àbàtà* that has four lobes with two male and two female in sequence of the natural marks on them. There is also *Ikin* which is kernel fruits from a sacred palm tree that may sometimes have only one trunk with many branches beginning from two branches.

The second division in *Ifá* divination system is *Títè, alè* that has to do with imprinting on the *o, pò, n Ifá*-divination tray the Odu that comes out of divination with *lyè, rè, Òsùn*-divination powder for proper interpretation to know the root cause of the problem that brought about divination. Why one

has to offer *E, bo*, what kind of *E, bo* to offer, how to offer it, where to place it and when to take it there. While *Ò, karara e, bo* -sacrifice is the third arm of this *Ifá* religious tradition. *Dídá o, wo* -casting through some of the instruments mentioned above is the traditional means of diagnosing ailment to know the cause of an ailment just the way the way western orthodox medical practitioners will use stethoscope to know similar thing. However, *Ifá* will give more detailed information in this regard particularly the causer factor that may be spiritual and give holistic healing through the offering of *E, bo*. *Títè, alè* is to imprint on the

divination tray the Odu that comes out and recite it to reveal the causer factor and detailed information on the prescribed E, bo, that will solve the problem (Awotunde, 2024).

E, bo-sacrifice, as earlier said is the third arm of *Ifá* divination system and the solution to heal all ailments may it be secular or spiritual. It is an integral part of *Ifá* divination that is central to every part of the Yorùbá whether secular or religious. This is the reason why Awolalu (1979, p27) says E, bo, is held at remarkable esteem because it has the ability to meet basic needs and aspirations of man. Among other functions of E, bo, are means of showing gratitude to the spiritual beings that we offer the E, bo, to for one favour/reason or the other. Sometimes, we offer E, bo, to fulfill a vow made when things are good or bad. E, bo, is also an important means of communication and communion between the physical and spiritual world. Again, E, bo, could be offered to ward off evil and anger of the divinities or other spiritual agents. During crisis, most especially when epidemic breaks out in a community that could be as a result of taboo braking, E, bo, is usually to the rescue to save such a community from total annihilation (Elebuibon, 2000). Another great importance of E, bo, is, it is a food for Esu who must eat from every E, bo, offered because of his position among the gods and human as a law enforcement agent who will punish those who refused to offer prescribed E, bo, . Esu is one of the sixteen principal divinities and the first apprentice of Orunmila the custodian of *Ifa* divination. Esu is the arbiter between the man who was asked to offer Ebo-sacrifice to forestall Ajogun- evil forces and the Ajogun world itself. He is the intermediary between two opposing ends of human aspiration and displeasure. Joy and sadness, life and death, wealth and poverty, bountiful harvest and drought, fulfillment and failure and a catalyst to improve or sustain situation (Salami, 2008, p150-151).

It also serves as food for the priests and his households (Abimbola, 1968). This is important because *Ifá* priesthood is not a paid job. Rather a service and sacrifice to humanity because no Babaláwo will charge excess fee because a client can afford it or denied a client his service because he cannot afford his charges. Besides spiritual importance of E, bo, , secularly, it is also important to offer E, bo, particularly with some of the things we have in abundance such as food items and other material things so as to have good health, joy and happiness to enjoy the rest. In this case, giving to the elders who do not have enough energy to work is a good sacrifice. Though they are not beggars, yet whatever they are given will be regarded as *Oúnje*, *omó*, -child' s food.

Oní kẹ́, kẹ́, logún
Alábàjà lo, gbò, n
Oníkolo láàdó, ta
A dífá fún O, dúnmákú
Tí s, o, mo, bíbì inú Àgbo, nmirègún
Wó, n ní kó rúbo, nitorí ikú
Wo, n ní ó f' adie, iràná kan rúbo,
Ó s, e é ikú ò pá
Ijó ní jó,
Ayò, ní yò, ...
...o, dún mbákú
Ejje, ti gbádíe, mi lo,
Adie, mi, adie, iràná
Tí mo fi sílè,
Lejje, gbé lo, .

