AFRICAN TRADITIONS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION, DIASPORA AND GENDERED SOCIETIES

Edited by
Afe Adogame,
Ezra Chitando
and
Bolaji Bateye

ASHGATE

AFRICAN TRADITIONS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION, DIASPORA AND GENDERED SOCIETIES

The historiography of African religions and religions in Africa presents a remarkable shift from the study of 'Africa as Object' to 'Africa as Subject', thus translating the subject from obscurity into the global community of the academic study of religion. This book presents a unique multidisciplinary exploration of African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies. The book is structured under two main sections. Part I provides insights into the interface between Religion and Society. Part II features African Diaspora together with Youth and Gender which have not yet featured prominently in studies on religion in Africa.

Contributors drawn from diverse African and global contexts situate current scholarly traditions of the study of African religions within the purview of academic encounter and exchanges with non-African scholars and non-African contexts. African scholars enrich the study of religions from their respective academic and methodological orientations. Jacob Kehinde Olupona stands out as a pioneer in the socio-scientific interpretation of African indigenous religion and religions in Africa and the new African Diaspora. This book honours his immense contribution to an emerging field of study and research.

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African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies

Essays in Honour of Jacob Kehinde Olupona

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Contents

PART II: DIASPORA, YOUTH, AND GENDER DYNAMICS

List of Figures

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Lord," in Stephen Spencer (ed.), *Mission and Migration* (2008); and the co-edited *Understanding World Christianity: The Life and Vision of Andrew F. Walls* (2011).

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Preface

Ulrich Berner

It is a pleasure writing a preface to this collective volume published in honor of Jacob Olupona. Space does not allow me to give a comprehensive overview on his contribution to the study of African religions worldwide, with regard to all his publications. Therefore, I shall limit my focus to his contribution to the emergence and development of the study of African religions in my university.

Professor Olupona joined my department at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, for a period of time, about twenty years ago. Although it was rather a short period, his presence had a lasting impact on the development of this department which had been established just a few years earlier. During his stay at Bayreuth University, he was working on a collective volume on *Religion and Society in Nigeria* (1990), co-edited with his colleague Toyin Falola, a historian. This combined an historical perspective with a broad view of the contemporary religious field in Africa. Also at that time he was preparing the publication of his doctoral thesis: *Kingship, Religion and Rituals in a Nigerian Community* (1991). The subtitle of that book—*A Phenomenological Study of the Ondo Yoruba Festivals*—does not reveal the broad range of his methodological approach. He draws on various disciplines, going much beyond traditional phenomenology, as, for instance, by providing descriptions of the kinship system and of economic life—themes that would have been neglected by phenomenology but emphasized in the anthropology and sociology of religion. It is this combination of historical, phenomenological, anthropological, and sociological approaches that has been a model for the study of African religions at the University of Bayreuth.

Jacob was also instrumental in developing his approach to the study of African religions at Bayreuth University, by recommending and sending Nigerian students and scholars to join my department for Ph.D. studies and to teach about African religions. Afe Adogame, one of the editors of this book and a former student of Jacob's at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, was the first Nigerian doctoral student in my department. Afe completed his Ph.D. in 1998 and then taught at Lagos for a couple of years before rejoining my university as a teaching and research fellow in 2000. Afe, in turn, recommended Asonzeh Ukah, who completed his Ph.D. in 2004 and has been teaching at Bayreuth, with an emphasis on "religion and the media," since then. Jacob also recommended the late Professor Ogbu Kalu, his former teacher at Nsukka, who spent half a year at Bayreuth as a visiting professor (1999/2000) on an invitation by the Institute of African Studies. I would also like to mention Umar Danfulani from the University of Jos, Nigeria, and Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, one of the editors of

this book, both of whom came to Bayreuth for a period of one year, on Humboldt fellowships. So there is a strong tradition of African scholarship in my department in Germany, resulting from Jacob's activities during his short stay at Bayreuth University, twenty years ago.

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Introduction

African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Contending with Gender, the Vitality of Indigenous Religions, and Diaspora

Ezra Chitando, Afe Adogame, and Bolaji Bateye

> All the planners of the study of religions should take a hard look at the lack of women scholars in the profession. It is a disgrace to this profession that men keep on writing Ph.D. theses on women and religion. When indeed, some of the best students in the undergraduate programme are young women who are anxious to do graduate work in religion. Two problems are responsible for this. There is still a cultural bias against women's participation in university teaching jobs. Indeed, Religious Studies Departments have some of the most conservative teachers any university will ever see—they of course also have some of the most progressive! (Olupona 1996: 205)

"Bringing those absent" has become an urgent undertaking within the academic study of religion in Africa. The citation above captures the frustration of one of the continent's leading male practitioners in the field. Jacob K. Olupona has battled to ensure that the study of religion accommodates women in a fundamental way. He has sought to undermine its patriarchal foundations by promoting female African scholars of religion. Unfortunately, the picture that he painted decades ago still obtains, to a large extent. The eloquent silence of women haunts the discipline. Women have been rendered invisible at two critical levels: first, as researchers and teachers of religion, and secondly, by not having their voices heard as the focus of research. The discipline of religious studies in Africa, as indeed elsewhere in the world, remains preoccupied with male interests and methodologies. The interface with women's studies has yet to transform the discipline in a profound manner (Sharma 2002).

Despite the massive odds staked against them, femaleAfrican scholars of religion have refused to allow male scholars to speak on their behalf as if they were dead. Individually and collectively, they have ensured that gender is placed firmly on the agenda of religious studies in Africa. Dealing with existential issues such as violence, HIV and AIDS (Phiri and Nadar 2006) and other themes, they have provided a promising foundation for the Africanization of the discipline. Perhaps due to the fact that, for them, the study of religion is directly linked to their situation of marginalization, female African scholars are well placed to contribute to the emergence of African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

In our own understanding, the Africanization of religious studies implies that the discipline reflects seriously on its African context, takes on board African issues, and has an African flavour or outlook. Consequently, African scholars of religion need to continue to belong to the global community of scholars (since Africans are an integral part of the human family), but they must be painfully conscious of their identity as Africans. It is this political commitment to Africa that is at the heart of the quest to Africanize the study of religion. Addressing issues that concern Africans is thus an integral part of the Africanization process. The emergence of African traditions in the study of religion in Africa depends on this unwavering focus on African issues. As we have argued, femaleAfrican scholars are poised to make, and are making, a significant contribution to this quest.

Storming Strongholds: FemaleAfrican Scholars of Religion

It is critical to note that without the courage and commitment of femaleAfrican scholars of religion, the theme of gender would not be finding its way into the curricula of departments of religious studies in Africa. As Olupona has noted, most of these departments are "manned" (see Muchemwa and Muponde 2007) by highly conservative males. In many instances, the men who man departments of religious studies are the same men who wield power in church circles. In both set-ups, they have resisted the advancement and ordination of women. Employing the rhetoric of "African cultural authenticity," they charge that women who are clamouring for gender justice are uncritical consumers of "Western cultural decay." "Decent African women," they contend, "know their place!" Regrettably, this place is supposed to be under the feet of men!

Female African cholars of religion face formidable odds. To begin with, both colonial and missionary education tended to promote the education of the boy child. In line with the patriarchal ideologies that permeate biblical, Western, and African cultures, it seemed "natural" that the boy child received preferential treatment in the area of education. As Susan Rakoczy has observed: "In patriarchy the male is the norm and women are understood to be inferior in every way: biologically, intellectually, anthropologically, socially. Women—all women, every woman—are inherently of less value than any male human being" (2004: 10). The net effect was the marginalization of the girl child in the formal education system.

In an informative essay, Isabel Phiri (2009) has examined the major challenges for African women theologians in theological education in Africa. The factors that she identifies for women theologians also apply to female African scholars of religion. These include male dominance in institutions and the attendant marginalization of women. Limited scholarships, unfair recruitment and employment practices (for example, many women lecturers are on short-term contracts), and the absence of an engendered curriculum are some of the key factors.

Despite the heavy odds, female African scholars have managed to bring the theme of religion and gender to the fore. Whereas previously African male scholars

were the sole authorities on religion in Africa, including women's religious experiences, the rise to prominence of female African scholars in the 1990s has changed the landscape. Female African scholars have sought to remind researchers that African male scholars are "outsiders" in relation to African women's religious experiences. They have also exposed patriarchal assumptions in indigenous cultures and how these often get transferred to departments of religious studies (Nadar 2008–09).

The presence of female African scholars has enriched the academic study of religion. We anticipate that their vibrancy will increase the pace towards Africanization. As we alluded to above, female African scholars have been keen to tackle existentially pressing issues. More importantly, they have granted space for African women to articulate their religious experiences. This is vital as women represent the most vibrant religious constituency in Africa. In his Foreword to Olajubu's *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, Olupona acknowledges the vitality that female African scholars of religion bring to the discipline. He writes:

> We are at a very critical time in the history of religions and gender studies in Africa. African nations, and particularly African universities, are obscuring the call from several quarters, both national and international, to recognize the tremendous role of women in the society. Most importantly, Africans are obscuring the call to provide space in the academy for women to tell their own stories, rather than for men to pontificate on their perceptions of women's religious experiences. (Olupona 2003: vii)

Male scholars of religion such as Olupona, who, by word and deed, demonstrate commitment to the engendering of the discipline, are a powerful resource for the quest to Africanize the discipline. Since gender properly refers to socially defined relations between women and men in a given society, it is critical for male scholars of religion to appreciate the urgency of applying gender as an analytical tool to the study of African religions. As they reflect on their privileged status, African male scholars of religion must recognize and contribute to African women's struggle for inclusion in the discipline, as well as to the overall quest for gender justice on the continent (Chitando 2010). By joining forces with female scholars of religion, male scholars will ensure that African traditions in the study of religion in Africa thrive.

Abiding Traditions: The Vitality of African Indigenous Religions

Alongside the turn towards gender that we outlined in the foregoing section, the Africanization of religious studies will continue to be reflected by the space granted to African Indigenous Religions in the curricula of African institutions of higher learning. Again, Olupona has been an inspiring leader in this quest. His teaching, research, and publications on African Indigenous Religions have been highly informative. Urging researchers to go "beyond primitivism" (Olupona 2004), he

has maintained that indigenous religions have not been forced into oblivion by the onslaught by modernity. Instead, these religions remain vibrant and provide "worlds to live by" to millions of their followers.

In line with Olupona's insights, Africanization will entail African scholars placing priority on African issues and concerns. In pursuit of this ideal, they will need to have the courage to investigate the vitality of indigenous religions in their own contexts, without somehow feeling that they need to seek the approval of "big brothers/sisters" operating from metropolitan centers. Obviously, they have to be mindful of the general bias about the capacity of Africans to undertake serious academic study. Africa remains an enigma to many researchers. Thus: "Owing to centuries of negative discourse on Africa, current discourse on Africanisation is conducted in the midst of several historical, ideological, theological and contemporary landmines. Historically and ideologically, Africa has been represented as the 'dark continent'…" (Maluleke 2010: 371).

Against the background of a negative discourse on Africa as outlined by Maluleke above, African scholars publishing on indigenous religions have to be careful to avoid reinforcing negative perceptions and stereotypes. Although the debate on terminology continues to evolve, it is vital for African scholars to employ terms that do not perpetuate negative images of the continent and its religions. The process of Africanization necessarily involves the quest to promote value-free and accurate descriptions of African religious phenomena. African scholars have to jettison disempowering and misleading labels of African Indigenous Religions. This will enable African traditions in the study of religion in Africa to gain ground.

As part of the process of decolonization and Africanization, African scholars working in the field of African Indigenous Religions have to assert their methodological independence. This is a very sensitive area as the trend has been to portray African scholars as blind followers of the latest methodological fads brewed in Europe and North America. Given the historical development of the academic study of religion in Africa, the "center–periphery" axis has been dominant. However, African scholars must allow the character of African Indigenous Religions to determine the relevant methodological tools. Olupona has rejected the idea of forcing African scholars to undertake the study of religions like Europeans. We cite him at length below:

> There is an urgent need to develop a conceptual framework for making meaningful interpretations. The implication of our research work for scholarship in the study of religions is also important. Having said this, let me add that I am not in agreement with the general criticism we hear from colleagues in the West that our scholarship is too descriptive, uninteresting and lacks [an] analytical framework. While I have been a convert to this idea in the past, I have been rethinking the whole issue lately. It is becoming clear to me that some advocates of critical theory and a theory of based analysis in the study of religions are increasingly pushing this agenda to please some Western scholars who have made it a habit to dictate what our academic agenda should be. The implication is that

> Africa has simply metamorphosed from a slave coast supplying raw materials to European industries to supplying data and information to advance the theoretical grid making of Western research. If you fail to advocate or critique a theory, be it functionalist-structuralist, symbolist, intellectualist, phenomenological hermeneutics, then your scholarship is considered uninteresting and purely descriptive. (1996: 204)

Olupona's strong Africanist perspective in the above citation reminds African scholars that fellow Africans constitute their primary audience. However, as we noted, African scholars belong to the global community of scholars and this constituency remains important. What must not happen, as Olupona argues cogently, is to for African scholars to be forced to pander to the whims of scholars in one part of the world at the expense of tackling their own pressing issues. Africanization occurs when African scholars of indigenous religions give priority to the role of these religions in the daily lives of their adherents, how these religions interface with missionary religions, and other relevant themes.

Without becoming "missionaries" for African Indigenous Religions, African scholars have to ensure that these religions figure prominently in the study of religions in Africa. Ideologically, the question is quite simple: if Africans do not study African Indigenous Religions, who will? If African scholars of religions do not place emphasis on the indigenous religions, who will? Since these religions are intricately tied to the African religious imagination, it remains critical for all African scholars of religion, including those specializing in Christianity in Africa, Islam in Africa, history and comparative religion, religion and gender and other fields to pay attention to their continuing vitality.

African spirituality has refused to be muted, despite the multiple influences that threaten to disrupt it. African scholars have an obligation to analyze how this spirituality continues to thrive in our time. They must investigate how this indigenous spirituality permeates other religions that have found their way into the continent. Researches into African spirituality will assist in establishing the vitality and resilience of African Indigenous Religions. In turn, this will sharpen African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

Africanization in the study of African Indigenous Religions will imply studying these religions critically, but with empathy. Hard questions will need to be asked about whether and how African Indigenous Religions contribute to the leadership and governance systems that are found on the continent. As female African scholars of religion have begun to do, there is a need to interrogate the strengths and weaknesses of African Indigenous Religions in the quest for gender justice. The role of foundational concepts such as *ubuntu* (being human) in the contemporary context needs to be examined, alongside analyzing the role of indigenous religions in ongoing struggles for health and well-being. Such approaches will enrich African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

Beyond African Shores: Exploring African Religions in Diaspora

If African religions were previously confined to the African continent, in the contemporary period these religions are now spread widely in new contexts. If previously African religions were "group-tied," today African religions are practiced by a remarkably diverse range of people outside the continent (Adogame 2009). Furthermore, missionary religions that were embraced by Africans are now being exported—having been repackaged and Africanized—to new environs. With particular reference to African Christianity, Maluleke elaborates thus:

> Although geography cannot be dismissed, African Christianity is not merely about the Christianities happening within the confines of the continent of Africa. African Christianity is to be found wherever African people are present, have a presence or have influence. This includes the global South, as well as Europe and North America. Nor is it merely about people of African descent or origins. African Christianity is about a way of being Christian that takes dialogue and context seriously. It is about the way people conceive of the Bible, the Spirit and Jesus. They do this in Johannesburg. They can do this in São Paulo. They are doing this in Paris. African Christianity is no longer about the skin colour, origins and geographical location of its practitioners. It is a way of being Christian in the world today. (2010: 377)

Olupona has demonstrated his awareness of Maluleke's insights. He has contributed immensely to the study of African religions outside African contexts. Refusing to adopt a narrow perspective, he has sought to demonstrate how the religions of Africa have spread far and wide. Olupona's work reminds African scholars of the need to be open to the multiple and complex ways in which the religions of Africa have evolved. His publications on orisa devotion (Olupona and Rey 2008) and African immigrant religions in the USA (Olupona and Gemignani 2007) confirm his academic leadership in the area of African religions in Diaspora. He has inspired the emergence of African traditions in the study of religion as a global enterprise.

Research by African scholars into African religions in Diaspora contributes immensely to the Africanization of the discipline. First, it highlights one of the key factors of Africanization, namely, that African scholars themselves are at the center of research efforts on African religiosity. Without calling for a moratorium on publications on African religions by "outsiders," it is important that African scholars be at the cutting edge of research on African religions. Second, Africanization ensures that it is African issues and concerns that are at the center of religious studies. Researching African religions in Diaspora implies placing emphasis on the religious experiences of Africans in new locales. This represents a broadening of the scope of African religious studies. It represents an awakening to the fact that Africans have taken their spirituality with them to new shores.

The fact that African religions are thriving outside Africa calls for a shift in the traditional approaches to these religions. Olupona has grasped this fact and

has encouraged other scholars to pursue this exciting area of study. Younger and emerging African scholars must build on this theme and continue to explore the impact of religion on Africans who have relocated to new contexts. New approaches, methods, and theories in the study of African religions are likely to emerge from this scholarly engagement. This will amplify the Africanization process and contribute towards the blossoming of African traditions in the study of religion.

