



International Journal of Research in Academic World



Received: 12/December/2024

IJRAW: 2025; 4(1):54-58

Accepted: 19/January/2025

The Monarch's Funerals in the UK and Republic of Benin Case of Queen Elisabeth II and King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo_084509-1

*¹Dr. Hergie Alexis SEGUEDEME

*¹Enseignant-Chercheur à l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi, Bénin.

Abstract

The UK monarchy is an institution whereas Abomey's is a legacy. From one crown to the other, traditions are not the same. As far as funerals are concerned, their management differ from one side to another. In UK, public funerals are held and the people is invited to mourn their sovereign. But in Abomey, the King's funerals are a mix of mystery and power demonstration where the sacred takes a great place. For instance, Queen Elisabeth II is buried at Windsor, St George's Chapel but the grave of the late King of Abomey Dada Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo remains secret. Overall, the funerals aim to preserve memory and the sustainability of the monarchy. There are shaped to strengthen the respect and love that the people bear for the Crown. This study entitled "Comparative approach of monarch's funerals in the UK and Republic of Benin: Case of Queen Elisabeth II and King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo" is both descriptive and analytic. It reveals the way and means of monarch's funerals in both Countries and compares them. It emphasizes on the cultural, social and religious beliefs that are backgrounds to such practices.

Keywords: Monarchy, funerals, tradition, memory.

Introduction

Death and funerals are closely associated. Still, they create uneasiness among human kind. In the UK, Kate Woodthorpe (2018) ^[17], senior lecturer in sociology noticed "a general unease with talking about dying" by the Britain's even within the royals. In African society, the same reality is experienced. When death occurs specific vocabulary is used.

The funerals of sovereigns Elisabeth II and king Dedjalagni agoli-Agbo was a great deal for their people. Hammer (2022) ^[12] remarked this enthusiasm for Elisabeth's funeral "Hundreds of the world's leaders descended upon

London for the event while international media covered the pageantry with seemingly endless interest"

This work is divided into three sections. The first section is an introduction to the study and deals with the significance, the purpose and the limitation of the study. The second went through Life, reign, death, and funerals of Queen Elisabeth II and King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo. The third is focused on comparing Queen Elisabeth II and King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo funerals. Then, comes the discussion and the perspectives before the conclusion of the study.



Fig 1: (i) Queen Elisabeth II, The Longest Monarch of the UK



Fig 2: (ii) King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo, The Late Monarch of Abomey

1. Introduction to the Study

i). **Problem Statement:** Death and funerals are part of human life. This study cast a glance on royal burial namely the ones of Queen Elisabeth in the UK and King Dedjalagni in Republic of Benin.

- **The Significance of the Study:** The topic it covers a scientific field that has not been thoroughly investigated by academic. Specially our approach meant to compare. In that way, it is original.
- **Purpose of the Study:** We set out to show similarities as same as differences between burials rites of royals in the UK and in our country. So, we can demonstrate if these protocols imply some civilization patterns.

ii). **Limitation of the Study:** Our work is not based on testified records. It is limited to web sources and verbal testimony. Other researches can be done to explore other perspectives and even extend to other aspects than the funerals of the concerned monarchs

iii). **Research Methodology:** Our approach is based on documents as well as testimony. We produced questionnaire and we take great care of official and first hand sources. This work is both analytic and descriptive

iv). **Conceptual Clarification:** Funeral, monarch, monarchy and culture are explained in this section

2. Life, Reign, Death, and Funerals of Queen Elisabeth II and King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo

2.1. Life, reign, death, and funerals of Queen Elisabeth II

i). Life and reign

- **Her Early Life:** Queen Elisabeth II was born at 2.40am on 21 April 1926 at 17 Bruton Street in Mayfair, London as first child of The Duke and Duchess of York (future King George VI and Queen Elisabeth). Her parents gave an education to prepare her as the future queen of the UK. In a speech marking her 21st birthday Elisabeth said, "I declare before you that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service, and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong." The same year, she married Philip Mountbatten, a distant cousin to whom she falls in love since 18. In 1949, they had had their first son, Prince Charles, the current monarch. All these years, she has been prepared as future queen of the UK.
- **Her Accession to the Throne:** Princess Elisabeth was just 10 years old when she became heiress

presumptive (first in line to the throne). At 26 years old, she succeeds her father King George VI.