Owner of Keke (a kind of tribal mark) in twenty places
 Owner of Abaja (a kind of tribal mark) in thirty places
 Owner of Kolo (a kind of tribal mark) in fifty places
 Cast divination for Odunmbaku
 The child of Agbonmiregun
 He was told to offer sacrifice because of death
 He was told to offer a farewell fowl
 He did and death preserves him
 He was dancing
 He was rejoicing
 ...the year I was to die
 Death has carried away my fowl
 My fowl, my farewell fowl
 That I place on ground,
 Was what death carried away?

VARIOUS TYPES OF E, BO, (SACRIFICE), DIFFERENCE WAYS OF OFFERING, ELEMENTS OF SACRIFICIAL RITES AND PLACEMENT IN PUBLIC SPACE

It has been established above the importance of E, bo, which is the reason why we offer it. As earlier said, the Yorùbá believe in the existence of the Supreme Being and other spiritual agents. These spiritual agents like the divinities, spirits, ancestors and mysterious powers could cause chaos in the life of humanity at the same time be of countless blessings in diverse ways if their taboos and community ethics are kept. The Yorùbá also have a strong believe in the existence and the power of the forces of evil like sorcery, witches and wizards and Ajogun- the warlord of the left side of Esu, the head of Ajogun which are *Iku*- Death, *Àrùn*- Sickness, *È, gbà*-Paralysis, *È, wò, n*-Imprisonment, *Òfò*-Loss, *Epe*-Curse, *Oran*-Trouble and *Èse*-All other problems. As a result, of this belief, E, bo, is crucial among the Yorùbá to placate and appease these forces to allow them live a meaningful live. Since it is believed that life should be preserved and this preservation rests on the shoulders of these agents mentioned above that have power to sustain or destroy it, it is important therefore to strike a balance and maintain communion with these agents. One of the ways to do this is through offering of E, bo, and this is the reason why E, bo, is vital or central in maintaining the equilibrium (Olaleye, 2013).

Again, it is the belief of the Yorùbá that every sickness emanated from the spiritual because of their belief in the dual nature of man (the physical and the spiritual). It is believed that if and whenever man is sick, it is the spiritual body that will first experience the sickness. They are of the opinion that it is when the spiritual body cannot withstand the sickness that man sees the physical manifestation. Therefore, a man might have been sick many days, weeks or months before he experience it physically that responsible for sudden death of some people with brief illnesses. To prevent such sudden death or sickness, and to experience holistic healing therefore, E, bo, must be offered to take care of the causer factor that emanated from the spiritual. Since it is these spiritual agents that are causing trouble for man, once they are placated or appeased with E, bo, and they remove their grips, holistic healing is assured. These appeasements may require live animals like the case of Odunmbaku-name of a person in *Ò, wó, nrin Mèjì* (Abimbola, 1968) where *Ifá* says;

In this case, the animal used for the E_{bo} will not be killed; rather, it will be allowed to be roaming about. It is death that will kill the animal. Therefore, E_{bo} Ayè pínùn-substitutionary sacrifice is a form of sacrifice that propitiates, prevents at the same time substitutes as explained by Fatoosin Awosola (2024).

In Yorùbá society, there is what is called E_{bo} O_{pé} -Thanksgiving sacrifice. This has to do with showing appreciation for a favour in business, marriage, new born baby, building of houses and so on that one needs to show gratitude to the Supreme Being or the divinities who are his agents through who man receive the blessing of God. This is the reason why the Yorùbá is of the opinion that *Bí a bá s, eni lóore, o, pé, làá dú*-for the benefit received, we show gratitude (Awolalu, 1979). Again, there is also E_{bo} È_{jé} -votive offering. This is a kind of E_{bo} -sacrifice offered as a result of a vow made before a deity after the promise had been fulfilled. To show gratitude therefore, the devotee will give specified offering in return. This was the experience of the informants in the recent concluded 2024 Osun Osogbo annual festival. During 2023 of the same festival, she made a vow that if can be blessed with the fruit of the womb; she would come with all the items for the worship of Osun and money to show her gratitude (Ajibola, 2024). Again, another informant made a vow that if he was able to win a contract

he was pursuing, he would uplift the status of an *Ifá* man he approached for a help. He fulfilled the promise by building a modern house for the *Ifá* priest and offered a goat and food items to *Ifá* to show his gratitude (Gbotoso, 2024).