The Chapters in This Book

The interface between religion and society has occupied researchers for a long time. Chapters in the Part I dwell on this theme. Utilizing African perspectives, they seek to provide new insights into the relationship between religion and society. In Chapter 1, Lucas Shamala describes indigenous approaches to peacemaking in Kenya, while in Chapter 2 Danoye Laguda scrutinizes religious pluralism and secularization in Nigeria. In Chapter 3, Olutayo Adesina probes the interface between religion and economics in the context of Nigeria. Chapter 4, by Musa Gaiya, interrogates the concept of civil religion in Nigeria, while in Chapter 5 Kehinde Ayantayo examines the challenge of ancestor veneration to the project of nation building in Nigeria. Samson Fatokun undertakes a comparative analysis of expiatory sacrifice in the early church and in African indigenous religious traditions in Chapter 6. The chapters in this section enable one to appreciate the need to take African contexts seriously when studying the impact of religion on society, as well as the impact of society on religion. The significance of the African context in understanding religion in Africa comes out clearly in these essays. They lay the foundation for developing African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

African religions are no longer confined to African shores. In addition, the categories of youth and gender have not featured prominently in studies on religion in Africa. The chapters in Part II reflect this reality by focusing on Diaspora, Youth, and Gender. In Chapter 7 Abel Ugba examines the challenges of researching African immigrant religions. Women's leadership role in Aladura churches in Nigeria and the USA is the focus of Chapter 8 by Mojubaolu Okome and Elisha Renne. Janice McLean analyzes the place of second-generation youth in West Indian Pentecostalism in Diaspora in Chapter 9. Collectively, these chapters highlight the need to go outside the physical space of Africa in order to grasp the continuing relevance of African religions.

Religion is shaped by, and also shapes, gender roles. Ezra Chitando examines the potential of masculinity studies to contribute to the Africanization of religious studies in Chapter 10. Bolaji Bateye undertakes a critical review of the gendered dimensions of Yoruba religion in Chapter 11. The late Dorcas Akintunde assesses the status of women in Nigerian churches in Chapter 12. In Chapter 13, Oluwakemi Adesina explores the individual lives, fate, circumstances, and coping strategies of Muslim women in Northern Nigeria within the contexts of economic adjustment, religious puritanism, and gender inequality. The chapters in this Part illustrate the

extent to which the interplay between religion and gender receives a new impetus in African contexts.

Overall, we are persuaded that Olupona has contributed immensely to the quest to Africanize the study of religion, as well as to the attendant emergence and growth of African traditions in the study of religion. African scholars of religion must no longer be content to regurgitate methods and theories developed elsewhere. As Olupona's work demonstrates, there is more than enough scope for them to charter their own intellectual destiny, even as they remain participants in the global enterprise to make sense of religion.

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PART I
Religion and Society, Religion in Society

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Chapter 1
Approaches to Peacemaking in Africa: *Obuntu* Perspectives from Western Kenya

Lucas Nandih Shamala

Introduction

There is a debate that has been active for many decades with respect to the origins of war and violence in human society. It has pitted those who believe that war is the result of human aggression innate in human biology against those who argue that it is socially learned behavior. The prevailing view today is that social conflict is a socially learned phenomenon, just like any other complex activity, such as the development of speech and the construction of language (Tuso 2003: 79). In the following analysis we will explore the manifestation of *Obuntu*, a *Bantu* communitarian way of existence, as it is exemplified through the aspect of peacemaking and conflict resolution. We will make the case that traditional non-Western forms of knowledge systems and practices, particularly the *Obuntu* of the Abaluyia community, provides an important alternative approach in the peacemaking and conflict resolution discourse and is, therefore, worthy of consideration by policy makers, intellectuals, public moralists, and peace activists alike as they seek viable alternatives for resolving conflict, making peace, and managing peace. In order to accomplish the above objective, we will outline the *Obuntu* value system as it is illustrated through the *emilukha* or *emisango*[1] peacemaking ceremonies of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya. To attain this objective, the present study will analyze three sub-clans of the Abaluyia society: namely, the Abesukha, the Ababukusu, and theAbakabarasi.

Before proceeding with the discussion of the Abaluyia examples of peacemaking ceremonies, we will examine the roots of conflicts and wars on the African continent. An understanding of the causal factors of conflicts in Africa suggests the direction that could be followed in preventing, confronting, mitigating, and resolving a plethora of conflicts and wars on the continent. This important analysis is not possible without an explanation and understanding of the contribution of Western imperialism to the creation of violent systemic structures that engender an atmosphere of war, conflict, and other social pathologies on the African scene.

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[1] These two names denote the meaning of ceremonies in the Kiluyia language.

The Genesis of Conflicts in Africa

We contend here that the introduction of Western technological advances in Africa, rather than promoting peace, has unfortunately succeeded in creating an embattled continent that is riddled with various kinds of conflicts, insecurity, exploitation of the poor by the rich, subordination of the powerless by the powerful, ecological imbalance, and environmental degradation, among other social ills (Acholonu 2003: 89). Thus Western imperialism has engendered and significantly facilitated the process of acute social disintegration, social fragmentation, and social dislocation of the people and their communities due to wars and conflicts, such that Africa today may very well be described as the most conflict-ridden continent in the world. Africa is in this respect "a continent in chaos," in the words of George Ayyitey (Kalu 2003: 18). The above state of affairs on the African continent is not accidental, but rather has been directly and indirectly caused by external and internal factors on the continent, which arguably are products of Euro-Western imperialism. How did this come about? Answering this important question requires a social, structural, and historical dissection of the causes of conflicts in Africa, as this reveals the erosion and distortion of indigenous African values and practices which held the social fabric intact—including the practice of *Obuntu*.

We begin by noting that, geographically speaking, contemporary Africa is a creation of European powers at the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884–85, convened by one of the architects of Western imperialism, the German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck. This conference shared and divided Africa among 14 foreign powers without the African people's consent or knowledge. The dismemberment of Africa at this conference was undertaken through the slogan "The Scramble for Africa" which gave birth to the so-called "protectionist policies" among European powers. Thus the end of the summit saw the emergence of over fifty new colonial territories carved up at the stroke of the pen and tailored along the pattern of European metropolitan states. The imperial powers at the Berlin Conference failed to pay attention to aspects of the continent's indigenous socio-political, historical, cultural, linguistic, and economic situations. The intruders were either oblivious to these factors or they were operating on the basis a scheme which was hatched to systematically conquer, subjugate, domesticate, exploit, and appropriate Africans and their resources.

The newly created artificial boundaries were bound to produce considerable social, economic, political, and religious strife and conflicts which have ravaged the African people and their continent for decades, and which Africans are condemned to contend with for many decades, if not centuries, to come.

Before Africa was carved up by the various European states as a colonial territory, most local conflicts were between no more than two ethnic groups at any given time (Kalu 2003). With the absence of state boundaries, pre-colonial conflicts in Africa afforded the losers the option of living with the larger group or moving into a different autonomous territory. Here was a revolutionary form of democracy, which was imbedded in African roots, the African *Obuntu*. Rarely

did such conflicts result in one party completely annihilating and exterminating the other. The practice of brutally eliminating your neighbor—termed "enemy" in Western lingo for jingoistic interests—was never part of the *Obuntu* value system. Rather, it was the unfortunate legacy of colonialism, as will become clear in this chapter. In fact, most social formations in Africa were confined within manageable land territories occupied by the same cultural and linguistic group with loyalty and obedience to the leader's ability to provide for the group's economic needs.

Furthermore, in most pre-colonial African societies, people were not restricted to specific land areas by coercion or force. In cases where force was necessary to hold the group together (usually as a result of one abomination or the other), individuals usually had the option to leave the group for another. Disputes within an Abaluyia sub-clan could lead to people breaking off from it and starting a new group on their own, so that small *tsimbia* or sub-clans came into existence from time to time, which, when relations with the parent group had been restored, continued as separate units partially dependent on the larger groups (Huntingford 1944: 23). Contrary to the above situation, European annexation of African peoples and their lands was executed through barbaric force and beastly brutality.[2] The violence that colonial experience dealt to Africans at the hands of their colonizers remains a significant source of conflict in contemporary Africa, many years after the colonialists left. The exit of Europeans saw the entry of European/Western puppets, or the neo-colonialists, a situation well captured by Frantz Fanon's notion of "Black Skin White Masks."[3] The so-called African independence saw the changing of the guard from a European one to an African one. However, there was no difference in the attitudinal, mental, ideological, as well as structural and systemic orientation of the neo-colonizers, who unequivocally mimicked their masters.

As we have already shown, the Berlin Conference partitioned Africa into European-style nation-states, and arbitrarily fragmented African nations, families, customs, and languages, and above all, trapped people within state boundaries providing no viable exit options in case of conflicts. As a consequence, conflicts over land and other economic resources that would previously have resulted in the defeated moving to different pastures have, for post-independence officials, become an excuse to seek at least punitive peace and, at worst, the total extermination and annihilation of their "enemies." African leaders have imbibed and internalized the violence of their imperialist masters, which they repeat at the expense of their own

[2] We are aware that in very few cases the annexation of African peoples and land was undertaken through trickery or at the invitation by African leaders in search for protection from hostile neighbors.

[3] See Fanon (1967). In this profound psychoanalytic work, the author depicts a situation where the blacks/Africans/colonized peoples practice blind imitation in following the White/Western culture and mannerisms, as well as the disavowal of their own cultural identities.

brothers and sisters with impunity. They have, in this regard, undergone what Wa Thiong'o has correctly designated as the colonization of their minds.[4]

Unfortunately, the imposed African nation-state characterized by force and violence was neither contested nor reformed at the dawn of "flag independence" in the 1960s. The post-independent state, or what we designate in the present study as "flag independence," has inherited Euro-Western practices that used force and coercion to produce stability and order. The question here becomes: how can a nation-state, an inherently violent institution, be utilized as a mediating agency in conflict-ridden situations as is the case in many parts of Africa today? How can such an institution be relied upon as the final arbiter of conflicts and as a provider of economic opportunities and resources for the survival of its citizens? Is it the case that the nation-state by its very constitution as a violent entity is incapable of resolving conflicts in the first place? These and other important questions deserve to be critically engaged in order to understand the mitigating role, if any, of the state apparatus in African conflicts. Since scholars tend to perceive war as a means of communication between warring parties (Von Clausewitz 1992), the nature of political culture and the general norms in the international globalized system are important considerations for understanding intra and inter-state conflicts, not only for the Abaluyia context but for Africa at large.

Viewed from a structuralist vantage point, the globalized international system is characterized by anarchy, making conflicts between nation-states inevitable. If we consider the view of anarchy and violence in the international arena as a given, it follows that a democratic form of government would tend to make a state a less ferocious entity especially toward other democracies. Two questions are pertinent here in so far as the African conflict situation is concerned. First, given the fact that peace is usually sought as an alternative to conflict, is peace then the absence of war? Second, if war is the absence of peace as understood in the West, is it even possible to maintain the conditions that sustain peace as an alternative that precludes war?

The above questions make clear that the sustenance of peace, especially in the African context, requires much more than the knowledge of its alternatives. This means that peace analysts and peace activists in Africa will do well to understand the structural and systemic conditions that make conflicts inevitable in this vast continent. Consequently, the creation of lasting viable structural and systemic imperatives are essential and must, of necessity, inform an understanding of the complex nature of external, internal, and regional factors and how these factors collude to produce conflicts.

The exploitation of Africa's human and material resources by the international globalized system, which has created a scarcity of economic resources for the people on the continent, is a factor that funnels conflict in Africa. The point we are

[4] Wa Thiong'o (1986), In his work, Wa Thiong'o posits that the colonial project was effective due to the linguistic conquest of Africans leading to a colonization of the mind, and consequently, of the people's culture. This situation calls for a decolonization of the minds of African people which, to him, means going back to writing in African languages.

at pains to make here is that the sources of conflict in Africa are much more complex than many in Euro-Western circles would have us believe: that is, that conflicts are a product of a primitive, barbaric, atavistic war-like mentality on the part of African "tribes" (Wandibba 1985: 49). Such a careless and simplistic rendition of African conflicts readily removes the requirement critically to interrogate the underlying reasons for conflicts in Africa and seriously impedes our ability to provide lasting peaceful solutions to wars and conflicts. It also excuses and glosses over the rapacious colonial histories of oppression and subjugation with the concomitant plundering and social destruction among indigenous peoples the world over. Such a characterization of African conflicts also conceals the role of imperialism in the creation of such conflicts and other dehumanizing conditions, not only in Africa, but elsewhere in the global context. However, the details of globalization and its contribution to conflicts and strife in Africa, while important for analyzing the roots of African conflicts, fall beyond the scope of this study. In the next section we will explicate the ceremonies on peacemaking in the African context in general, and then examine the Abaluyia scene in particular.

Ceremonies and Peacemaking in Africa: A General Overview

Before examining the Abaluyia approach to peacemaking and conflict resolution, a few general points about the nature and practice of ceremony in Africa are in order. Ceremonies, (*emilukha*), in Western Kenya, are at the center of African *Obuntu*. This is because *emilukha* are always a collective undertaking. They involve sharing, and the idea of interdependence. Sharing in community life is the availability and opportunity to join and participate in collective ceremonies. There is no reference to individual ceremonies. In fact, when an individual is absent from a communal ceremony, he or she endangers the cohesion of the group and runs the risk of being suspected of wanting to destroy it. This is the case because the ceremony is the bedrock of African *Obuntu*, seeking to bind people together. Thus partaking in a ceremony by all the members of a group ensures that none of the members is seeking to disavow the ceremony and that nobody holds hostility, anger, or envy in their hearts. This is the reason why the reconciliation or peacemaking ceremony in the *Obuntu* worldview is a fixed event, which is preceded by many other important rituals, functions, and festivals. The ceremonial moment in the African *Obuntu* is a process through which people seek and find peace with themselves, their relatives, their ancestors, their neighbors, and the environment. Ceremony binds together the living, the not-yet born, the departed ancestors, the creatures of the environment, and the animate relatives. It brings together the visible as well as the invisible. It enhances a web of interconnectedness and interrelatedness—*Obuntu.*

As we have already noted, peace cannot be an individual affair. Rather, peace in the African worldview is essentially linked with the community—it is not possible on your own. Here, peace is not understood in the Euro-Western sense of the term as simply the absence of strife or war; rather, peace means the ability to live in harmony,

with balance, or to have balance in your community. Such peace includes the family, the neighbour, the domesticated animals and plants, and other aspects of nature—an interconnected and interdependent understanding—an *Obuntu* phenomenon.

It is the objective of peace to interconnect and repair the alienation caused by strife in the community. Failure to adhere to the expectations of the community in peace ceremonies may result in quite the opposite of the outcome: that is, instead of enhancing peace it could funnel strife. That is why Africans in general, but the Abaluyia in particular, are very keen to follow elaborately all the expectations of ceremonies.

Just what factors lead to war and conflict in the first place, as understood among the Abaluyia? According to Wandibba, a leading Abaluyia elder-scholar, cattle acquisition was a key consideration in the reasons for going to war among the Bukusu sub-clan of the Abaluyia. This was because the Abaluyia were mainly pastoralists, although they also engaged in subsistence farming and agriculture. Wandibba observes that the Karamojong, Pokot, and Turkana raided south of Mt. Elgon expressly to loot cattle from both the Sebei and the Ababukusu, especially at times when their own herds had been devastated by severe drought and epidemics (Wandibba 1985).

Raphael Wesonga, another Abaluyia scholar, reports that both the Nandi and Maasai peoples were also exclusively concerned with cattle raiding in Bukusuland (see Wandibba 1985). Nakabayashi has echoed this view (Nakabayashi 1981: 21). He observes that the Abaluyia in general, but the Abesukha sub-clan in particular, inhabited a zone that the Nandi frequently raided, and this made defensive wars a vital part of their history (Nakabayashi 1981). Yet the act of war among and between the Ababukusu and the Iteso, Bakhayo, Bawanga, and Elgon Kalenjin were as much about cattle as land, for they were neighbors who tended to expand at the expense of the others as their population grew. The point we are advancing here is that no matter how one may frame the issue, in the final analysis, it must be emphasized that war in the Abaluyia context, as in other African societies, was understood and sanctioned in terms of the preservation of the life of society or the common good—the interest of *Obuntu*. Put differently, war among the Abaluyia, as with many other indigenous peoples, was never indulged in for jingoistic interests. This view of war sharply contrasts with the reasons for going to war in Western societies as well as in some parts of Africa where jingoism and the self-interest of a few elites serve as the overriding reason to wage war and spill blood, often with impunity and beastly brutality.

Whenever the Abaluyia waged war, it was undertaken in the interest of the preservation of the life of the whole community. That is why the shedding of blood, including the "enemy's" blood, was and remains. always inauspicious, and is invariably followed by elaborate ceremonial rites of purification (Magesa 1997: 271–2). In other words, great care must be undertaken before blood is shed, and whenever war is undertaken resulting in the shedding of blood, it must be the very last resort, all other avenues having failed. As indicated above, this aspect of war is not unique to the Abaluyia but also applies to other indigenous peoples. George

Tinker has attested that this view of war is also held among the Osage and other Native American nations.[5]

What is evident from the above views is that the notion of conflict, war, and peacemaking, as is the case with any other social or cultural phenomenon in African communities in general, and the Abaluyia community in particular, must always be understood in the light of the whole system of morality and ethics, that is to say, the African practice of *Obuntu* in its totality.