- **Her Coronation:** Queen Elisabeth II's coronation took place at Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953 and in presence of her mother, her children and other royal staff members.
- **Her Majesty's Reign:** In this section, we will focus on the queen's reign. Three aspects will be presented:

Queen Elisabeth have had four children: Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward and eight grandchildren: Peter and Zara Phillips (b.1977 and 1981); The Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry (b.1982 and 1984); Princess Beatrice of York and Princess Eugenie of York (b.1988 and 1990); and The Lady Louise Windsor and James, Viscount Severn (b.2003 and 2007). Although the Royal House is named Windsor, she took a decree to change it into Mountbatten-Windsor. In spite of her status, she took great care of her family and try her best to preserve it from decadence even during testing times.

The Head of the Nation: As head of the nation, Queen Elisabeth has appointed fifteen prime ministers: beginning with Winston Churchill and ending with Liz Truss just two days before her death. Elisabeth was respected by Britain as she was on a worldwide scale. What is her role in international affairs? *Her role in international affairs: A queen of the world* is a biography of Queen Elisabeth II published in 2019 by Robert Hardman. The author describes Her as a diplomat, stateswoman, pioneer, and peace-broker.

ii). Death and Funerals

- **The context of Her Majesty's Death:** In the queen's life, happy events were often closely followed by sad ones. If we refer to the article Queen Elisabeth II: a moderniser who steered the British monarchy into the 21st century, the queen's final years were marked with painful events. The COVID-19 effects compounded by the lost of her Husband, her "strength and stay" as she called him, in 2021 caused a great pain to the queen. It is in such context that the queen passed away on September, 8 2022.
- **The Announcement:** The announcement of her majesty's reign was both made by Buckingham palace and 10 Downing street. The day queen Elisabeth died: the inside story of her final hours, a paper published on Friday, December 30, 2022 by the *Guardian's* journalists Caroline Davies and Jessica Elgot recalled.

• Her Funerals

a) **Before the State Funerals: The Mourning Period:** The mourning period runs from September 8 to September 19 the day the queen was buried. A period when numerous Britain's paid their tribute to Queen Elisabeth II

The Significance of the Mourning: The public attendance to the mourning is very important, asserted Philip Williamson, Professor of Modern British History, Durham University. In his article: *Queen Elisabeth II: the history of royal funerals and how this one will be different*, the lecturer analyses royal funerals management over the last century and asserted that the one of Queen Elisabeth II fills the goal of strengthening the UK's monarchy.

b) **State funerals: Honour and Pomp:** The state funeral took place on September 19, 2022. It is was attended by

world leaders and rose endless interest as pointed out by Hammer (2022) ^[12]. Many leaders by their presence paid tribute to the late sovereign. The pomp surrounding the event and the perfectly scheduled ceremony just show how much queen Elisabeth II count for her people. Three steps marked the funerals *The Procession from Westminster Abbey to Wellington Arch, the Procession from Albert Hall, Windsor to St George's Chapel and The Committal Service*



Fig 3: Grenadier Guards of the imperial army are carrying the coffin of Queen Elisabeth II during the committal service.

- c) **The Private Burial:** The Private Burial which took place in The King George VI Memorial Chapel was conducted by the Dean of Windsor. Much was not said about it. Buckingham Palace, the Guardian and other newspaper just released the information of this end step of Queen Elisabeth II funerals. Probably, the private burial was set to preserve some intimacy to the queen's body and to allow her family to bid farewells to their beloved matriarch without being watched by the planet.



Fig 4: St George Chapel, where Queen Elisabeth II is buried.

- d) **The Post Funerals:** The departure of a monarch leaves the way to his successor to be crowned. Elisabeth's heir is known since decades. His first Son Prince Charles III was cautiously prepared for the role as he knew that the passing of her mother will put him on the front line of the Kingdom management.
- e) **The Significance of the Burial Rites:** As a Christian with a "deeply held her faith", Sean Lang (2022), the Queen was interred accordingly. Her burial rites are a testimony of the secular links that the crown has with The Church in the UK.