E_{bo} Ètùtù-propitiatory sacrifice is offered during epidemic, crop failure, flood disaster and so on with the notion that some gods have been offended or angered. This was evident in 2011 during flood disaster in the city of Ibadan. Though the governor was informed of the impending danger by the traditional worshipers, but ignored the warning by dismissing the notion that they were only looking for meat to eat. However, when the flood eventually happened, nothing could be done again. Many lost their lives and a lot of property worth billions of naira. (Famoriyo, 2024)

There is also E_{bo} ojúkòríbí- preventive offering. This is done to avert impending danger that could befall man. To be aware of such impending danger, the warning is always from *Ifá* divination. We should note here that when we are talking about preventive sacrifice, we are talking about both good and bad. We sometimes offer sacrifice for something good coming so that no evil will prevent the person concern from attaining this goodies while we offer sacrifice to block would be danger. This is exemplified in *Ò, bàrà Òfún* (Odegbola, 2014) where *Ifá* states;

Igbá fífo kò horu
E, nu fífo kò dún nàmù-nàmù
Ògòdò òwú
Kò sunwò, n ní è, è, rùn gangan
A dlá fún Lóminíkùn
Àrè, mo, Èwí l' ádò
O, lá òun kò le bàjé, ló dáfá sí..

An empty calabash does not bring out vapour
 Empty mouth does not make sound
 Immature cotton seed
 Is not good during dry season
 Cast divination for Lominikun
 The first child of Ewi-Ado
 My wealth will not diminish was what she consulted the oracle on...

Lominikun the daughter of king Ewi Ado went to make enquiry about how her wealth would be sustain. She was told that her wealth would not diminish but should tell her farther and Odofin her husband to offer sacrifice so that he Ewi Ado would not die same day with her husband. She was rebuffed, they both refused to offer the prescribed sacrifice. After six months, Odofin the husband of Lominikun slept and did not wake up. He was buried in the afternoon. As the wives were preparing for widowhood rites, a message came that king Ewi had gone to join his ancestors.

There is also E_{bo} Ìpílè -foundation sacrifice. According to Awolalu (1979, p160), foundation sacrifice is based upon the idea that all new enterprises undertaking by a man are to be committed to the hands of the creator. Idowu (1990, p5)

supported this notion by saying in all things, the Yorùbá are religious. Religion forms the foundation and all governing principle of life for them. To them, all things are in the hands of the creator and their duty is to obey his commands. He went further to say through all the circumstances of life, through all its changing scenes, the creator is in control. Before a child is born, the oracle is consulted and necessary sacrifices are offered. When the child is born and at every stage in life- puberty, betrothal, marriage, taking up a career, building a house, going on a journey and many other things that concerns man, the oracle is not left behind. *Ifá* also has this to say in support of the above in *Ò, wó, nrín Méjì* (Yemitan & Ogundele, 1973).

Ò, pé, kùn-f' o, rogún è, s, o, rò, ò, nà Ìràyè
Ló dífá, fún Asiantán
À ngbé e n' íyàwó lo, f' Ó, ló, fin,
Wó, n ní kó rúbò, iyà púpò,
K' órí è, lè sunò, n n' ilé O, ló, fin tó nlo,
Asiantán gbó, ó rú
Ó délé O, ló, fin ké, hìn,
Orí re, sunò, n ju t' áwo, n aya O, ló, fin tó kù lo, .

She that kills tiger for rival to become wealthy of Iraye
 Cast divination for Asiantan
 She was being betrothed to Olofin
 She was asked to offer sacrifice for abundant of suffering
 So that her head may experience joy in the house of Olofin she was going
 Asiantan herd and she complied
 She was the last to get to Olofin' s house
 Her head was better than the rest of the wives of Olofin

Summary of Types of Ebo-Sacrifice	Their Purposes
1. E _{bo} O _{pé} -Thanksgiving sacrifice.	Ebo-sacrifice to show appreciation for a favour in business, marriage, new born baby, building of houses and so on that one needs to show gratitude to the Supreme Being or the divinities who are his agents through who man receive the blessings of God.
2. E _{bo} Ètùtù-propitiatory sacrifices or sacrifice offered to appease the invisible elements.	This is kind of sacrifice offered during epidemic, crop failure, flood disaster and so on with the notion that some gods have been offended or angered.