The notion of peacemaking and conflict resolution in Abaluyia society is linked to the aspect of *emima*, an all-encompassing socio-cultural phenomenon with the concomitant ceremonial processes that obtain within the Abaluyia socio-cultural milieu. As Magesa has observed, the resolution of conflict is connected to the belief system (*emima*) of the people and is inseparable from it (Magesa 1997: 271–2). Thus to speak of justice and reconciliation in the African context in general, and among the Abaluyia in particular, is to speak of morality and ceremonial activities (*emilukha*) at the same time (ibid.).

Having seen the *Obuntu* aspects of peace in Africa in general, we now examine the ways in which *Obuntu* emerges in the process of conflict resolution and peacemaking among the Abaluyia. Although there are many similarities between these processes, clan-based ceremonies present interesting differences that enrich the diversity of *Obuntu* and the ways in which such diversity plays out in conflict resolution and peacemaking. Hence we have selected three sub-clans and will analyze *Obuntu* in their *emilukha* ceremonies which epitomize conflict resolution and peacemaking in Abaluyia society. Consequently, we examine the manifestation of the practice of *Obuntu* among three Abaluyia sub-groups: namely, the Ababukusu, the Abesukha, and the Abakabarasi. This will entail a description and analysis of three *emilukha* or *emisango* ceremonies, which were performed in order to make peace or end inter and intra-clan feuds and conflicts, as well as to re-establish social harmony and equilibrium in the community. Although only three Abaluyia sub-clans are examined, the conclusions to be drawn from this examination can be extrapolated for the rest of Abaluyia society in general due to the close cultural and linguistic affinities between Abaluyia societies.

Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution among the Abesukha

Nakabayashi (1981), has carried out an important study among the Abaluyia-Abesukha sub-clan. In his study, he demonstrates that the relations between the Abesukha and their Abanandi (Nandi) neighbors were not always belligerent, because from time to time the two communities entered a peace pact, one that

[5] Personal communication from George E. Tinker. According to him, before and after war the Native American tribes perform elaborate and lengthy ceremonies. Before the first blood is drawn, to avoid disharmony and imbalance in the community, purification rites occur to ensure the ancestors are in accord with the anticipated drawing of blood.

was sealed through an *omusango* ceremony. In most cases the community seeking peace conceded to their counterpart's ceremony.

Whenever there was a feud or conflict between the two communities, and if such a conflict resulted in the shedding of blood, either of their enemy or their own, the Abaluyia send representatives—usually a council of elders—to their neighbors to discuss a peace pact in order to end the feud or conflict. After a series of deliberations between the two parties, a time and place is chosen for *emisango*. Usually such a place would be near the border, preferably a junction or a crossroads: symbolic of the coming together of the two communities/parties, in the *Obuntu* worldview. The *omusango* ceremony was based on the slaughtering of a dog (*isimbwa*), which would be cut into two pieces that would be shared among the elders of the two parties. The blood which splashed during the ceremony symbolized the blood that was drawn during the conflict and was an indicator that the blood of the dog stood in place of the blood of the men from the two communities, which had been spared by the slaughtering of the dog. After the ceremony, the location in which the ceremony was performed held an important place in the life of the two communities, symbolizing the meeting of the two communities which had fractured relationships; it reconnected them, through a powerful uniting ceremony of *Obuntu*. From then onwards, the place would become a regular meeting place for people of both communities. In some cases it even became a center for barter exchange, where, for instance, the Nandi people, who were predominantly pastoralists, came to exchange their cattle for grain and other farm or garden produce, which was grown by the Abesukha, who were predominantly agriculturalists.

The above ceremony compares with the act of sacrificing an animal or the act of shedding blood in the interest of peace among other peoples. The Israelites of the Old Testament times and other Near Eastern groups (extra-biblical groups) were quite familiar with these types of sacrifices, which sealed peace covenants and ensured peace for the parties involved. A striking example of this notion is the Christian Church, which was founded on the belief in a crucified Christ who shed his blood for the salvation of humankind: an act that is supposed to reconcile humankind with God. Having described the ceremony of peacemaking among the Abesukha, we now turn our attention to the Ababukusu sub-clan.

Peacemaking among the Ababukusu: *Khulia Embwa*

Khulia Embwa means "eating a dog." The ceremony of *Khulia Embwa* literally means the "dog-eating ceremony." Once the objectives of war become manifest, or when the welfare of the community was seriously endangered by war, the leaders sought peace with their adversaries. Accordingly, truces and firm treaties were agreed between the warring parties. At this particular *omulukha* ceremony, each party sent an elderly person as their emissary to some mutually agreed rendezvous, usually at a fording point in a river or stream. During the ceremony a puppy was

held by the two elders (peace-agents) and cut into halves. Each party then took an oath renouncing war and aggression against the other and pledging to uphold peace with each other for as long as they lived. One such peace pact, which was sealed through the blood of a puppy, is reported to have taken place between Lipopo, a leader of the Teso people and Masibo, a Bukusu leader from Baumba clan, at a place called Lelekwe on the border between West Bukusu and North Teso. As part of the agreement, Lipopo was to be paid an annual subsidy of one cow. A similar ceremony marking peace between the Pok, a southern Sebei group, and the Namachanja of South Bukusu, has been recorded among the Bukusu. In this report, intermarriage was arranged and carried out as a seal of the agreement and its permanence (Wandibba 1985).

Similar ceremonies and agreements were quite common among other Abaluyia sub-groups, whereby peace was sealed and bound through an exchange of two young people through intermarriage between the feuding groups in what may be described as political marriages. The rationale was that when people are linked through marriage the two communities cease to be mere neighbors and, instead, become relatives through the marriage bond and union. This practice epitomizes the embeddedness of the values of *Obuntu* in the various peacemaking ceremonies of the Abaluyia.

The above illustration of peacemaking is contrary to certain naïve views, which are usually advanced by Western foreigners who assert that the so-called tribal wars were primitive, atavistic, and barbaric undisciplined activities. What is evident from the foregoing discussion is the fact that those who organized war were not mere robots but intelligent human beings who all the time had to consider the welfare of the community, the common good, before sanctioning war. It was only as a last resort that a community would be engaged in war, and all steps would be taken to shorten the length of it and to diminish the unnecessary spilling of blood including the opponent's blood. Having described this aspect of peacemaking among the Ababukusu sub-clan, we now move on to consider the aspect of peacemaking among the Abakabarasi sub-clan.

Peacemaking among the Abaluyia-Abakabarasi: *Amasanganjira*

According to oral tradition, whenever the Abakabarasi were at war with their neighbors, in a quest to prevent indiscriminate shedding of blood, a team of elders from the Abakabarasi clan would approach their counterparts from the other community. Deliberations between the two communities' councils of elders would ensue, whereby both sides would take accountability for their role in the war, together with its consequences for the members of the two respective communities. After they deliberated for days and even weeks, they would then determine what was needed to end the conflict and mend the fractured relationship between the peoples of the two communities. This would be reached through a general consensus. At the end of the day, a time and place would be selected from

where a *omulukha* ceremony, a form of the *Amasanganjira* ceremony, would take place. This is also known as the *Omuyayano* feast, which comes from the word *Okhuyayana*, meaning "to share in a sacrificial meat/offering." Usually it took place on the border, at a junction or crossroads, symbolizing a converging space or a joining place for the two communities. The *Amasanganjira* was for all members of the communities who were able to attend. A sheep, usually a big fattened lamb, would be selected in order to be slaughtered at this junction to symbolize the willingness of the two sides to enter into a peace agreement or covenant designed to stop any further spillage of blood.

The lamb's blood also acknowledged the blood of the dead soldiers and served to indicate that they had died not in vain but for a sacrificial purpose—to safeguard the well-being of the living and for the common good. The lamb was in this regard a linkage between the living and the dead, and also a symbol of future peace and harmony between the two communities. The lamb would be slaughtered on top of carefully arranged green branches, green leaves, and green grass. The inside of the sheep, usually the intestines and tripe (*ovuse*), would be retrieved from the innards and spread around the surrounding area in a quest to invoke the presence of the departed ancestors to partake of the *Amasanganjira*. The lamb's meat would be cut in two equal halves and each side cooked and shared one side among its members. An *Omusalisi*, a special medicine man and diviner, from either side would preside over the ceremony. Such a medicine man would mix the *ovuse* with the blood of the slaughtered animal, and this would be sprinkled on all the bystanders from both sides of the aisle while the medicine man uttered words which invoked the presence of the ancestors and the departed to be witnesses to this occasion. Whoever broke the promises of the contract would incur the wrath of the ancestral spirits and this could cause disharmony/imbalance within the society. This ceremony usually guaranteed peace for many years and cemented the relationships between the two groups. The contracting parties usually exchanged a young man and woman in marriage as a seal of their relationship. This exchange indicated that from then on they were not only neighbors but had become relatives through the marriage exchange. The ceremony and the marriage exchange enhanced interrelatedness—*Obuntu*—between the two parties.

Conclusion

Thus far we have examined the aspect of peacemaking and conflict resolution among the Abaluyia. We have seen the colonial project's contribution to conflict and strife in Africa. We have also seen the efforts by Africans to make peace through the practice of *Obuntu* among three sub-clans of the Abaluyia. Three ceremonies were examined, emphasizing how they epitomize the practice of *Obuntu* in conflict resolution as well as in making, maintaining, and managing peace among various communities.

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Chapter 2
Religious Pluralism and Secularization in the Nigerian Religious Sphere

Danoye Oguntola Laguda

Introduction

Religious pluralism suggests competition among religious epistemologies that permeate our religious space. This type of pluralism becomes more interesting in a globalized world where other forms of pluralism have a bearing on religious beliefs and practices. There are now alternative epistemologies that inform our ideas about the way the world works. This has an effect on what we consider (individually or as a group) to be true or credible. In turn, this situation affects our cosmologies and cosmogonies, thereby creating new religious movements or a modification of what can be referred to as "classic or traditional" religious cosmologies. The new trend has created new values and meaning for religion, especially in societies like Nigeria with its multiple diversities. Since independence and even during the colonial era, religion has played a significant role in modeling the struggle for political independence, economic development, and moral uplift. This is in spite of the multiple religious ideologies.

Our effort in this chapter, from the above premise, is to re-examine the religious landscape in Nigeria within the framework of pluralism and secularization. From there, we propose a definition of religion based on a market model where "needs" inform conviction or patronage of religious traditions, while not denying the spirituality of the traditions. Religion continues to play vital roles in policy formulation and implementation in the state. At the individual level we propose that "needs" will inform "patronage" of religion in a religiously plural society like Nigeria.

Pluralism and Secularization Defined

Pluralism posits that more than one view or ideology is in competition with others. The ideologies may be competing for power, economic control, or survival. It could be cultural, ethnic, or tribal struggle for supremacy. Religious pluralism (our concern in this chapter) suggests that more than one religious cosmologies are in immediate competition with each other in the attempt to occupy or earn space in the new globalized world. Gordon Melton, writing about religious pluralism in the West, argues as follows:

> During the 20th century the west has experienced a phenomenon it has not encountered since the reign of Constantine, the growth of a significant visible presence of a variety of non-Christian and non-orthodox Christian bodies competing for religious allegiance of the public. This growth of so many alternatives religiously is forcing the west into a new situation in which the still dominant Christian religion must share its centuries old hegemony in a new pluralistic religious environment. (1998: 594)

Gordon's position seems to aptly describe the religious plurality that now permeates the world. It further offers an understanding of the Nigerian situation where traditional African religious cosmologies now compete with the cosmologies and epistemologies of Christianity, Islam, and some oriental religions. However, it should be noted that the situation of inter-religious competition is more obvious in the West than in Africa. These 'imported' religious ideologies now dominate the religious space in Nigeria.

Religious pluralism has made secularization a fad for states where more than one religious ideology is prevalent. This could be to avoid conflicts and promote religious interaction and tolerance. It could also be to pursue the theories of sociologists like Peter Berger (1997: 974) that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. The reality, however, is that the world today is neither secular nor religious, but the latter option seems more popular. Even in the West, if we take the American model, religious values seem to be the pivot of independence and freedom. In Nigeria, even though the constitution suggests that the state is secular, it has always integrated and appropriated religion in its policies and laws. It is obvious, therefore, that secularization theories are attempts to account for how pluralism has reshaped the religious map. The new order seems to be a ground for contesting epistemologies.

In the opinion of Christiano et. al. (2008), pluralism by its nature is multiplicative. Each new religion spawns more new religions and, as secularization theorists have rightly noted, ever-increasing pluralism undermines the absolute certainty that has been claimed by at least some religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, for example), though new religions will simultaneously continue to arise to concretize this argument. Christiano et al. argue as follows:

> The more one becomes aware of more and more religious competition in a market place like setting, the harder it becomes to assert that one religion contains all truth and that the others must be wrong. While it is certainly possible to make comparisons of better and worse, all-or-nothing rigidity simply doesn't hold up. (2008: 75)

Therefore no one religion in a religiously pluralistic society can satisfy the "needs" of the "buyers" (the people). The state's attitude towards religion may have direct effects on the level of pluralism that is allowed in society. Historically, Islamic nations (such as Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Saudi Arabia) may not

be attuned to the "free commerce" of religion that has become the hallmark of Western democracy. In Africa, it may be difficult for the state to engage in religious monopoly. In Nigeria, for example, the religious landscape is a free market situation where "demand" determines "supply." This is simply because of its religious plurality. Thus, we can submit that the Nigerian situation demonstrates that monopoly is the antithesis of pluralism.

Religious pluralism creates a market place of ideas where absolute claims for ultimacy are always at some degree of risk. The free market situation gives freedom to the "buyers" to pick and choose among competing ideologies those that satisfy their need—materially and spiritually. On the basis of the free market model, Christiano *et al*. posit two theories on secularization. First, there is a substantial body of evidence that pluralism of belief (including disbelief) has been intensified by globalization. Second, pluralization forces us to make a distinction between secularization and what might be called new religious movements that may emerge or other world traditions may gain dominance over a traditional historical epistemology. The latter relates to what happened with Christianity in the West and African Traditional Religion (ATR) in Africa.

In my opinion, therefore, the market situation created according to the thesis of Christiano *et al*. will lead to syncretism. "Buyers" seeking a solution to their hydra-headed problems may "shop" for their needs in different shops or supermarkets where "all products" seem to be available. This will not make the "buyers" irreligious, but rather makes it more interesting and challenging for them to make a choice among the competing "brands" (religions). New religious pluralism therefore provokes new syncretism since it seems the religious "boundaries" have been broken down in the face of pluralism. I also contend that religious pluralism will necessitate secularization in which appropriation of values could take place without religion. In other words, under conditions of religious pluralism, religion has lost its capacity to impose its beliefs and practices. Society claims the capacity to seek its own destiny without religious participation. An individual will therefore be able to examine the ideologies, epistemologies, doctrines, tenets, and practices of the competing religions and make his or her choice based on "needs." There are limitations here as to what will be "for sale." People's minds may also have been conditioned and they may not be able to make rational choices.

Religious Pluralism in Nigeria

The Nigerian Federal Constitution of 1999, like other constitutions before it, claims that the state is a secular state. The implication of this claim is that religion should not be a factor in governance and the responsibility to lead and govern rests solely on the constitution, customs, traditions, and culture of the federating "groups." However, the realities on the ground suggest the contrary. Not only is the country religiously pluralized, but religion has continually been a factor in government policy formulation and in the implementation of laws. It is therefore

apposite to consider the religious landscape in Nigeria as a way to understand how religious diversities earlier discussed play themselves out in the country. There are three competing religions in Nigeria—Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. These competing ideologies jostle for space in the minds of about 150 million Nigerians. It should be noted, however, that Islam and Christianity are dominant and that these traditions account for about 96 per cent of the population. Although the precise figure is debatable due to religious politics and the politics of religious statistics in Nigeria.

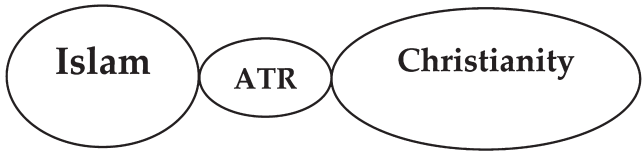

Figure 2.1 This demonstrates the religious landscape of Nigeria. Where Islam and Christianity dominates ATR based on the 2007 population census in Nigeria.

Islam was introduced into the country through the North and through trans-Saharan trade through the deserts of North Africa. Since its introduction, it has spread all over the country. Missions and groups have emerged, propagating Islamic tenets and doctrines. Proselytization has been the hallmark of Muslims in Nigeria. The groups can be divided into three mission groups (e.g. the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, Nawal-Ud-Deen Society, and Zumratul-ul Islamiyah Society), spiritualists (groups), who engage in healing and soothsaying for their patrons and the Islamic "Pentecostals" (Nasru-Lahil-Fatil Society (NASFAT), Quareeb Society (QUAREEB), Nadwat-ul-ahly Society of Nigeria (NADWAT) etc.). The last groups are popular in south- western Nigeria, where prayers and lectures are organized every Sunday for the "faithful." This is what Lateef Adetona (2005) refers to as the "Prayer Market." It should be pointed out that Islam and Muslims in Nigeria have used religion as a tool of social identity, political negotiation, and economic empowerment. Therefore these groups have become active in the political development of the country. For example, during military rule in Nigeria (1983–99), Muslims were among those that agitated for the enthronement of democracy. In this regard the Supreme Council for Islam in Nigeria and National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO), were at the forefront of the agitation.