The Significance of the Burial Place

For centuries, Westminster Abbey has been the place where the UK's monarchs were buried. Time's journalist Anisha Kohli recalled in her paper "All about Queen Elisabeth II burial site and Its Significance" how Windsor has been favored by many royals as their burial place. Then, Queen's choice of St George's VI Memorial Chapel as burial place

evidently manifest her will to be close of her departed family members. When we refer to New York time paper Windsor, Queen's final Resting Place, Has a long association with Her "Windsor is also special for the British royal family. To be laid at rest at Windsor Castle is like homecoming for the late monarch.

2.2. Life, Reign, Death, and Funerals of King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo

The late King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo was a charismatic figure who had accomplished his mission with a great sense of human and responsibility. His death on July 2018 had brought a big sadness and mourn in the royal families in Abomey and elsewhere.

i). Life and Reign

- **His Early Life:** According to oral sources, King Dedjalagni was born about 1938 (some says 1934) in Abomey, the royal city and the seat of power of the former kingdom of Dahomey. He attended Adjahito primary school where he got his CEPE and was recruited by the national police where he spent all his career. As the elder son of his father King Togni Ahossou Agoli-Agbo, he was meant to replace him as the king of the royal dynasty of Agoli-Agbo.
- **His Designation to the Throne:** As a matter of course, he was settled in this position by his father, the late Togni Ahossou Agoli-Agbo in 1983. King Dedjalagni is the son of King Togni Ahossou Agoli-Agbo, who is himself the direct successor of King Agoli-Agbo Aidodo do. King Aidodo took the throne after the passing of his brother King Agoli Agbo the first, the successor of the renowned King of Dahomey Behanzin who was deported to Blida (Algeria) as a result of the failure of his resistance against French domination in 1906.
- **His Coronation:** The Vidaho, was crowned on September 29, 1989 according to the royal rites of the kingdom of Abomey. He took the official name of "Dedjalagni bo soulin ton vè adi": *The palm tree is quite valuable but its thorns hurt so much*. This means that the new King is willing to provide generous help to anyone who ask for but any betrayal or abuse will be severely punished.

Some twenty years after, he became the King of Abomey, following the passing of the late King.

Monarchy and Reforms during His Majesty's Reign: "He was a reformer who trusted that every child of the Kingdom should interest themselves to the customs and the culture" says Didier Samson, one of his sons to AFP during his burial. King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo was a figure of unity and remain popular till His departure.

ii). Death and Funerals

"The death of the king plunges his kingdom into darkness. No celebration may take place until the king's ceremonies have ended."

- **The Context of His Death:** According to our source Daa Daxo Agoli-Agbo, the younger brother of the departed King, he went through several months of disease before passing.
- **The Announcement:** "Darkness has fallen on the kingdom," is the consecrated formula meant to announce the departure of a King in Abomey. Even if gossips carry the news from one place to another, the official

announcement which request the presence of the people, from royals to commoners, took place on August 11, 2018.

- **The Mourning:** The mourning followed closely the announcement of the sad news of King Dedjalagni death. As observed by Herkovits (1938: 58), ‘‘the importance of their continuation (of the funeral rites and kingly ancestors worshipping) is in the evidence this offers of the vitality of the indigenous civilization ...’’. Therefore, it appears that funerals are important part of the vivid civilization transmitted from generation to generation by Dahomey’s royals.

The very feature of the mourning is the ceremony called ‘‘Assikplata’’. It is a publicly ceremony held to announce that the burial rites of The King have started and nothing can be properly done unless the ceremonies are through.



Fig 5: (iv) Residents gathered to attend the ‘‘Assikplata’’ Ceremony during the funeral of King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo

- **His Funerals:** The funerals of King Agoli-Agbo has not been yet completed. Only the ceremony of Assikplata is held. Complementary ceremonies as *Atodji Tonxhun* remain to be carried out as said by his brother Daa Daho Agoli-Agbo.
- **The Burial Rites and Their Significance:** The burial of a sovereign in Abomey went through animistic rites that emphasizes the history and the cultural beliefs of Fon people. They are set to strengthen the relations between the monarchy and the people.