Summary of Types of Ebo-Sacrifice	Their Purposes
3. <i>E bo, ojùkòrìbì</i> - preventive offering.	Ebo made to avert impending danger that could befall man.
4. <i>E bo, Ìpìlè</i> , -foundation sacrifices.	Ebo-sacrifice offered at the beginning of all new enterprises undertaken by a man which must be committed to the hands of the Creator for success and protection.

We should note that there are many kinds of Ebo-sacrifices. However, only few are mentioned and explained here because of time and space.

Numerous Reactions toward Indiscriminate Littering of Public Space with *E bo* (Sacrifice) in Yorùbá land

There were/are different reactions from people toward placement of *E bo* -sacrifice in public space in Yorùbá land. However, these reactions are basically under three major factors. One is based on religious sentiment, while the second is based on western education, and the last one is on western civilisation. Foreign religion, especially, Christianity made its first appearance in Nigeria as a country through Benin kingdom in 1484 by the Portuguese but was not successful in its mission. In 1655, the Spanish Friars also made attempt but also failed. However, in 1842, Freeman, a

*Ohun tí a bí wo, n bí kíl wù wó, n
Te, ni e, lé, ni ní yá wo, n lára
A dífá fún Ìwò, dè, è, rè,
Tí s, 'alábàrìn e, ja*

They are never inspired by their own historical legacy
The ones for the others are what they catered for
Cast divination for the fishing Hook
The close friend of the Fish

They became hostile to everything that has to do with the religion and tradition of the land. Some Yorùbá rulers and Africa in general who had a material reason and unlimited divine right as opposed to checks and balances which placed some limitations on their powers declared their support for Christianity (Babalola, 1981). Through mental and theological colonisation, the Yorùbá as well as other African countries where they established their religion were made to see all their objects of worship as totem, fetish and idolatry.

Again, in other for the missionaries enhance their vigorous evangelistic campaigns; they established schools that were flooded by the children of leading chiefs. Rivalries among Christian denominations in Yorùbá land paved way for some of the students to be educated abroad. For instance, according to Babalola (1981, p117), between 1845 and 1865 some of the children in the mission houses were sponsored for various courses in England to study courses like medicine, chemistry, navigation and teaching careers. Unfortunately, these children in mission schools saw themselves as superior to their peers in the village and town. As a result of their education, they show interest in western culture, habits and dresses. This is in response to the teachings of missionaries who tried at all possible cost to discourage everything African. Their intention was to produce people who were Yorùbá only in blood but European in culture, thought, habit and religion of which they succeeded in their mission. Till today, things have fallen apart and the centre could no longer hold as many Yorùbá will prefer western medicine, education, religion and culture to their own (Toluwase, 2024).

The third factor has to do with western civilisation/culture. As said earlier, many of these Yorùbá trained abroad will rather prefer everything western. African/Yorùbá culture were/are considered uncivilized. These categories of people do not see anything good in *E bo* -sacrifice and would do everything possible to

Mulatto, according to Adewale (1978, p26), made a brief appearance in Egba/Abeokuta (a sub group in Yorùbá Land) and was ushered in with a rousing and hearty welcome. All precautions were taken to make sure that his journey to Egba was free from all predicaments. Freeman was followed by Henry Townsend and his assistants in 1843 for the expansion of Christianity that Freeman lay down. However, this was possible because of the prophecy and prediction that *Ìfá* made about 12 years before their arrival that they should be allowed to stay. The missionaries wasted no time in spreading Christianity to other parts of Yorùbá Land and from there to other parts of the country. With this new found faith, traditional religion became obsolete and outmoded. Thus, justified what *Ìfá* says in *Ìrè, tẹ, Ogbè* as quoted by (Omidiwura, 2024) and buttressed by Ayo Salami (2008, p22) that;