There were various attempts to Christianize Nigeria prior to 1842. The fifteenth and sixteenth century's attempts to evangelize failed for various reasons. According to Oduyoye (1984) and Ogbu Kalu (1980), most Nigerians who initially converted to Christianity were unable to divorce themselves from their traditional religion. Thus, they introduced a form of syncretism like that observed in the Holy Arousa Church in Benin. The Arousa church adopted local divinities into their belief system. After 1842, Christianity spread to the nooks and crannies of Nigeria via the coastal areas, through the missionary efforts of the Church Misionary Society (CMS), Methodists, and Catholics at various mission posts in the country. The missions made their presence felt with substantial efforts at proselytization, establishing schools, hospitals, and other social services.

Since then many Christian groups have come on the scene. There are the African Independent Churches (AICs), Pentecostals, and Charismatic churches. Some of these groups emerged from mission churches. All these groups are competing favourably to "win souls" in the country. On the socio-political front, the church played a pivotal role in the agitations for Nigeria's independence. It has continued to seek good governance, corrupt-free leadership, and good social values for the country. The agitations of Christian groups are often publicized through the umbrella of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). The Christian groups have turned the country into a spiritual market where "religious trade fairs" are organized regularly to "cater" for the needs of the people. It should be noted that there is competition among the Christian groups for the soul of the people. Thus we can talk about pluralism even among the Christians in Nigeria. This situation has, to my mind, weakened the focus of the groups and made Christianity a means to prosperity, social relevance, and empowerment for the leaders while the congregations (followers) continue to wallow in poverty, ignorance, unemployment, and disease. To confront these problems, Christians in Nigeria have continuously moved from one church to another in a pluralized Christian environment, seeking "products" in a "religious departmental store" where salvation, miracles, prosperity, and healing are the major "goods" on display.

The third religious tradition in Nigeria is traditional religion, popularly referred to by many scholars as African Traditional Religion or ATR. This is the religion that emerged out of the culture and traditions of the African people. It is a religion that expresses a belief in a supreme cosmic being and subordinates who have continuously influenced the cosmologies and cosmogonies of the people. This religion dominated the politics, economics, and social and cultural landscape of the people of Nigeria before the advent of Islam and Christianity. These new traditions now dominate the religious landscape to an extent that most Nigerians only identify themselves as Christians or Muslims at the expense of African Traditional Religion. It should be noted, however, that there are still Nigerians who are patrons and adherents of this religion, even though they are few. These "few" are organizing and modernizing the tradition so as to attract patronage. In fact August 20 every year (in the last decade) has been declared Isese day (traditional

religion day) by the Lagos State Government in recognition of traditional religion in Lagos State (one of the 36 federal states in Nigeria).

There are many groups among the traditional religious groups. We have the conservatives (these are the core, who are still practicing the pristine traditional religion). We have the liberals, who may be accused of syncretism. They combine the pristine traditional religion with Islam or Christianity. There are also those who, in the name of modernity, are appropriating Islam and Christian values to "sell" ATR to Nigerians. In this category, we have Ijo Orunmila (Adulawo or Ato). This group has appropriated Christian liturgy as part of their tenets and doctrines. They have a creed, hymnbook, and standing choir with leadership patterned after the Anglican Church structure. There is also the "syncretistic" group. One notable group is "Chrislamherb." This group appropriates Islam and Christian traditions with ATR to compete in the Nigerian religious landscape. It is interesting to note that the traditional religious groups are providing challenges in an attempt to occupy and dominate the Nigerian religious space.

Discussion

From our description of the religious situation in Nigeria, we observe that it is a pluralized religious environment where multiple religious traditions compete for the mind of the populace. This perhaps may have informed the constitutional position earlier mentioned that Nigeria is a secular state.[1] However, "secularization" is not an appropriate term to describe the religious space in the country. While it is true that the state has not adopted any religion as official, the rulers have continuously appropriated religious values in policy formulation and implementation. In fact the coroner law system (CLS) introduced by the Lagos State Government in 2007 was withdrawn in 2008 due to the agitations against its "unIslamic" contents by Muslim groups. Eleven days are declared as public holidays in Nigeria for religious reasons. Political processes and programs must give due recognition to religion for them to be acceptable to the electorate. For example, it has become a tradition for political parties in Nigeria to always apply "religious balance" in the selection and presentation of candidates for electoral offices. Therefore, we suggest that Nigeria is not a secularized environment because the country is religiously plural. The popular dictum of new pluralism as a cause for secularization cannot hold true in Nigeria. While we agree that religious pluralism might bring out secularization as observed in the American model, it cannot be true of the developing nations in Africa, as the Nigerian example has shown. On the contrary, secularization in Nigeria allows for the appropriation of the values of more than one religion in the making of government policies, legislation, and programs for the growth and development of policy.

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[1] See also the chapter by Gaiya in this volume.

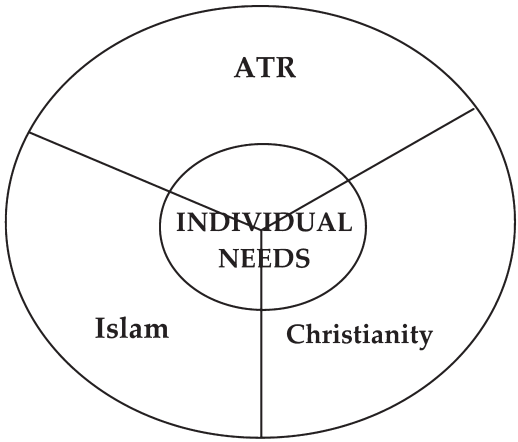

Figure 2.2 This is a representation of "*needs*" of individual(s) that cut across the three dominant religious traditions in Nigeria. This will suggest that syncretism could be due to "*needs*" of individuals or groups.

Syncretism is one of the attendant effects of religious pluralism. In fact, in an environment where there are many religions showcasing their "wares," there is bound to be syncretism since the "needs" of the people will determine what they will "buy" in the "spiritual supermarket." As mentioned earlier, Nigerians are faced with problems of hunger, disease, ignorance, spiritual attacks, and bad governance. Any religion that "displays" solutions to these problems will be patronized by the people. In this regard, a structured questionnaire was administered in Lagos among selected educated upwardly mobile religious youth, between the ages of 25 and 45. About 65 per cent of the respondents to our questionnaire on this issue agreed that they patronize more than one religious group to tackle the challenges confronting them. Some 30 per cent claimed they are committed to the tenets and doctrines of their religion as a solution to these problems. The other 5 per cent are not bothered about the situation and feel that spiritual solutions to social and economic problems will come naturally. Therefore, the Nigerian situation suggests that there is no religious monopoly of answers to the myriad of problems facing the country. A combination of two or three religious "wares" may bring the ideal solution to the problems of the people. In a religiously plural society, like Nigeria, people will adopt and appropriate multi-religious solutions to their spiritual and material problems.

In the course of this discussion, we also noticed that pluralism exists within a particular religious tradition. It is common to meet patrons of mission churches who also participate actively in the programs of Pentecostals with the objective of seeking spiritual solutions to their problems. This is common among Christians

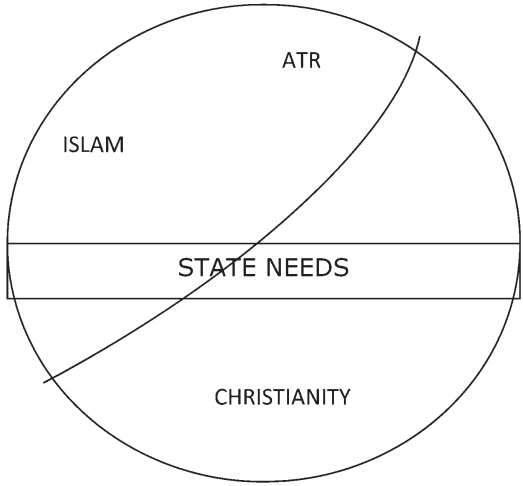

Figure 2.3 Nigerian Religious Situation—Pluralism
Source: Nigerian Population Commission (2007)

Note: The implication of these diagrams (Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3) is that the Nigerian religious space has become a supermarket where individual and group needs determine the religion(s) they will appropriate to meet their spiritual and material needs. There is no monopoly in this market.

and Muslims globally. Thus, where there are alternative epistemologies, people tend to seek multiple solutions to issues confronting them. We suggest that no one religion has solutions to the hydra-headed problems of the modern world.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter how religion, like culture, has turned into a commodity to be purchased and consumed in a market. The teachings and salvation messages of religious traditions become market commodities that people consume in a market economy situation. The scenario in a religiously plural society becomes interesting because competing religions attempt to outwit each other with their "wares" or "goods." We may therefore propose that there is no monopoly of religious epistemology in a religiously plural society. The religious space is highly deregulated, as we have shown with the Nigerian example. Thus people can walk into the "market" (supermarket) and "purchase" more than one "item" (tradition) to confront their multiple challenges. This is syncretism. But, it is the fad of our time. Therefore, religious pluralism (diversity) is a catalyst for religious syncretism in so far as religion is seen from its utilitarian and functional values. There is space

for secularism in religious pluralism as seen by the state. This will provide a level playing field for competing religious traditions to position themselves to play their social, spiritual, economic, political, and ethical roles without hindrance from the state. However, the Nigerian situation presents a picture of a secular state, which still appropriates and interrogates religion in policy formulation and implementation.

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Chapter 3

Faith, Spiritualism, and Materialism: Understanding the Interfaces of Religion and the Economy in Nigeria

Olutayo Charles Adesina

Introduction

It is often taken for granted that religion and the observance of its sacred doctrines is normatively a good thing. It is equally accepted that politics is the fundamental prerequisite for the well-being of any society in search of civic culture, progress, and political development. Like the preceding phenomena, the strategy of economic adjustment, widely referred to as the structural adjustment program (SAP), and which was adopted by several countries of sub-Saharan Africa in the second half of the 1980s, was proclaimed as the tool for "stabilizing developing countries' external and internal balances and promoting their growth" (Enberg-Pedersen et al. 1996: ix). Based on the promises held aloft by the sometimes perceived mutually exclusive phenomena, the social picture in Nigeria was expected to be one of harmony, gradual and sustained development, and a profound sense of progress. But what happens when the elites in whom society reposed so much "trust" have used and exploited these tools to upset the whole social structure?

This chapter gives an insight into how religion, politics, and the process of economic development became mechanisms of manipulation, exploitation, and control. In the aftermath of changes in the economy between 1986 and the present, the chapter also evaluates how poverty, corruption, and social and political alienation in the church and in society at large combined to contribute to the spread of social convulsions. It surmises that through the experiences generated, civil society developed relationships, expectations, and behavior patterns with severe implications for nation-building and national cohesion.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has clearly and constantly faced important and difficult political, social, and economic challenges. But not in their wildest imagination did Nigerians envisage the problems foisted on them in the last decades of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first by the coalition of these three factors. This chapter operates under the assumption that the specific relationship between the three factors is that of power, greed, and contestation. The result was the initiation of a vicious cycle of corruption, violence, death, destruction, and the continued underdevelopment of the Nigerian

nation. Religion, politics, and the economic adjustment programme became insidious weapons in the hands of those who used them for selfish goals. They used them to balkanize the country, thus raising tension and making the country vulnerable to crisis. But did this differ significantly from the paradigm foisted on the country between 1960 and 1985?

Power by Other Means?

An analysis of the pre-1986 approach to governance in Nigeria may complement the analysis of the post-1986 period by throwing light on the factors and the sub-structure that helped shape and define the strategies adopted in the subsequent period (for details see Kukah 1993; Falola 1998). Prior to 1986, there was no mechanism that would reward and guarantee sufficient returns from the manipulation of religion, politics, and the economy. According to Segun Osoba (1978, see also Williams and Falola, 1995), a Marxist historian and intellectual, elements of these factors had been actively manipulated by the leading lights of the national bourgeoisie and their minions, for selfish sectional and personal interests. This view was amplified by Yusuf Bala Usman when he stated that this class adopted this approach as a strategy for masking their real identity, which they dared not expose to the ordinary people whose political support they wanted to mobilize for their own selfish advantage (see Osoba 1978). In the case of Islam, Henry Bienen (1986) succinctly described the pattern this took:

> as Nigeria moved to a 12-state system in 1967 from one of four regions and then to a federal republic with 19 states in 1976, it became necessary to stress Islamic unity in the 10 northern states where two-thirds of the population was Muslim. In order to maintain the dominance of the north in national politics, Islam had to provide the glue that had disappeared with the demise of the old Native Administration …

He further affirmed that: "as it became necessary to stress Islam in order to maintain northern unity that was under pressure from the creation of more states, Islam itself often worked to intensify fissures opened up by social and economic changes. Appeals for social justice were made in Islamic terms". The end product was the creation of a hierarchic social system in which a citizenry with a deep sense of loyalty and obedience was assured. There developed a culture of allegiance to the powerful that rejected qualities of independent achievement, self-reliant action and initiative (Harber 1984).

Politics, Religion, and the Economy

Nigeria emerged as a secular state at independence in 1960. But while the nature of this secularity hinged on the fact that no one religion was dominant

in the scheme of things, the role and place of religion had consistently been felt in domestic and international matters. When in a largely rehearsed script earlier played by the North, Alhaji Shehu Shagari (who later became the first Executive President), in 1978 led the Northern delegates to walk out of the Constituent Assembly over the non-inclusion of the Shari'ah in the constitution, and other matters that were deemed inimical to the interest of the North, religion and its role in politics had assumed a new dimension (Dudley 1982: 163–4; Laitin 1982; Ogunswano 1980). It became a tool for blackmail. Politicians, adventurers, and armchair analysts thereafter, began to agitate for an equalization process based on religious affiliation. There were quite deep economic undertones to the agitations. The North had been uncomfortable with the South's control of the economy. The South had achieved great economic and bureaucratic leverage in the modern sectors since the period of colonialism. A significant proportion of civil service jobs and international commerce was also under the control of Southerners. The North, on the other hand, had used its large population and monolithic structure to capture political power, which it saw as a counterweight to Southern control of the economy and bureaucracy. The Shari'ah controversy was therefore designed as a strategy to exert significant influence on the constitution to enable the North to position itself against Southern economic and administrative power (Laitin 1982).

Religion also became a tool for agitation. In Oyo State from 1979, for instance, Muslims began to complain of the preponderance of Christian appointees in the cabinet of the Oyo State Executive Council. Similar posturing was adopted in the case of federal appointments where religion played a crucial role. The problem created by the politicization of ethnicity and religion took a new turn. In recognition of the fact that religion had become a political weapon of immense proportions, the Babangida administration tactfully refused to include ethnicity and religion as major indices of analysis in the 1991 census. Although census figures are computed so that reliable data can be used for development purposes, in Nigeria the census is regarded as a highly inflammable phenomenon.

Economic Adjustment in Nigeria

The economic adjustment program initiated in 1986 was premised on removing the state's overwhelming role in the economy. In essence, the new policy/approach stressed self-reliance as a vital tool of economic development. Under conditions of economic crisis, and subsequently structural adjustment, there was actually a swift decline in the ability of the Nigerian State to provide for the basic socio-economic needs of the people. This resulted in the exclusion of a large segment of the people and their marginalization from the benefits of development and social provisioning (Jega 2000: 27). However, because of the prevailing limitations of the neo-liberal economic policy environment, one of the survival strategies of the poor became to find accommodation within the realms of faith, spirituality, and primordialism. Religion and/or sentimental attachment to primordial loyalties

through membership of social and political groupings became widespread phenomena. As access to opportunities became more difficult, human existence and strategies for survival also became redefined. This became imperative due to the deep frustrations and uncertainties in a complex society hitherto governed by "attachment to state patronage" (Sklar 1979). The coping strategies developed during the period ultimately displayed an acute and keener sense of survival at all levels. An interesting exploration of questions regarding the wonderful blend of religion, politics, economics, and ethnicity was the re-socialization of children in northern Nigeria within the age-old *almajirai* phenomenon designed to advance the course of religion and social engineering. This phenomenon in the last decades of the twentieth century has helped to reinforce the complex interconnection of economic, social, political, and religious factors in an adjusting economy. Placed under the tutelage of a Mallam (Koranic teacher) in a different town, the Mallam was not responsible for feeding the youth. What he provides them with was a begging bowl.[1] In other words, at the most elementary level, Islamic education involved the teaching of the Koran, the Arabic language, and religious knowledge by an Islamic scholar who received gifts and alms in lieu of payment (Falola 2004: 4). In essence, the "student" is expected to take his Mallam as his father and must accept his word as the word of authority. There is also an emphasis on physical punishment, obedience, and deference (Skinner 1977: 31). The implications of this have been far-reaching. Since they do not actually have parental control, the *almajirais* have evolved into a profound tool of social destabilization.