Fig 6: (V) Dignitaries from Abomey’s dynasty in procession towards the official site of King Dedjalagni’s funerals.

3. Comparative approach of Queen Elisabeth II’s and King Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo’s funerals

First of all, let’s start by the comparison of the announcement of their death.

- Comparison of the Announcement:** It’s recognized by traditions all over the globe that announcement of a death should be carefully addressed. When Queen Elisabeth died in September 8, the BBC, the British national media released the news just few after her close relatives were informed and reassembled at Balmoral Castle where the

Queen passed. Leaders all over the world and millions of citizens paid tribute to her majesty during her funerals.

On a lower-scale, it is the same that happened when King Agoli-Agbo died on July 2, 2018. The news spread as soon as the death occurred. But what makes the difference in these announcements is that the announcement of King Dedjalagni death was done properly during the ‘‘Assikplata’’ ceremony. A ceremony that gives a top to His majesty’s funerals. It is characteristic of how much Fon people namely royals in Abomey care about processes and rituals. Everything has a precise meaning according to the tradition in Abomey. A solemnity and gravity not seen in the announcement of Queen Elisabeth death. We can then assert the UK’s culture is less emphatic on death announcement than the Fon Culture. It is also a clue that sobriety characterized death rituals in the UK whereas gravity is the very characteristic of anything done in honor of a departed, utmost a King in our culture in Republic of Benin.

- Comparison of the Mourning:** Both monarchs’ funerals took place on a global-scale extent. Professor Williamson of Durham University pointed out the importance of the public participation to these ceremony. He wrote: ‘‘The unexpected element was the Queen’s death in Scotland, (...) it allows more people to watch the procession.’’ The aim of all of this was to ease the acceptance of the crown in a context of changing.

However, there is one particular point that makes all the differences between the two kinds of mourning: the expression of sorrow in the case of King Agoli-Agbo took place after his burial. His coffin was not exposed. The mourning of King Agoli-Agbo is a ritual necessity whereas the queen’s mourning fit a political goal. Of course, there were power demonstration in both circumstances.

- Comparison of the Funerals:** Funerals are central of this study. As soon as Queen Elisabeth died, the plans of her funerals were announced. Codenamed operation London Bridge it was set in every detail by her majesty before she died. Her burials rites rooted on the Christian faith of the queen.

If we only take into consideration the rituals and the funerals proceedings of King Agoli-Agbo, there is seemingly nothing to compare. But when we look at the participation of the public, there is much to say. Except the private burial that took place in the intimacy of St George chapel, nothing was concealed to the public as far as the queen’s funerals are concerned. In Fon culture the sovereign’s body is not meant to be exposed. That concealing tradition about the king’s body still prevails.



Fig 7: (vi) Grenadier Guards carry the coffin of Queen Elisabeth II, what could never be seen in Abomey’s context

Discussion

From one nation to another practices couldn't be the same. In the UK, citizens are less accustomed with death. Kate Woodthorpe, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of Bath point out in her article *From Prince Charles and his mother down, why Britain finds it hard to talk about death*, "an experiential poverty" on funerals' management by Britain's. Woodthorpe (2018) [17] explains: "Due to a continually ageing population, many in the UK are lacking in firsthand knowledge of what it is to deal with death". Things differ in Benin context where emphatic ceremonies are held to honour people as well as sovereigns. But the human and financial cost of these rituals are unbearable for a developing country like us.

Conclusion

The monarchs involved in this study are by no means insignificant. They are representant of brilliant civilization world widely acknowledged. Comparing the funerals of Queen Elisabeth II and King Dedjalagni is a great undertaking that lead us to acknowledge the very practices that characterize the ways and means by which monarchs are interred in the UK and in Republic of Benin. These ways and means features the social development, the citizen's consciousness and faith as well as the popular representation of monarchy in both countries. Our study stretches out many differences in the rites of burial. Except the pomp and honour common to both practices, we observed that many things remain secret in the funerals of Dedjalagni Agoli-Agbo. This research work cannot be considered as exhaustive as many aspects of funerals and royal succession are not explored.