discourage it. An informant, who is an evangelist, believed that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is enough sacrifice for the sins of the world (Olatunji, 2024). Jenmbola (2024), a secondary teacher of Yorùbá language and culture and a deaconess in Christ Apostolic Church did not see anything reasonable in *E bo*, that the person who offered it will place and meet it back there the following day until she was kidnapped by those who wanted to use her for money ritual. She was told by the gang leader that she should go back home and offer *E bo* to her mother that had died many years back because her mother prevented her from being used for the money ritual. Same mother prevented the wife of her junior brother from untimely death during child labour. According to her, she did not only offer the prescribed *E bo*, rather, ever since then, she has made it an annual event to offer such prayers and *E bo* to her dead mother. Another informant is of the opinion that *E bo* -sacrifice is a gory sited to behold. With its offensive odor that comes out of the sites, he advocates that government should be proactive in arresting anybody caught with *E bo*. To him, in this computer age and level of civilisation, where science can provide solution to almost all issues confronting humanity, there should not be anyone bothering himself or herself with the issue of *E bo* (Olusola, 2024).

The response of Babalola (2008, p451-453) to the issue of *E bo* in public places was summarised with the Yorùbá Proverb that says *E, ni ijà ò bá ní pe'ra è, l'ó kùnrin*- He who has not engaged in a fight will call himself a man. He buttressed his point with his personal experience when one of his daughters was sick. With forty days fasting and prayers by the prayer warriors of his church to make her child regain good health proof abortive until he was asked to offer *E bo*, which he did after the vicar of his church came to tell him after their fasting and prayer session to give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give unto God what belongs to God and the child got well within a short period. He wrote his experience in his Autobiography under "the three wise

women". Another informant, Foluke though a Christian, is indifference to the offering of E, bo. According to her, regardless of any means, once a problem is solved, it does not matter how and whatever means it is solved. If E, bo is a problem solver, so be it she concluded. To Tolulope (2024), E, bo has been with us from time immemorial and has never heard that it has constituted or recheck havoc in any community in Yorùbá land. Besides, it is not every E, bo that are placed where they are to be rotten. Rather, many of them are consumed by human beings. Thus, humans will become a cargo or courier service that will convey the message to the spiritual world. This will prevent foul or unpleasant sites. Fatoki (2024), a pastor of a Pentecostal church is of the opinion that the death of Christ on the cross as final sacrifice for the sins of the world is enough for him. Although he claimed that he had on one or two occasions offered E, bo before he became born again. Now that he has become a new being, he claims the blood of Jesus is enough for him.

However, Akinnawonun differs a little on the above issue when asked. He is of the opinion that though Christ came and died for the sins of the world, but he said he has a reservation on the general coverage of the sins. To him, yes Jesus came to die for the sins of the world but not all sins. Otherwise, there would not have been any problems on earth again. Besides, those who have solace in offering E, bo still get positive answers to their requests through E, bo to the creator and spiritual agents they directed their offerings to. To him, every step he takes, he makes enquiry through *Ifá* and necessary E, bo is offered and he gets positive answers. This is the reason why he believes that he would continue in that direction to solve his problem. To him, it is those who have no problem that would think that E, bo will constitute problem to the community (Akinnawonu, 2024). Olorunlaye (2024) also supported the above assertion that Christ did not die for all the sins of the world. Otherwise, Babaláwo will not get any other sins to offer E, bo for. At the same time, there would not be tribulation of any kind on earth again. Looking at the world today, there are more suffering and anguish than when Christ was on earth he concluded.

Oyetola (2024) believes that whatever makes someone happy, healthy prosperous and enhance one's life positively and is not injurious to others, regardless of what people say about it should be ignored. To him, as far as E, bo is concern, ever since people have been offering it, it has not constituted any danger for the society. Therefore, who so ever finds it not good to behold should look other way. Olamileye (2024) finds it difficult to be believed that in this computer age, some people still cling to offering of sacrifice as a means of solving problems that hospitals, corporate bodies, religion and government can solve. In developed world, there is nothing like that, yet they progressed. To her, littering public space with E, bo should be discouraged.