Over the years, Nigeria has not taken up the gauntlet of restricting the use of *almajirais* for political purposes. This is because most of those in power helped to create the monster of religious extremism in the North. Most of those who are recruited are from the army of unemployed or unemployables—all victims of the widespread and worsening bad governance.[2] Unfortunately, religious leaders have been known to cooperate with the government in enthroning bad governance. According to Adogame:

> It can hardly be accidental that most religious groups in Nigeria implicitly and often explicitly support prevailing economic norms and institutional patterns i.e International Monetary Fund (IMF), Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Debt rescheduling, Green Revolution etc. The leadership hierarchies of some religious organisations for instance evolve into a segment of the ruling class. In an attempt to perpetuate itself in power, it supports institutional mechanisms brought about by government's economic machinery. This exacerbates the economic woes of the masses that in turn flock into these religious institutions and thereby increase their material and spiritual prosperity… (Adogame 1999)

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[1] Interview with Muslim scholar Alhaji A.A. Bello (Ibadan, October 15, 2007).

[2] Statement by the National Publicity Secretary, Action Congress (AC), *The Nation* (Lagos), January 6, 2010, 5.

There was a sense in which the SAP and its appendages were perceived as economic injustice. But to what extent was this responsible for the acute crisis generated during this period? An answer may be found in the position of Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio, the creator of the Sokoto Caliphate, the largest state in nineteenth-century West Africa. He had affirmed: "a kingdom may last with unbelief (*kufr*); it cannot last with injustice (*Zulm*)."[3] To a large section of the Nigerian citizenry, the adoption of the SAP amounted to severe injustice. This was tantamount to suffering in the midst of plenty. Even though religion provided succor to those suffering from its effects, it also provided a tool to explain or cope with the phenomenon.

The Promises of Breakthrough before Total Breakthrough

In Nigeria, there is now a thin line between God and Mammon. Christian churches now engage in conducting what is now known as "Prosperity Conventions" or in giving tithes where people are talked into "seed sowing" to obtain some breakthrough and miraculously prosper. This has been confirmed by sometimes unedifying revelations about supposed "men of God" or their churches. The often conflicting ideological positions of church and business have been marked with an inexplicable unity that derived explicitly from the complicity of the religious class. The symbol which represents the ultimate transition of churches into business empires was perhaps represented by both LoveWorld Incorporated, otherwise known as Christ Embassy (CE), and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). These symbols, which signify the states of mind of the new clergy and their flocks, are more extraordinary than the massive foray of business people or government officials into the church. The situation is aggravated by the actual realignment between greed, crime, conspicuous consumption, and religion. In this new dispensation, the CE and the RCCG, like several other churches, have become platforms for other business interests, which include banking, publishing, broadcasting, entertainment, and the hospitality industries.

The Christ Embassy, significantly represented by its flamboyant Pastor, Chris Oyakhilome, has been submerged by this new interface of economy and religion. As Emmanuel Uffot (2010 has noted:

> Chris Oyakhilome, pastor of Christ Embassy Church, is not only winning souls but has built an expansive business empire from which he is making good money … Oyakhilome belongs to the growing clan of pastors who preach prosperity but he is better known for his miracles which are very controversial … The church operates like a conglomerate with no fewer than 10 subsidiaries that

[3] Quoted in M. Last, "The Shari'a in Context: people's quest for justice today and the role of courts in pre- and early colonial northern Nigeria," unpublished typescript, Department of Anthropology, University College, London, 2002, cited in Archibald and Richards (2002).

> work with the common goal of oiling the purse of the ministry and its patron. The major money spinning arms of the ministry includes LoveWorld Cyber Ministry, LoveWorld Television, LoveWorld Christian Network, LoveWorld Multimedia Ministry and LoveWorld Publishing Ministry.

However, one major business enterprise run by the church is LoveWorld Records Limited located in Ikeja. The company, incorporated in 2008 as a private limited liability company to engage in business in music, entertainment and gospel merchandise also operates a distribution network that facilitates the selling and marketing of records within and outside Nigeria. Its monthly turnover is put at more than ₦10 million.[4] In addition, Oyakhilome, through Global Plus Communications Limited, controls a media empire worth billions of Naira (Uffot 2010). These are legitimate earnings made by the church through its foray into big business.

But the church has also swum several times in the murky waters of scandal and infamy. The most insidious revelation concerning this church was the case of Lawrence Agada, a senior cashier with Sheraton Hotels and Towers, Ikeja, Lagos, and an assistant pastor of the Ifako branch, who donated stolen cash and gifts totaling ₦39 million to the church in the name of "sowing a seed". The fraud was discovered in March 2002. Agada had donated this to the church in instalments, donating 250 KVA and 27 KVA generators valued at ₦4.4 million and ₦1.5 million, to the church headquarters and the Ifako branch respectively. He also gave ₦6 million for the renovation of the local satellite church and ₦1 million for the purchase of plastic chairs and ₦1 million for another crusade called a "Prosperity Convention" (Uffot 2010). According to Abraham Aiyedogbon, in his "Christ Embassy and Stolen N39 million: A Question of Integrity" (2003; see also *Newswatch* 2003):

> there was no indication that the cashier used part of the stolen money for anything else apart from giving it in different forms of donations to the church. Elizabeth, Agada's wife who was also administrative staff of the church confirmed being privy to the whole deal. She affirmed that she was worried at a point knowing the money does not belong to them and that one day they may be required to pay it back to the hotel. Although they had no business of their own she was sure "God" was the one talking to her husband to steal the money for the church.

Nevertheless, Agada had a letter of commendation from Pastor Oyakhilome to show for his "generosity.". In the letter acknowledging the donation of a generator valued at over ₦4 million, Pastor Oyakhilome wrote:

> I trust you are both fine and experiencing the glory of God in a greater measure laughing your way through…In your life, God will do mighty things. He will

[4] Nigerian currency since 1973 has been the *naira* (₦), divided into 100 *kobo.*

> cause you to excel and lift you up so high that the world can't but take notice of you, in Jesus' name, Amen. (Aiyedogbon 2003)

This no doubt further impelled the gentleman to "sow better to the Lord."

As with the CE, the activities of the RCCG have been well documented (see Ukah 2003). What remains to be well discussed are the personal lives of the hierarchy of the church members. The case of the Late Pastor Timothy Olufemi Akanni from the stable of this church, as revealed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC),[5] clearly illustrates how "men of God" in Nigeria have been caught in the web of filthy lucre. Until October 22, 2006 when Pastor Akanni died as one of the 117 passengers in the Bellview plane crash at Lisa village in Ogun state, Nigeria, he remained a faithful and highly spiritual member and pastor of the RCCG. However, the EFCC claimed that while alive, he was at one time the Director of Finance and Supplies (and later the Director of Special Duties) of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Pastor Akanni, who was on a monthly salary of ₦100, 000, salted away cash and properties worth ₦7 billion. The deceased pastor reportedly had 23 deposit and current bank accounts, using different aliases. He was the owner of 22 choice properties scattered all over Lagos and Abuja. He also had a fleet of vehicles, which included a Land Rover Jeep, a Toyota Camry, Toyota Hiace buses and a Volkswagen Touareg (Adesina 2006a).

Surprisingly however, before Pastor Akanni died in the unfortunate Bellview plane crash of October 22, 2005, he was also a bigamist. The pastor had an official wife and an unofficial one, who also had children with him. The acquisitions became the object of tussle between two women because, after his death, the unofficial wife showed up, and laid claim to the man's cash and property. The legal wife then petitioned the EFCC, who on further investigation discovered the tremendous wealth salted away by the pastor. A commentator remarked:

> As if that was not horrendous enough for a man who doubles as pastor of a big Pentecostal church, he also ran two homes, had two wives who were unknown to each other. He was a bigamist, if we want to say it bluntly. Since the news about Pastor Akanni broke a couple of weeks ago, I have been broken hearted, crestfallen, wondering if man has become so base, depraved and debased that there is no one you can repose confidence in again, not even a pastor. A preacher, particularly of the born-again stock is expected to be a paragon of virtues, the epitome of all that is noble and inspiring. But Pastor Akanni shot all these to pieces. (Adesina 2006a)

He lamented further:

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[5] The EFCC was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in 2003 as a law enforcement agency to investigate and tackle financial crimes, corruption, and money laundering.

> …Can a Christian have money in billions, whether he is a preacher or not? Yes, why not, if God blesses him. It is neither a crime, nor a sin, to be fabulously wealthy. But can a public servant, who earns N100, 000 per month have that kind of money legitimately? No, unless he robbed a bank, or he did some other underhand things like Akanni must have done. And that takes it out of the realm of righteousness, into the domain of graft, greed and corruption. (Adesina 2006a)

The EFCC ultimately secured a court order confiscating the assets in local and foreign currencies, landed properties, shares in blue chip companies, registered schools, bakeries, and expensive cars. Commenting in another vein, Patrick Tagbo Oguejofor accused the church of complicity in the whole saga:

> anybody who claims to be ignorant of the fact that the late Pastor Akanni was a polygamist is only deceiving himself. Even before his death the issue of his polygamous status was well known. Unfortunately, he was a very prominent member of his well known Pentecostal church and contributed so much to that church that the leadership preferred to keep a peaceful silence of his polygamous status. People should stop feigning ignorance. Pastor Akanni was not a mere pastor. He was a Regional Pastor—something akin to a Bishop in the Anglican or Catholic Church. In Abuja (and indeed Nigeria) where church is big business, church leaders are scrambling to have directors in the membership of their churches so as to have their own share of the oil wealth that is flowing amidst poverty that is eating up the land. In Abuja, church services take place in expensive hotels where much as 200,000.00 naira is paid per service. Sometimes, a church may pay as much as a million naira per week! You may not believe it, but an individual who is a mere civil servant 100% may take up payment for an entire year! The leaders of these churches drive in jeeps and nobody bothers as to ask them about tax. Pastor Akanni is not alone. We only knew about him because God exposed him through his wives… (Adesina 2006b)

For some, however, what Pastor Akanni did was symptomatic of other Nigerian pastors in the post-adjustment age. According to Jacobs Daniel of the *Southern Kaduna News Magazine*, "It was a big shame, what Pastor Akanni did. But the candid truth is that 80% of our pastors extort money from their members" (Adesina 2006b). Thus, virtually every group associated with religious bodies and organizations has experienced this in different ways and at different levels. The *Newswatch*, a weekly Nigerian magazine, recalled the story of Maphiwa, a staunch member of the Christ Embassy church branch in South Africa. According to her, she and her husband became bankrupt because of their association with the church. She claimed:

> Before joining the Christ Embassy in November 2005, I had a car, a house that was financed by the bank and I could afford my monthly instalments. I had R35, 000 in the bank as savings and some investments with Standard Bank., Liberty

> and Sanlam to the total sum of R20,000. In December 2005, there was what they called "Thanksgiving Service" which we were required to bring a gift to the Lord in forms of money and other valuables like cars, cell phones and computers to thank God for what he had done for us … In January 2006, Pastor Kenneth Oyakhilome (younger brother of Chris and head pastor of the South African branch) preached and instructed us to give 'First Fruit' offering. This meant that one was required to give the entire salary for the month of January. This I did as we were taught that the Lord would bless us and we would receive a 100 fold return if we obeyed. There was also a threat that came with it, that if we did not obey, blessings would not follow us instead curses would. (Uffot 2010)

In addition to the foregoing, other things followed:

> In Christ Embassy, there are lots of activities which require money like Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, and pastor's birthday. Members are also instructed to buy books, CDs, DVDs so that we have something to preach to our "cell" members. After the huge sums of money I gave to the Christ Embassy church, by February 2007 I had to sell my house… (Uffot 2010)

At this juncture, it is important to state that these developments, that are in fact not new, have captured the attention of the media and the notice of public commentators, as the views above illustrate. Although we cannot generalize these points for all the churches, nevertheless there is ample evidence that should begin to draw scholarly attention to exploring the nexus of religion, economy, and politics. Perhaps church hierarchies and religious entrepreneurs need to be more self-reflexive and set up internal critical machinery to evaluate their religious economies. This intermix is not necessarily bad in its own right as they—religion, economy, and politics—are hardly mutually exclusive domains. In fact, there is no sharp dichotomy between religion and other phenomena such as economy or politics in the African context. The situation described above is suggestive of the ambivalent face of religion as both functional and dysfunctional. Scholars should increasingly be concerned with exploring and analyzing religious phenomena and processes within society through the functional and dysfunctional prisms. Religious groups such as those highlighted (also their Muslim counterparts such as Imams and other religious gurus) simultaneously contribute to, and impede, the socio-economic and political development of the country.

Conclusion

The new phase of Christianity in particular, and religion in general, which has propelled "ministers of God" to turn their ministries into businesses has started to receive great attention. Through the instrumentality and the dogmatic insistence on prosperity, a sizable number of "ministers of God" have found it difficult to

separate their existence and their preachings from conspicuous consumption and materialism. This approach became amplified as the dominant economic program foisted on the country in the 1980s and 1990s, SAP, turned out to be a catastrophic failure. The African social and economic landscapes hitherto blossoming with the seeds of hope after political independence in the 1960s became littered with the debris of broken dreams, failed hopes and stunted growth. "Palpable insecurity, malnutrition and disease continued to take their tolls while the government continued to institutionalize the dependency and despondency of the people." (Kukah 1996: 13). The manifest failure of the structural adjustment programme as well as other economic policies adopted by various governments over the years therefore became major obstacles to social existence in Nigeria. These ultimately contributed to the decline of the economy, which resulted in mass poverty, persistent malnutrition, rising inflation, and the continued marginalization of the critical mass in society. These gave room for an unprecedented social experimentation that has continued to deepen and widen the people's search for alternatives. Religion became a significant tool of hope in the search for survival and in persistent attempts to improve the chances of qualitative existence in the face of acute mismanagement and the increasing extremes of wealth and poverty.

The emergent civic culture that developed in the aftermath of the foregoing cut short any attempt to direct allegiance towards the state at a national level. Nor did it reaffirm man's deep respect for God. Some religious leaders, wrapped in a culture noted for creativity and consumption, began to apply these talents to questionable and illicit pursuits, while their followers began to emulate their propensity for conspicuous consumption. Hence, Ekeh's thesis from the early 1960s remains as valid as ever towards the end of the twentieth century and in the early twenty-first:

> It does seem to be the case that pre-war Nigerians, at least, had come to define their citizenship relations with the civil state in terms of, and only in terms of, their social rights, while their duties are withheld from the civil state and are either abrogated or otherwise located at primordial sources. (Ekeh 1972: 84)

The church, just like membership of an ethnic group, has created a socio-spatial practice of community building which has ensured a sense of an "entitlement" that has created a number of contradictions and compromises. Thus, many churches in Nigeria have now become avenues to develop a social consciousness that is gradually distancing itself from Christianity, communities of faith, and religious Puritanism. In other words, these churches have invested in a system of cultural capital that perpetuates materialism in both their spoken and unspoken assertion of prosperity. That, unfortunately, is the new mantra of the houses of God in Africa's most populous country.

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Chapter 4
Toward a Civil Religion in Nigeria

Musa Barnabas Gaiya

Introduction

The chapter examines the status of civil religion in Nigeria. It acknowledges government efforts at creating a civil religion for national cohesion since the end of the civil war in 1970, but notes that this has been elusive due to ethnic and religious sectarianism. Religious expression in Nigeria is both public and private. But such public expression of religion does not result in the emergence of civil religion because there are constant inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts as each religious group seeks political dominance. The chapter suggests civil religion education in schools as one possible way out of religious conflict in Nigeria.

Professor Jacob Kehinde Olupona was one of the first Nigerian scholars to see the utilitarian role of religion in Nigeria, not only as a civil religion but as a means of national cohesion. Thus, like Emile Durkheim, Olupona could see the importance of religion in national development, contrary to the opinion of other social scientists who contend that religion was antithetical to national development and should be discarded in political engineering.[1] In stressing the utilitarian role of religion in society, Olupona can rightly be dubbed the "Robert Bellah of Nigeria." Rosalind Hackett and Jacob Olupona (1991: 266) define civil religion as "civil faith" which consists of "a loose collection of rites, ceremonies, and beliefs derived from and pertaining to the collective experience and destiny of a particular nation"; this is what Simeon Ilesanmi (1996: 60). calls an "abstract cultural code [for] legitimate[ing] expectations of people." In a sense, civil religion is the faith of a society in a common destiny (Bellah 1996: 15), which, as Hackett and Olupona (1991: 266) explain, provides, at least in a symbolic manner, unity and cohesion to a polity. Hackett and Olupona believed that there were clear indications of civil religion in independent Nigeria, seen not only in Nigeria's leaders' "God-talk," or the use of religious language in national broadcasts, especially those marking special occasions, but also in the creation of civil religious symbols, such as the national flag, national anthem, and the National Day. They argued that the post-civil-war reconstruction was a watershed in the development of civil religion in Nigeria, seen in several Nigerian governments' attempts to erect civil religious monuments and institutions, such as the National Youth Service Corps, the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and, more recently, the National Mosque and the

[1] See, for example, the Marxist stance of Usman (1987).