References

1. Achebe C., *Things fall apart*, London, Heineman, African writers' series, 1956.
2. Bedell Smith, S, *Elizabeth the Queen: The Life of a Modern Monarch*, National Library, 2012.
3. Grant, S., *The Queen died*, HarperCollins 2023.
4. Hardman, R, *Queen of the World*, National Library, US, 2019.
5. Pimlott, B, *The Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth II*, National Library, US, 1997.
6. De Guzman Chad and Mansoor Sanya, Queen Elizabeth II Is Being Laid to Rest at a State Funeral. Here's What to Know, Updated: September 19, 2022 12:53 PM EDT | Originally Published: September 19, 2022 3:45 AM EDT
7. Said-Moorhouse Lauren and Foster Max, CNN, Queen Elizabeth II's state funeral: How the royal family will say goodbye to their matriarch, Updated 6:11 AM EDT, Sun September 18, 2022.
8. AFP, Ritual burial of Abomey king begins in Benin, Agency report, Published: August 13, 2018.
9. Biography.com, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain was the longest-reigning monarch in British history. She celebrated 70 years on the throne in June 2022 with her Platinum Jubilee, Updated: Sept 12, 2022,
10. Britanica.uk, Elizabeth II, queen of United Kingdom, Last Updated: May 26, 2023.
11. Biography.com, Biography: Queen Elisabeth II, Updated: May 2023.
12. Hammer, P, *Westminster Abbey has witnessed nearly a millennium of British history – but many rituals, like those at royal funerals, aren't so old published*, theconversation.com, Published: September 20, 2022 2.35pm, Creative Commons license.
13. Lang, S, *Queen Elizabeth II: a moderniser who steered the British monarchy into the 21st century*, theconversation.com, Published: November 26, 2018 5.31pm.
14. Norman, H, *Stan Grant's new book asks: how do we live with the weight of our history?*, theconversation.com, Published: May 22, 2023 10.05pm.
15. Rowbotham, J, *Platinum jubilee: the British monarchy has been in and out of public favour for 200 years*, theconversation.com.
16. Williamson, P, *Queen Elizabeth II: the history of royal funerals and how this one will be different*, theconversation.com, Published: September 16, 2022 5.05pm SAST
17. Woodthorpe, K, *From Prince Charles and his mother down, why Britain finds it hard to talk about death*, theconversation.com, Published: November 26, 2018 5.31pm, Creative Commons license.
18. <https://theconversation.com/profiles/philip-williamson-903206/activities>
19. <https://www.royal.uk/funeral-queen-elizabeth-ii15/06/2320h12>
20. <https://time.com/6214531/queen-elizabeth-ii-funeral/15/06/2319h54>
21. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/09/11/uk/queen-death-whats-next-guide-intl-cmd/index.html>
22. 15/06/23 20h04
23. <https://theconversation.com/from-prince-charles-and-his-mother-down-why-britain-finds-it-hard-to-talk-about-death-107155>
24. <https://theconversation.com/queen-elizabeth-ii-a-moderniser-who-steered-the-british-monarchy-into-the-21st-century-159485>
25. <https://theconversation.com/the-british-monarchy-has-always-controlled-how-much-we-see-of-it-but-charles-iii-could-change-that-192894>
26. <https://www.biography.com/royalty/queen-elizabeth-ii15/06/2319h43>
27. <https://www.royal.uk/the-queens-early-life-and-education15/06/2319h30>
28. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elizabeth-II17h46>
29. <https://www.history.co.uk/articles/queen-elizabeth-ii19h0915/06/23>
30. <https://theconversation.com/westminster-abbey-has-witnessed-nearly-a-millennium-of-british-history-but-many-rituals-like-those-at-royal-funerals-arent-so-old-190878>
31. <https://theconversation.com/platinum-jubilee-the-british-monarchy-has-been-in-and-out-of-public-favour-for-200-years-175968>.