Faseegun (2024), a renowned Babaláwo-*Ifá* priest believed that those who are against the offering of E, bo are only ignorant of the fact that healing is of two sided, the physical and the spiritual. One side cannot be heal and leave the other. Otherwise, holistic healing has not taken place. Therefore, possibility for such ailment to relapse is there, since everything that Olódūmarè, God in Yorùbá belief created exist in double, and since it is the believe of the Yorùbá that before one experience sickness physically, such a person had been sick spiritually months, weeks or days before the physical manifestation, therefore, taking care of such a situation though the use of E, bo is the best to attain the perfect and holistic healing that man desired. After all, offering of E, bo has been in existence before our fore

fathers without constituting any danger to the community and so shall it be as far as the world is still in existence. He viewed that those who are against offering of E, bo has not actually seen what will make them do so.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF STREWING OPEN SPACE WITH E, BO (SACRIFICE) ON PUBLIC HEALTH

There are basically two schools of thought on the implications of littering human environment with E, bo on public health. The first school of thought is those who believe that E, bo, rather than harm the environment is revitalizing it. They are of the opinion that E, bo is an age long tradition and practice for the revitalization of the physical environment and for the repair of the atmosphere through emissions from E, bo to the sky. As said earlier, these revivalists are of the opinion that E, bo can revitalize the environment both spiritually and physically. Those who share in this opinion include Awolalu (1979, p88), Jegede (2004, p21-22), Dopamu (1988, p74-75), Abimbola (1970, p11) and Olaleye (2013, p10). They believe that E, bo is not a prayer supplements to the divinities alone. Rather, it is also a food relationship with the animals and humans as well. For instance, the Babaláwo and his house hold, his friends and neighbours could be partakers of E, bo if it is so directed by *Ifá*. This is the reason why (Abimbola, 1970) said without E, bo what would Babaláwo eat?

Again, beyond being a source of food for animals and humans, some items used in offering E, bo are perishable organic materials that will naturally become a fertilizer for the enrichment of the soil. Also, sometimes, when a Babaláwo goes to forest to harvest some leaf or roots of plants, he does not go there to take alone. Rather, he gives back to the soil with his E, bo. While going, he takes along with him a kola nut to make such a request to harvest the parts he needed. After harvesting the parts, he gives back to the tree the kola nut he holds by digging a hole beside the tree and plant it there or place it in a hole dug to harvest the root of such a plant thereby prevent deforestation with his sacrifice of that kola nut.

The other school of thought, the ecology school of thought from where you can find scholars like Van Der Meer (2015, p361) and Adeogun (2018, p84-85) are of the opinion that E, bo-sacrifice is another form of a waste that they believe no divinities eat or take away the physical E, bo-sacrifice offered to them but takes only the spiritual part of the E, bo. They, (ecologists) oppose the indiscriminate placement of E, bo especially in public places. They view that the rottenness and non-disposal of E, bo from such places is a form of pollution that can destabilize and threaten public health.

CONCLUSION

All religions in the world uphold cleanliness as a virtue for the physical environment in attaining purity and spirituality particularly the Yorùbá religion. This is evidence in their mode of dressing most especially the Babaláwo and Olosun who symbolises their inner purity by wearing white clothes. Besides, no *Òrìṣà*-deities in Yorùbá land that drink polluted water. This is the reason why their water is fetched early in the morning before any human wakes up. While going to fetch the water, they usually alert the communities with the sound of their gong and usually fetched by virgins who have not started their menstrual circle. It is also the duty of female adherence to make the shrines, temples,

groves and every place of worship clean at all time. Therefore, rather than see or regard Ebo as constituting environmental pollution and indiscipline with serious implications for the physical environment and human health as Van Der Meer (2015, p361), we should regard this traditional practice as more of an irritation as Jegede (2015, p133) view it and this irritation can be taken care of through erecting fences around common places where placement of Ebo is prominent in the public space. This will give room for the sustainability of Ebo because of the role it plays in the society as a life safer since it has no negative records of dangers it has constituted to the general wellbeing of the society or public health.

DECLARATION

Consent for publication

All participants were informed of the objectives and procedures of the study and subsequent publication of the results.

Availability of Data and Material (ADM)

Data not available because it compromises the anonymity of participants.

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The authors confirm responsibility for the following - study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

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