Ecumenical Centre in Abuja, the federal capital. To develop national ethics as a basis for civil cohesion since the end of the civil war, Nigerian governments have set up re-orientation programmes such as the National Orientation Committee, War Against Indiscipline and Corruption, and more recently, War Against Corruption with a biblical archetype, "National Rebirth." Seeing these developments, it would not be out of place to assert, as Hackett and Olupona (1991: 266) did, that there are indicators of incipient civil religion emerging in Nigeria. Olupona's argument hinges on the fact that civil religion is the creation of the state rather than evolving as a result of interactions between the polity from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. This position is consistent with Robert Bellah's. According to Bellah:

> Since the state is the organ of consciousness of society, it must have a relation to that common conscience which is at the same time moral and religious. The state must be ultimately related to the deepest level of value consensus in the society, what I have called … the civil religion. And so here … Durkheim brings in the religion of humanity and the cult of the individual. Since the cult of the individual is the highest moral ideal of society and the state is society's organ of consciousness, Durkheim says that it is the role of the state to "organize the cult, to be the head of it and to ensure its regular working and development." (Bellah quoted in Hughey 1983: 67)

This chapter argues that, much as Nigerian governments have tried to institute such a civil ethos, civil society has remained essentially divided due to the fact that the essential ingredients for civil religion—pluralism, secularism (de-establishment of religion), and patriotism—which were essential in the development of civil religion in other societies such as the United States of America, are lacking in Nigeria. It appears that the desired national cohesion has not been achieved. The forces of disintegration are so strong, that almost fifty years after independence or more than forty years after the civil war, Nigerians are still debating the basis for integration and co-existence of the different segments that formed Nigeria in 1914.

The forces of disintegration include the reintroduction of Shariah in 12 northern states, an attempt to sacralize the state, the struggle for resource control by the oil rich south-south states, the re-emergence of the struggle for the actualization of the Biafran state, and the evolution of the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress as a vanguard for the realization of Yoruba ethnic and political aspirations. In addition, in the Middle Belt (Central Nigeria) the contentious issue is one of defining who is an indigene, and who is a settler.[2] These forces of disintegration have a potential for leading to national disaster. Until national cohesion is achieved, talk of civil religion in Nigeria—a subject Olupona, like Robert Bellah in America, has championed since his graduate days at Boston University in the 1980s (Ilesanmi 1996: 60)—becomes tenuous. This chapter suggests that the way to start is by

[2] This was one of the remote causes of the 2001 religious/ethnic riots in Jos which spread to other parts of Plateau State.

teaching religious tolerance in Nigeria's schools, which should include teaching notions of civil religion contained in Nigeria's national rituals, civic institutions, and symbols. The aim of such an education is to create "faith" in Nigerian civil society within the context of a pluralistic society. Since the fresh ground the chapter explores is the possibility of civil religious education, pertinent questions that will be raised are: Can civil religion be taught? What is the content of such an education? How should civil religion be taught?

Religion in Nigeria

There is public visibility of religion in Nigeria. Religion is not only spoken and practised but displayed, sometimes out of proportion. In the cities of Nigeria, street and traffic signs, notice boards are defaced by posters inviting passers-by to religious programs, crusades where, apart from preaching the Word, healing rituals and transformation of life in all facets are carried out.

Religious propaganda has entered into Nigerian homes with the evolution and popularization of home videos that are packed with themes from neo-Pentecostal teachings. Religious programs and sermons are screened on national and privately-owned television stations by Pentecostal televangelists: what Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Ostwalt (1995) describe as "screening the sacred." Thus, public display of religion is a common phenomenon in Nigeria. Political speeches are couched in religious language. Take the case of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo's speech at the launching of National Rebirth shortly after he was sworn in as the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999. In his speech on September 10 he said:

> …These expectations and my own firm belief in the great potentials of our nation, given the right leadership, and my conviction that leadership is a trust from God and that every leader shall one day be called upon to account for his or her actions in the hereafter, propelled me to accept the challenge and to resolve not to fail the people. On my release from prison, a little under fifteen months ago, I went into a pact with my Lord to do His bidding at all times. I saw my survival and freedom as a message from God to do what needs to be done in Nigeria. I could not disregard the call of God to duty.

These speeches are usually confessional, betraying Christian or Muslim convictions. In Jos, where I work, often considered as the centre of Christian presence in the country, a visitor is immediately confronted with a plethora of worship places. A 15-minute drive on any major street in the city one encounters church signboards such as Jesus Prayer Tower, Ministry of Perfection Inc, The Parliament, Oasis of Love Church, New Generation Bible Church, Winners' Celebration Chapel, Latter Glory Church, New Testament Christian Mission, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church, Shekinah Global Gospel Ministry, in addition to the many billboards

and bills posted on streets inviting people to special meetings. Islam in Nigeria is less publicly flamboyant, but street prayers and the attendant closure of major roads during Friday prayers have increased in Jos, especially after September 2001. Rivalry between the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, has created mutual suspicion, which prevents the translation of this religiosity into a catalyst for identifying and adopting shared national values, aspirations, and goals essential for the sustenance of civil religion: what Ilesanmi (1996: 62) perhaps means by "public philosophy." In the United States of America, although a religiously plural society, its inherited Protestant ethics provide the basis for its ideals. These Protestant ideals, which are seen as religiously neutral, include sacrifice, honesty, freedom, and human rights. This type of unifying ideals characterize African traditional societies as well, as Olupona shows in his *Kingship, Religion and Rituals in a Nigerian Community.*

Theoretical Basis

The founding father of civil religion is Rousseau, who set up what Bellah (1967: 5) calls the "dogmas of the civil religion," which are "the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, and the exclusion of religious intolerance." Bellah, like his predecessors, Radcliffe-Brown, Lloyd Warner, and Talcott Parsons, studied the role of religion in non-Western societies as a means of understanding his own (Western) society, then averred:

> When we look at tribal societies that do not have a differentiated state or economy, then we can plainly see that religion cannot be a separate sphere of largely private experience. Rather religion permeates and expresses the whole way of life of the tribal people. When we seek to study their rituals, we soon find we are learning about their kinship relations, the exchange of goods, the hierarchies of power and influence, such as they are, and many other things. Indeed singling out something we call "religion" from other things that tribal people do may be convenient for our analysis, but it is reading into their way of life a category which is not separated in that way by the people we are studying. (Bellah 2001: 91)

Non-Western societies are the way they are because religion fulfils important aspects of their lives. With respect to Africans, John S. Mbiti says they are notoriously religious. He goes on to explain:

> Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to beer party or to attend

> a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament. (Mbiti 1970: 2)

The coming of world religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, has, to some extent, tempered this African religiosity. Christianity, in its post-Enlightenment form, was more responsible for the distortion of this worldview. But in spite of this incursion of foreign worldviews, the African remains irresistibly tied to his traditional worldviews, what S.N. Ezeanya (quoted in Kalu 1985: 11) called "the endurance of conviction," which led E.A. Ayandele to make this perceptive comment that

> …African traditional religion remains an instinctive part of most African professors of Christianity. Scratch the African pastor and you would discover he has greater faith in the charms and amulets he wears surreptitiously and the "witch-doctor" to whom he pays nocturnal visits than the Holy Bible and Jesus Christ; scratch the Christian medical doctor and you would discover that he pays greater attention to the diviner and the psychical fears instilled by his village *milieu* than his scalpel and the white man's tablet; scratch the prominent layman politician and you discover that his public bold face and animal courage are against the background of his secret endless grovelling before masters of supernatural forces in traditional society. (Ayandele 1978: 611–12)

As such, a typical African could become schizophrenic but may not be irreligious. He could be a polytheist but seldom would consider himself an atheist. His religion is not a private matter; he displays and sells it to whoever wants to buy. Religion provides him with answers to all life challenges. But in public the African politician wants to show he is a true Christian or a committed Muslim, rather than a traditionalist. This religious disposition makes it very tempting for the African politician to manipulate religious sentiments for a selfish political course. This development is shown in the use of the word "God" by Christian politicians and the term "Allah" by their Muslim counterparts. This is in contrast to the United States of America, where the term "God" appears neutral. This is understandable, since America prides itself as a religious melting pot, the term "God" must mean more than the Christian concept of God. Thus "God" is inclusive of all concepts of God. So when President J.F. Kennedy made a reference to the term "God" in his inaugural speech, he did not refer to any religion specifically. Bellah explains that Kennedy's use of the term "God" was not a reference to Jesus Christ or Moses or any Christian church. "In fact", Bellah (1967: 3) submits, "his only reference was to the concept of God, a word which almost all Americans can accept but which means so many different things to so many different people that it is almost an empty sign." In a secular society like America, the term could mean "the one upstairs." In Nigeria, the word "God" is loaded. It means the Christians' "Supreme Being." The Muslims would identify with Allah as their "Supreme Being". Since Nigeria is not a secular

state as America is,[3] religion not only captivates the minds of Nigerians but it is full of meaning for life. This requires reorientation since the God of civil religion, as Bellah (1967: 7) says, is not only "Unitarian" but "he is also on the austere side, much more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and love." Taking the Nigerian situation as an instance, it is correct to argue that not every nation state has a civil religion. Phillip E. Hammond has argued in this vein when he states that there are nation states without civil religion. Hammond (1980: 121) goes on to say: "Only some make sacred their civil rituals; only some create theology out of their political myth." In this regard, it is therefore better to discuss the potential for civil religion in Nigeria, rather than the existence of one. Even American civil religion evolved gradually. Bellah tells us there was a time when American civil religion was

> not shared by all Americans. At the very beginning it is estimated that about a third of the colonists subscribed to its tenets, another third were loyal to Britain and the rest remained indifferent. In the late 1850's it is clear that the articulate spokesman of the south had abandoned the faith and that the Douglas Democrats in the north were indifferent to it. Lincoln's effort to recall the nation to its "ancient faith" was a long uphill battle. (quoted in Hughey 1983: 68)

The Odds against Civil Religion in Nigeria

Nigeria is a former British territory. Like the United States of America, Nigeria was an amalgam of at least three nations in 1914. Before the merger, the different sections had operated independently of each other. Even after the merger, one of these sections, the Northern region, had contemplated secession in 1956 over marginalization (Crowder 1978: 233). However, the Eastern region did secede in 1967, which precipitated almost three years of bloody civil war. To douse the embers of separatism after the civil war in 1970, the Federal Government under Major-General Yakubu Gowon, as Hackett and Olupona (1991: 267) rightly point out, embarked on a national reconstruction project by calling Nigerians to rededicate themselves to "the pursuance of only those things which will ensure the preservation of the unity of this country." This national goal was later enshrined in the nation's constitutions of 1979, 1989 and 1999, captured in its opening statement "TO LIVE in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God." The new National Anthem, which forms part of what may be called the civil religion ritual, is even more elaborate and it reads thus:

> Arise, O Compatriot, Nigeria's call obey
> To serve our Fatherland

[3] Although the Nigerian constitution says no government shall adopt any religion as state religion, there is no separation between the church/mosque and the state as is the case in the United States of America. See also the chapter by Laguda in this volume.

With love and strength and Faith
The labour of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain
To serve with heart and might
One nation bound in freedom, peace and unity.

O God of Creation, direct our noble cause
Guide our leaders aright
Help our youth and the truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty heights attain
To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign.

So also is the National Pledge:

I pledge to Nigeria my country
To be faithful, loyal and honest
To serve Nigeria with all my strength
To defend her unity
And uphold her Honour and Glory
So help me God.

These are recited almost every day in public and private schools in Nigeria.

In May 1999 Nigeria returned to civilian rule. A retired former military head of state was sworn in as the second democratically elected president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: Chief Olusegun Obasanjo a self-proclaimed "born again" Christian. On October 27, 1999, about five months after the inauguration of the President, the elected governor of Zamfara state, Alhaji Ahmad Sani, launched the Islamic Shariah law with an air of satisfaction as he declared: "Indeed it is with great satisfaction and a feeling of self fulfilment that Allah has helped us to bring forth the struggle and steadfastness of our Ummah towards the realisation of this noble objective which for decades had appeared or was rather made to appear a task almost impossible" (see *Newswatch*, November 15, 1999, 32). Two weeks later, the Federal Government declared the action of the Zamfara State government unconstitutional. Since Zamfara State's action 11 other states in northern Nigeria have followed suit. The actions by the 12 northern states have been considered an adoption of Islam as the established religion of these states, thus negating the 1999 constitutional provision, section 10 which states that "The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion." Whatever else may be said about the implementation of Shariah in these states, it has had far-reaching political, social, and religious implications. It has also affected the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation under one constitution. Apart from the attendant riots which were characterized by loss of life and property in many states

in northern Nigeria in the wake of the introduction of the Shariah, similar dissident groups emerged in the southern parts of Nigeria. In western Nigeria, there is the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC), which began as a vigilante group. It later became a powerful movement for the protection of the interests and aspirations of the Yoruba ethnic group. In the south-east, there is the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB); although underground, the movement is aimed at revisiting the demand for a Biafran state. In the south-south there is the Union of Niger Delta Youth Council (UNDYC), like the erstwhile Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by the late Ken Saro Wiwa, who along with eight others was hanged by the late military dictator General Sani Abacha in 1995. This union has as its goal the complete control of the revenue accrued from oil extracted from the Niger Delta areas so as to address the problem of oil spillage, especially the environmental degradation it has caused.

The precondition for Civil Religion in Nigeria

One basic requirement for civil religion to thrive is national cohesion and unity. We have seen from the above historical sketch that this has eluded Nigerians in spite of government efforts to bring about national unity since the end of the civil war in 1970. The lack of unity in the country limits attempts to create a civil religion to a mere ceremonial exercise. Thus national integration is the most important challenge to the cultivation of civil religion in Nigeria. Another key ingredient is tolerance. Tolerance does not mean putting up with someone, but allowing others of different persuasion(s) to live in freedom and equality. In religion, it is the guarantee of religious freedom and equality. As such, tolerance in Nigeria should mean, for example, that Nigerians are free to live anywhere they wish and should be treated as equally as the indigenes of any locality. Tolerance goes with pluralism. There is no doubt that Nigeria is a plural society. True pluralism recognizes differences and celebrates them. These ethnic and religious distinctions can be harmonized by the inculcation of values such as unity, patriotism, hard work, sacrifice, and integrity. In stressing the importance of shared values for integration of the social system, Parsons argues:

> The value-standards which define institutionalized role-expectations assume to a greater or less degree a moral significance. Conformity with them becomes, that is, to some degree a matter of the fulfilment of obligations which ego carries relative to the interests of the larger action system in which he is involved, that is a social system. The sharing of such common value patterns, entailing a sense of responsibility for the fulfilment of obligations, then creates a solidarity among those mutually oriented to the common value … [W]ithout the attachment to the constitutive common values the collectivity tends to dissolve. (quoted in Hughey 1983: 65)

This is perhaps what Ilesanmi meant by "public philosophy," which he defines (1996: 64) as

> a body of positive principles that might serve as the "underlying grounds of political judgement-grounds concerning how the collective life, the life in common, is to be lived—which citizens, *qua* members of a judging community, share, and which [may also] serve to unite them in dialogue, notwithstanding their [sometimes radical] disagreement."

Or, as the Political Bureau set up by President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida in 1985 puts it: "a statement of the principles of what is good or right for the society taken as a whole." This is perhaps why Babangida went on to create the Mass Mobilisation for Economic Recovery, Self-Reliance and Social Justice (MAMSER) in 1985 to educate citizens on these "principles of what is good or right for the society." Therefore, Ilesanmi (1996: 64) concludes that the principles of "public philosophy or consensus place(s) moral limits on the actions of both rulers and citizens, and fix the boundaries beyond which the state and the people are forbidden to go." Inculcating these shared values requires more than educating the citizen as President Babangida tried to do. It requires good leadership, leaders that are role models. It was Chinua Achebe who located the problem of Nigeria as basically that of leadership. He argued perceptively (1983: 1):

> The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian-character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

Unfortunately, not only has Nigerian leadership become inept and corrupt, but insensitive to the yearnings of the governed for social and economic justice. Successive leaders of Nigeria, whom Olupona calls the "Chief Priests" of civil religion, have succeeded in what Matthew Kukah (1999: 246–75) calls the "cloning" civil society, which they consider as an opposition party rather than as a partner in the development of the country. The first major pressure group crippled by government was the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), at the pont when the government was making plans to clip the wings of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC).

Civil Religious Education

One of the ways out of this quagmire is perhaps through the teaching of the principles of "public philosophy" (the shared and transcendent values) in our schools. African societies were built through the inculcation of society norms and

values into the young during puberty initiation. Camara Laye, reminiscing on his experience of initiation rites, relates how the young were taken to the forest where they would be for a month. Apart from the circumcision rite which took place during the first week of their stay there, they had teachers who taught them the values and rules of society:

> The teaching we received in the bush, far from all prying eyes, had nothing very mysterious about it; nothing, I think, that was not fit for ears other than our own. Those lessons, the same as had been taught to all those who had gone before us, confined themselves to outlining the sort of conduct befitting man: to be absolutely straightforward, to cultivate all the virtues that go to make an honest man, to fulfil our duties towards God, towards our parents, our superiors and our neighbour. And we had to tell nothing of what we learnt, either to women or to the uninitiated; neither had we to reveal any of the secret rites of circumcision. That is the custom. (Laye 1954: 107)

As in the case above, societal values should be delineated and spelt out and introduced into the different subjects taught in schools, especially civic and religious education. Children should be taught, for example, how religion can serve the public good. Hughey (1993: 83) has demonstrated how American civil religion was based on Protestant ethics. He describes what "communal ethos" and "civil morality" meant to the Protestant sects:

> The sect member was expected to be helpful to his brethren, whether individual or collectively, and all individual activities were to be wilfully bounded by considerations of fellowship and community welfare … Such qualities as neighborliness and helpfulness are generally valued by villages and small settlements everywhere as indigenous, perhaps even necessary, to their way of life. It is of decisive significance, however, that within the Protestant sects these general demands for fellowship and community service were transformed into every-day ethical duties. Christian stewardship, a charitable disposition, and a willingness to work for community betterment were exalted as moral virtues, the possession of which was required of every sect member.

But Bellah, the doyen of civil religion in America, has said that civil religion has no creed. Yes, in the sense that in a pluralistic society, civil [religion] theology is as, Andrew Shanks tells us, to be non-confessional. Shanks (1995: 1) defines civil theology as "interplay between politics and religion." Civil theology, he argues further (1995: 2), is not governed by a person's "faith community." Thus, one does not have to subscribe to any faith to have a civil theology. But civil religion can, and does, coexist with faith theology. The way forward in establishing civil religion in Nigeria is in inculcating ethics of patriotism and the brotherhood of all peoples and all faiths in the young. Civil religion symbols such as the flag, National Day, and the tomb of Unknown Soldier, can be used to teach patriotism

and sacrifice. Rituals like reciting the National Anthem and pledge initiate the young into societal ethos. Thus the utilitarian role of religion is taught without sectarianism. This is how Benjamin Franklin saw the place of religion in his life:

> I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world and govern'd it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing of God to men; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded either here or hereafter. These I esteemed the essentials of every religion; and, being to be found in all the religions we had in our country, I respected them all, tho' with different degrees of respect, as I found them more or less mix'd with other articles which, without any tendency to inspire, promote or confirm morality, serv'd principally to divide us, and make us unfriendly to one another. (cited in Bellah 1967: 6)

Such Protestant values or specifically Puritan virtues were taught in America not necessarily for their spiritual values but for utilitarian values. These virtues included "temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, and humility" (Hughey 1983: 87). These virtues were firmly established that later arrivals in American society had to abide by them, as Hughey (1983: 96) relates: "White Anglo-Saxon-Protestant groups had been the first to arrive on American's eastern shores, and by virtue of that head start, America's culture and social order bore their unmistakable stamp. As one aspect of that imprint, virtually all standards of respectability had been defined, established and controlled by WASP groups."

Some of these secularized values are universal virtues and can form the foundation for national cohesion and development. But they must be bound together by a philosophical cord which defines national aspirations and values. Civic rituals, such as the singing of the national anthem or the reciting of the national pledge, should become sources for articulating such national goals.

Absolutely important is the inculcation of religious tolerance through de-emphasising sectarian differences, while celebrating divergences as a way of life. Religious tolerance is one of the components of civil religion as enumerated by Bellah. Civil religion, he insists, should consist of belief in "the existence of God, the life to come, the reward of virtue and punishment of vice, and the exclusion of religious intolerance" (Bellah, cited in Towler 1974: 148).

Conclusion

This chapter appraises Olupona's thesis on the existence of a civil religion in Nigeria vis-à-vis present realities. Olupona himself admitted that his thesis was tentative, needing further investigation (Hackett and Olupona 1991: 278). Successive Nigerian governments have made concerted efforts at establishing

civil religion, that is, faith in the nation state. We have shown that this has not been altogether successful due, on the one hand, to the complexity of the religious and ethnic configuration and, on the other hand, to the failure of government, on its part, to translate the values and aspirations of civil religion into practical instruments for national cohesion and development. The result has been discontent and lack of cohesion of polity due to general apathy. This apathy has led to the call for a sovereign national conference led by none other than the Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka. The chapter sees Olupona's thesis on Nigeria's civil religion as a challenge rather than an accomplished project. To realize this dream, the values and aspirations which form the basis for civil religion should be taught to Nigeria's young within the framework of an articulated national philosophy.

The above suggestion may require restructuring the curricula of schools from at least primary to junior secondary level to include a period of deliberate induction or initiation as a rite of passage into the national ethos. Also, religious education as a tool for the inculcation of societal values should be effectively utilized through the training and retraining of religious educators. The syllabi for the three major religions (Traditional Religion, Islam, and Christianity) should constantly be revised to emphasize shared values. The relevance of religious education in the evolution of civil religion was clearly spelt out in President George Washington's Farewell Address, and it may be appropriate to cite this perceptive thought here:

> Of all the disposition and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is security for prosperity, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation deserts the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and the experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles. (cited in Bellah 1967: 6)

Scholars of religion in Africa must be grateful to Professor Jacob Olupona for the monumental work he has done on all facets of African religion, both traditional and universal religions, but particularly in the rigorous way he argued for the role of religion in national development in Africa and in Nigeria in particular.

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Chapter 5

The Implications of Ancestral Veneration Manifesting in National Symbols for National Integration and Moral Transformation in Nigeria

Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo

Introduction

Beyond the popular maxim that ancestor veneration is essentially about the people who have lived upright lives here on earth, died a good and natural death and at a ripe old age, and received the acknowledged funeral rites, this chapter suggests that an aspect of this concept has long escaped the attention of scholars of religion. This has to do with a socio-political dimension-cum-value inherent in the concept, which has significant implications for enhancing national integration, and the cultural and moral transformation of society. This chapter aims to explore the potential of the concept manifesting itself in national symbols and as they impinge on issues of public morality and national integration. This is a significant development in Nigeria now that the questions of public morality and national integration remain crucial to the national body politic. Arising from this assertion are such fundamental questions as: What is ancestral veneration? What is its basis? How does this tradition manifest itself in national symbols? What are these symbols? How can the symbols enhance national and moral transformation in culturally and ethnically pluralistic Nigeria? How can these symbols be relevant in enhancing national integration especially within current national dialogue? In the light of these questions and the need to proffer answers to them, this chapter will be divided into sections on the theoretical background, the concept of ancestor veneration, the national ancestors, ancestor veneration's manifestation in the national symbols, its potential for enhancing national integration, and a conclusion.

Theoretical Background

Ancestor veneration is a religious practice that has received much attention from Western and African scholars. Outstanding among these scholars are van Gennep (1960), Beier (1966), Idowu (1966), Frazer (1968), Mbiti (1969), Opoku

(1978), Awolalu and Dopamu (1979), Ezenya (1980), and Ray (2000). We will concentrate on the views of African scholars because some Western scholars have discussed the concept on the premise that Africans had no concept of God. In contrast, Idowu explains the concept of ancestor veneration in light of the Yoruba belief that death is not the end of man's life (Idowu 1966: 186–7).

The Yoruba of south-western Nigeria believe that communication with the ancestors is a duty for those people the dead have left behind. This belief is based on the conviction that those who have departed this world have only changed their status by virtue of their death but remain members of their earthly families. Therefore, the belief is that the dead possess limitless potential, which they can exploit for the benefit, or for the detriment, of those who still live on earth, depending on the moral behaviour of the people left behind. On this basis, Idowu justifies the practice of ancestor veneration among the Yoruba. Mbiti provides a comprehensive analysis of the concept of "ancestors" with reference to its meaning, types, and reasons for their veneration. Two things are distinctive about Mbiti's thesis, which later inspired further scholarly work on the concept. One, Mbiti coins a distinctive word for the ancestors by describing them as the "living dead." Ancestors are described in this way because Mbiti believes that they are still people, who live perpetually. He also describes them as bilingual: they speak the language of men and women they lived with until "recently," and they speak the language of the spirits and of God, to whom they are drawing nearer ontologically (Mbiti 1969: 83). The second issue concerns the categorization of the status of the ancestor into two periods: the *Sasa* and *Zamani*. *Sasa* and *Zamani* are Swahili words depicting immediate present and past, respectively.

Regarding the present time, attention is paid to ancestors existing up to four generations back; by this time only a few of the immediate members of the family would still be alive. When the last person who knew a particular dead person also dies, then the ancestor moves to the realm of the past during which he is no longer a person but a spirit and could be described as a thing or an "it." What Mbiti tells us has shed significant light on long history of the culture of ancestor veneration, which may remain with Africans for some time to come, the onslaught of globalization notwithstanding.

Awolalu and Dopamu's work also deals with the moral aspect of the concept. They discuss why and how morality is considered one of the criteria for a would-be ancestor on the one hand, and the potential of the ancestor for providing and enforcing ethical guidelines for the people they have left behind on the other (Awolalu and Dopamu 1979: 284).

Gyekye (2002: 161–8), however, underscores the kind of overgeneralization many scholars associate with the concept of ancestor as he debunks the thesis that every ancestor was morally inclined while they were on earth. He argues that there are some exceptions, on the ground that the respect given to living chiefs (with specific reference to Ghana) is an extension of the respect given to the ancestors. It is not necessarily respect for the morally virtuous lives of living chiefs. His position is valid even when we relate it to the few Nigerian national

heroes who became national ancestors by virtue of their nationalist activities without specific reference to their moral status.

Beyond the level of morality, Ray offers new light on understanding the ancestor within the context of modernity. He discusses the recent mechanisms of popularizing the personal identity of the ancestor through modern media as an improvement upon the oral means of getting the message about their deeds across to the people of their immediate community. He writes that the dead are remembered today through elaborate obituary announcements and death memorials. We come to understand that the personal identity of the dead is constructed in elaborate obituary announcements, death and annual memorial notices published in newspapers and announced on radio and television (Ray 2000). By so doing, the names of ancestors are kept perpetually in the memory of the living. They can no longer be forgotten, as Mbiti earlier envisaged. What this suggests is that ancestor worship is not an old religious practice; rather, it is a tradition that has survived in spite of modernity.

The works reviewed regarding ancestor veneration seem to point in one direction. By implication, they seem to suggest that an ancestor is a person who: died a good death after having faithfully practiced and transmitted to his descendants the societal norms left to him by his ancestors; who contributed to the continuity of the line by leaving many descendants; who was a peacemaker, a link that fostered communion between the living and the dead, through sacrifices and prayers.

Ancestor Veneration

Belief about the personality of the ancestor as the closest link between the physical world and the spirit world remains one of the fundamental reasons why ancestors are venerated in Nigeria. Added to this is the impression that the ancestors are essentially benevolent spirits, who return to their human families from time to time and share meals with them. Against this background, therefore, ancestor veneration is manifested in adoration of the dead, holding them in high esteem, honoring, idolizing, looking up to them, treating them with reverence and paying homage to them, hero worshipping through rituals and sacrifices (Ayantayo 1988). A critical understanding of these practices shows that ancestors are venerated at family, community, and national levels. At the family level, members of the family have their dead grandfather as the family ancestor who is venerated monthly or annually. At the community level, the dead who was formally head of a compound or a town becomes the ancestor and is venerated accordingly. At the national level, with emphasis on Nigeria, we have many nationalists who, after their death, have become national ancestors. We need to explain this concept further.

The National Ancestors

National ancestors are recognized and, in most cases, immortalized, at the national level by virtue of their deeds and actions that have one way or the other contributed to the development of the nation (see Nigeria Muse File://A:/Nigeriaheroes.htm). They are the people who have excelled in their chosen career and some of whom have received national honors. An example of these are the nationalists who some call Nigeria's founding fathers and who are recognized across the nation. Notable among them (with reference to their outstanding performances or nationalist activities) are: Herbert Macaulay (1864–1946), who was a politician, nationalist, and founder of Nigerian nationalism; Dr. Alvin Ikoku (1900–71), who was an educationist and politician. While in government, he applied his influence to foster development in the Nigerian education sector. Others include Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904–96), who, like other nationalists, was a politician who served as Senate President, Governor-General (1960–63) and, later, President (1963–66). Azikiwe, popularly called "the Zik of Africa," is best remembered for his commitment to the Nigerian nation. Other outstanding nationalists are Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1909–63), who is remembered and accorded national recognition as a frontline nationalist and the one who first brought television to Africa. He was a founder of the Action Group (AG) and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Awolowo's followers regard him as the apostle of free medical facilities and education as well as the preacher of democratic socialism. Perhaps it is in the light of this that, according to Lagos *News Watch* magazine, Chief Ojukwu wrote in the condolence book opened at his death in 1987 that Awolowo was the best President Nigeria never had. We also have Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello (1909–66), who, apart from being a nationalist, was also a party founder, a Minister, and the first premier of Northern Nigeria. His greatest legacy was the unification of the diverse people of Northern Nigeria. Also in this category is Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1912–66). Balewa was recognized and so honored as the first Prime Minister of independent Nigeria (1960–66), apart from being a founder of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and the Deputy President of the party for some years. Also on the same track was General Murtala Ramat Mohammed (1936–76). He was a military Head of State whose short time in office had a major impact on subsequent developments in Nigeria. For example, while in office, he reformed the civil service and other major institutions.

Mohammed's government outlined a number of political reforms, which included the creation of seven more states, the drafting of a new constitution, and the organization of state and national elections as a prelude to a return to civilian rule on October 1, 1979. He set up a committee on a new Federal capital whose findings resulted in the change of the Federal capital from Lagos to Abuja. Other nationalists include Alhaji Aminu Kano and Stephen Osita Osadebe, and M.K.O. Abiola. Unlike family and compound ancestors, national ancestors have no shrine or special place where they can be venerated. They are not worshipped, but their

names are immortalized. Immortalization is an aspect of ancestor veneration, which manifests in several ways, especially in several national symbols.

National Ancestor Veneration through National Symbols

In the Nigerian context, national symbols manifest in important common experiences of Nigerians, which have been codified in the form of statues, towers, roads, flags, currency, coats of arms, the national anthem, the national passport, and the national pledge. These symbols are of national significance because they signify common national traits, which by implication, remind Nigerians of their origin, history, and political development. They have implications for unity, identity, and loyalty to the Nigerian nation. These symbols, especially the statues, roads, and airports named after such individuals, the currency, the national anthem, and the national pledge constitute tools or means of venerating national ancestors. As a mark of honor, some notable airports and roads, mostly in Nigerian cities, are named after nationalists such as Murtala Mohammed, Azikiwe, and Aminu Kano,. This has been done at the insistence of the Federal Government of Nigeria at one time or another. All these symbols serve as means of immortalizing Nigerian nationalists.

Ancestors are also venerated through the building of statutes and towers in their names and honor. For instance, in all 36 states of the Federation, we have statues, towers, cenotaphs, and arcades for unknown Nigerian soldiers. These soldiers are the ones who fell in battle as they struggled to defend Nigeria's corporate existence especially during the *coup d'état* of January 1, 1966 and the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–70. The arcade is designated as a living place for the dead. In actual fact, the place serves as the venue where Army Forces Day remembrance is celebrated on January 15 of every year. During the event, the governor of each state, along with the army and important political leaders, lay wreaths across the country. The occasion provides an opportunity for political leaders to call Nigerians to renew their loyalty and enhance their spirit of patriotism towards national stability and peace.

As for the currency, the heads of some Nigerian nationalists appear as logos on some Nigerian currency notes.[1] For instance, we have Tafawa Balewa on the ₦5.00, Alvan Ikoku on the ₦10.00, Murtala Mohammed on the ₦20.00, Chief Obafemi Awolowo on the ₦100.00, Ahmadu Bello on the ₦200, and Nnamdi Azikiwe on the ₦500. In addition, as a mark of serious commitment to the legacy left by these national ancestors on the one hand, and the need to immortalize them on the other, the national anthem—especially the first stanza—includes specific instructions that read:

> Arise O compatriots
> Nigeria's call obey
> To serve our father land

[1] Nigerian currency since 1973 has been the *naira* (₦), divided into 100 *kolb.*

With love and strength and faith
The labour of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain. (Nigerian Constitution 1999)

What this suggests is that the living should come together and work together to preserve the seed of unity which the founding fathers of Nigeria had earlier sown. This is taken as a reason to appreciate past heroes so that all their works would not be in vain. Perhaps this is why contemporary Nigerian citizens and leaders always evoke the spirit of the ancestors during national ceremonies in order to enhance national unity and integration. This is expressed in several ways. For example, in 1978, a sober week of national mourning was declared following the death of Murtala Mohammed. The practice of invoking heroes during national ceremonies, coupled with various means adopted to immortalize them, has social and political implications for national integration. I shall turn to this in the next section.

Implications for National Integration

The need for national integration in Nigeria remains a crucial issue given the divisive factors that have characteriszd her history, geography, and culture. The forces that threaten her unity include religious fundamentalism, ethnic rivalry and sentiment, cultural disorganization, and linguistic diversity (Ayantayo 2002). All these forces, at one time or the other, have to a larger extent generated tensions and conflicts amongst different communities. As the above factors pose serious challenges to Nigeria's unity and integration, conscious efforts have been made in the past and even the present to overcome them in order to enhance national integration. This effort is also geared at providing Nigerians of different religious and cultural backgrounds a common platform for appreciating, understanding, and accommodating each other's customs and life styles in order to live together. Ancestor veneration is an important tool to achieve national integration.

This is because the practice is suggestive of the recognition of these individuals who in the first instance are leaders of their communities and represent the interests of their communities at a national level. By so doing, these people help to bring to thefore the ethos and tradition of their people. The act of recognizing these individuals at a national level is in most cases interpreted as recognizing the people and the immediate environment from which they hailed. Bestowing honor on nationalists like Awolowo, Azikiwe, and Tafawa Balewa and giving them the status of national ancestors is a way of recognizing the place of the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa/Fulani in the scheme of things. Had these individuals not been honored in this manner, it would be possible for "their people" to accuse the nation of marginalizing them. This accusation is always on the lips of every ethnic group who feel their interest is not represented in the scheme of things.

The act of giving individuals who hail from different ethnic groups in Nigeria the status of national ancestors, heroes, and heroines is no doubt a catalyst for

national integration. This is so because where there is national integration each part depends on others for needs and services; the whole of society exists and functions as one unit, people, and group within society. This promotes group understanding, tolerance, and common sharing of basic beliefs and values as one people. Regarding the last variable, it is true that most Nigerians on the basis of their homogenous indigenous tradition share certain beliefs, especially belief in ancestor veneration. This perhaps informs the values Nigerians place on the ancestors, which enables them to accept and appreciate the Nigerian currency, which carries the heads of national ancestors. Every Nigerian does business with Nigerian currency irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background and religious sentiment without fear or complaint. By so doing, the appearance of national ancestors on the Nigerian currency consciously or unconsciously enhances unity in diversity. We do not have Igbo rejecting currency notes which have the heads of Yoruba or Hausa leaders on them, and vice versa. All Nigerians seem proud of doing business with the currency. This, in a way, promotes a sense of belonging among Nigerians. It is in the light of this that Nigerian leaders need to learn from history regarding the invocation of the national ancestors towards achieving national unity in times like this when the question of unity, recognition, and federal character top the list of topics of current national dialogue. One example of what to learn in history has to do with Obasanjo's (the then Head of State), canonization of Nigeria's national heroes and heroines in separate ceremonies. In one of the 1979 ceremonies he gave posthumous honor to four deceased leaders (Herbert Macaulay, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Alvan Ikoku ,and Murtala Mohammed) who played active roles in the struggle for Nigerian independence. During the occasion, Obasanjo remarked that the men had all made supreme sacrifices so that the nation could be strengthened and prosper in every sense of the word (Olupona and Hackett 1991: 270).

The purpose of evoking the ancestors and according them significant honor could also serve the purpose of enshrining selfless commitment, dedication to duty, and national service as goals worthy of every Nigerian's pursuit. This development has the potential to enhance national integration. It is the totality of the practice that Olupona and Hackett (1991: 270) describe as the manifesting of civil religion in national polity. Civil religion, in the words of Jonathan Smith (1995: 275), refers to the set of religious or quasi-religious beliefs, myths, symbols, and ceremonies that unite a political community and that mobilizes its members in the pursuit of common goals.

Implications for Moral Transformation

The values inherent in ancestor veneration also have a capacity for enhancing the moral transformation of individual Nigerians in a couple of ways. The first, showing appreciation or gratitude for work done or for good actions of individuals across the States of the Federation does not only enhance national unity, it also has the tendency to encourage good behaviour on the part of individuals living around

the people so honored. This, therefore, reminds one of the popular adage "One good turn deserves another." Such an act of gratitude could help inculcate a spirit of acting rightly or performing good actions at all times. It would also boost the morale of individuals. Under such an arrangement, people are likely to be morally inclined, having fully known that their good deeds would be appreciated within wider society. This would also help redirect the path of Nigerians in the direction of moral uprightness. This kind of motivation has been manifested in the giving of national awards such as the Grand Commander of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (GCFR). The second, is based on the fact that one criterion for a person to become an ancestor is having performed good deeds. To put it another way, only a person of good deeds can become an ancestor. Regarding this assertion, the position of Amposah is apposite, as he writes that:

> Relatives who are regarded as ancestors might have lived a good moral life… The names of wicked people are not mentioned during libation. Drinkers, adulterers and extravagant persons, cowards, lazy people are considered to be evil. A thief is a nuisance to society and therefore cannot be regarded as an ancestor. (Ezenya 1980: 44)

This criterion could spur people who care to be morally inclined so that they can strive to become ancestors. We do not have statistics to demonstrate how this criterion for would-be ancestors has enhanced the moral transformation of individuals. Nevertheless, there is a possibility for such a criterion to influence and affect people's moral thinking positively. For instance, the criterion has the tendency to evoke fundamental questions that have a moral flavor in the mind of any rational thinker any time such a person thinks about or reflects on the essence and the philosophy of the immortalization of ancestors. Such questions could be: What would people be saying about me if I had died yesterday? What kind of reputation am I making for myself? How would I like to be remembered by those who have known me or by God? As some are remembered as philanthropists like the late Bank Anthony, humanitarians like Mother Theresa of Calcutta, advocates of civil rights like Gandi Fawehinmi, or achievers in business, science medicine, or other activities, how would I like to be remembered?

Having assessed the above questions from a moral point of view, perhaps a wise person would tend towards doing good acts in order to be remembered for good. Leaving a good name behind after death is considered a wise decision according to Yoruba oral tradition. This is also in accored with a biblical injunction that states that a good name is better than good oil, and the day of death better than the day of one's being born (Eccl. 7: 1). The question is: Why would the day of one's death be better than the day of one's birth? The answer is that at birth, a person has not established a reputation, their personal slate is totally blank; their life course will result in either a positive or negative reputation, depending on what they do having grown into an adult. For those who have established a good name over the years, the day of death is indeed better in that respect than the day of birth. We cannot ignore the emphasis

that contemporary Nigerians place on a good name and a bad name respectively. Nigerians rejoiced over the death of General Sani Abacha, who was described as a wicked Nigerian ruler, but a week later mourned over the death of Bashorun M.K.O Abiola, the man who was judged to have won the contentious June 12, 1993 election.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that belief in ancestors on the one hand and the act of ancestor veneration on the other hand have been consciously or unconsciously institutionalized in Nigerian polity. Even though the practice has its roots in traditional religion, it has gained prominence among Christians and Muslims who also venerate members of their own religions, especially those who have contributed remarkably to the advancement of the organizations. For the Christians, a small number of such people are buried in church premises or have church buildings or departments named after them. This practice is grounded in the religious belief exemplified in the Bible that "the remembrance of the righteous one is due for a blessing but the very names of the wicked ones will rot" (Proverbs 4:7). The same goes for the Muslims who have mosques named after them. In addition, at the individual level, the fear of what people might say about one after death could make some do good, and if this is the case the practice of venerating ancestors does enhance the moral transformation of individuals. Adherents of traditional religion also affirm the adage mentioned earlier that people of bad deeds such as thieves, cowards, and adulterers would never become ancestors. At the national level, the idea behind ancestor veneration has to some extent enhanced national integration as the belief consciously or unconsciously manifests in popular national symbols such as national statutes, arcades, cenotaph, currency, and anthem. We believe that if the immortalization of ancestors is done within the spirit of justice and equity, belief in ancestor veneration will continue to foster national unity, cohesion, and integration. Despite modernity, beliefs and practices associated with ancestor veneration have proved to be resilient. Ancestor veneration has been institutionalized and may continue to enhance national integration.

However, to foster holistic national integration, it is important that female heroes should also be venerated. For example, women like Madam Tinubu and Lady Oyinkan Abayomi of Lagos, Queen Amina of Zaria, Queen Idia of Benin Kingdom, and Mrs. Ransome Kuti. It is true that a few communities in Nigeria have recognized these women, but the recognition accorded them is not equal to that which is given to their male counterparts. For instance, none of these women is inscribed on the Nigerian currency or many other national symbols such as national statutes, arcades, cenotaph, and anthem. Gender should not be a determining factor in the choice of who to venerate. Every living and dead Nigerian who deserves honor should be accorded it without reference to sex differences.

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Chapter 6

The Concept of Expiatory Sacrifice in the Early Church and in African Indigenous Religious Traditions

Samson Adetunji. Fatokun

Introduction

The central feature of first-century Apostolic Christianity, as presented by Paul and later popularized and developed by the early Church Fathers, was the activity of God's grace in forgiving, restoring, and justifying sinners in their hopeless and helpless situation through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God "who takes away the sins of the world" (cf. John 1:29). Similarly, expiatory sacrifice is a prominent feature in African traditional religious thought. This chapter attempts a comparative investigation into the nature, scope, and significance of expiatory sacrifice between the two religious traditions: Christianity and African indigenous religious traditions.

The Concept of Expiatory Sacrifice in the Early Church

Atonement or expiatory sacrifice was an underlying theme in the early Christian concept of salvation. St. Origen of Alexandria (c. AD 185–254) stresses that where there is sin, there is need for atonement and, for this reason, Jesus came into the world to expiate the sins of humanity through the shedding of his blood. The concept of the universal sinfulness of the human race is a common theme in the writings of the early Church Fathers. Affirming the Pauline proposition that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Tertullian of Carthage states: "In the beginning Adam was trapped by Satan into breaking the commandment of God; and being consequently given over to death, the entire human race tainted by its descent from him, became a channel for transmitting also his condemnation" (McGiffert 1961: 18).

Similarly, St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) held the view that all men substituted in Adam when he sinned, and that sin was theirs (Douglas 1972: 735). St. Origen, in his own contribution, maintained "All who are born of Adam the transgressor, have in themselves the likeness of his transgression" (Bettenson 1956: 281). In other words, in the early Church's view, the whole human race was

generically involved in the sin of Adam. Hence the need for atonement to restore estranged humanity to God.

Etymologically, the English word "atonement" signifies "the making to be at one" (at-one-ment): that is, reconciling of persons who have been at variance. By its secondary meaning it denotes an act or a payment through which reconciliation is made or achieved; hence atonement is propitiation of God by expiation of sin. In relation to this, the early Church emphasized the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross as the efficient and supreme means by which estranged humanity was reconciled to God.

Significantly, in the language of the early Christians, the blood of Jesus is the underlying theme in the concept of expiatory sacrifice. It is the chief object of atonement because it is that which cleans man from his sin. From its Old Testament background, atonement is brought about by sacrifice, and it is strongly emphasized that "the atoning virtue is in the blood" (see Leviticus 17:11). Likewise in the New Testament, the Greek *haima* (blood) is very significant in the concept of expiatory sacrifice. *Haima* is used physically as the "bearer of life" and the life force (Bietenhard 1978: 226). In fact, as pointed out by the author of Hebrews, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). Thus guilt could only be atoned for by blood.

Consequently, the early Church Fathers in their writings held to the blood of Christ as that which guarantees atonement and pardon. For instance, Bishop Clement of Rome (martyred c. AD 96) in his epistle to the Corinthian Christians of his day bid them to fix their gaze on "Christ's blood poured out for our salvation and bringing the grace of repentance to the entire world" (1 Clement, quoted in Carpenter 1916: 115). Barnabas (one of the Apostolic Fathers) stated that Christ's blood was shed that we might be consecrated through the forgiveness of sins (see Carpenter 1916: 115) . Thus, the sacrificial blood of Christ, for the early Church Fathers, had an all-powerful stain removal and sanctifying action.

St. Irenaeus, in his own contribution, stated that "the Lord redeemed us by His blood and gave His life for ours" (Bettenson 1956: 44). This implies that the blood of Christ was that which purchased redemption for humanity from slavery to sin. On the other hand, the phrase "gave His life for ours" clearly depicts that Christ substituted for the fallen human race through Hhs sacrificial death. In fact, for the early Christians, Christ was allegorically the "Lamb of God" who took away the sins of the world. The Apostle Paul stressed in his writing that God made peace with estranged humanity 'through the blood of his Son', the Perfect Lamb of God (Colossians 1:20). Tertullian, *De fuga in Peresecutione*, 2 has this to say: "… Christ redeemed us by His blood … He (God) spared not His own Son … He was led as a sheep to slaughter, … and delivered up to death, the death of the cross. All this that He might win us away from our sins."

The Old Testament underlying Hebrew word for atonement, *Kipper*, carries more of the significance of sin being "covered" or "expiated" or the wrath of God averted than the act itself. Even the corresponding Greek word *Katallage* which, although translated "atonement" in the King James Version and rendered

"reconciliation" in the Revised Standard Version and nearly all modern versions owing to its purported wider meaning of the end sought through the atoning process, in contemporary theological usage comes to denote the reconciling act itself, the work accomplished by Christ the Lamb of God, emphasizing the shed blood rather than the actual state of reconciliation into which believers are introduced through Christ back to God (cf. Exodus 30:15–16; Leviticus 14; 21; 35; Numbers 25:13).

On the other hand, St. Irenaeus, in his "theory of recapitulation of the atonement," linked redemption through Christ's expiatory sacrifice with the Incarnation. As he pointed out, "because of His measureless love, Christ became 'what we are' in order 'to enable us' to become what He is" (Kelly 1960: 375). Irenaeus further stressed that human nature was sanctified, transformed, and elevated by the very act of Christ's becoming man in the name of redemption. He pointed out that through Christ's expiatory sacrifice made possible through his Incarnation, humanity that was seminally present in Adam received the opportunity of making a new start in Christ Jesus (the last Adam, the saving Adam), through incorporation in his mystical body.[1]

Through Christ's expiatory sacrifice, the early Church Fathers maintained that an end was brought to the age-long enmity and separation between God and man. As stressed by Gregory of Nyssa, God made man initially for the purpose of sharing in his own goodness, but by a movement of freewill, "we brought ourselves" an association with evil, and so lost fellowship with God (Wiles and Santer 1975: 112). That is to say, Adamic sin brought about a separation between God and humanity since sin stands in opposition to God's holy character and nature. It is, however, believed that through Christ (the last Adam) the barrier was removed and the gap was bridged. In the words of Irenaeus: "In the first Adam, we offended God by not performing His command and in the Second Adam, we have been reconciled, becoming obedient unto death" (Bettenson 1956: 99). The early Christians therefore generally upheld the belief that lost humanity had been restored into fellowship with God because the power of sin and death had been defeated by the crucified Christ (Richardson 1938: 7). That is, the death of Christ on the cross at Calvary was considered the expiatory sacrifice *par excellence*, and the shedding of his blood, the supreme sacrifice for sin.

On the other hand, the notion of blood as the chief object of expiatory sacrifice posed a great interpretative problem that did not come within the scope of the biblical writers: the question of whom the blood of Christ was paid to: the devil or God. There was, in fact, a diversity of views on this among the early Church Fathers. St. Origen, for instance, spoke of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ as "the ransom paid to Satan," who had acquired rights over man through the Fall. This view, though rejected by one of the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Gregory of Nazianzus (c. AD 329–89), was accepted with modifications by many of the Latin

[1] The key concept used by Irenaeus to explain this is the Greek *anakephalaiosis* (recapitulation), which he borrowed from Paul's description of the divine purpose as being '"to sum up all things in Christ" (as used in Ephesians 1:16).

Church leaders among whom were St. Hillary, Bishop of Poitiers (c. AD 315–67), St. Augustine of Hippo, and St. Leo, the Pope (AD 440–61). While these early Church leaders on the one hand maintained that the devil had rights over sinful man, they however stressed that in trying to exercise them on the sinless Christ, he (the devil) abused them, and was thus, himself conquered by the power of the resurrection. St. Augustine, for instance, expressed the view that "Christ's blood was given as payment on our behalf," but in accepting it, the devil was not enriched but bound, and that therefore, we were freed from his clutches.

On the other hand, Gregory of Nyssus repudiated the whole idea of ransom. Questioning the rationality of such an idea, he argued:

> We were held captive by the Evil One, for we have been "sold into the bondage of sin," and our wickedness was the price we paid for our pleasure. Now a ransom is normally paid only to the captor; and so the question is: To whom was this ransom offered, and why? To the Evil One? What an outrage! If it is supposed not merely that the thief received a ransom from God, but that the ransom is God Himself—a payment for his act of arbitrary power so excessive that it certainly justified his releasing us! If it was paid to the Father, I asked why? He did not hold us captive. Secondly, what reason can be given why the blood of the Only Begotten Son should be pleasing to the Father? For He did not accept even Isaac when he was offered by his father, but He gave a substitute form the sacrifice, a lamb to take the place of the rational victim. (Bettenson 1956: 111–12)

In his submission therefore, the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, far from being a ransom paid to the devil, was a satisfaction or fulfillment of the Father's requirement for the divine plan of restoration and sanctification of fallen humanity through a God-Man victim:

> Is it not clear that the Father accepts the sacrifice, not because He demanded or needed it, but because it was part of the divine plan, since man had to be sanctified by the humanity of God; so that He might rescue us by overcoming the tyrant by force, and bring us back to Himself through the meditation of the Son, who carried out this divine plan to the honour of the Father, to whom He clearly delivers up all things. (Bettenson 1956: 112)

This position of Gregory was also maintained in the Middle Ages by St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his idea of satisfaction (Cross 1958: 100). In his view, sin was conceived as an infinite offence against God, which required equally infinite satisfaction. And that as no finite being (either man or angel) could offer such satisfaction, it was necessary that an Infinite Being, that is, God Himself, should take the place of mankind. And that by his death therefore, he "made complete satisfaction to divine justice." Thus, he argued, Christ's blood was paid, not as a price to the devil, but rather as a satisfaction to God in defense of his justice.

It seems reasonable and logical therefore to agree with the above view that the expiatory death of Christ is not in any way a ransom paid to the devil (as viewed by Origen and his supporters), but rather a satisfaction made to the Father for reparation and removal of original sin, and consequent restoration of the ruptured good relationship between Almighty God and humanity. The expiatory sacrifice of Christ was therefore, using J.S. Mbiti's words, the supreme "act of restoring the ontological balance" between God and fallen humanity (Mbiti 1970: 179).

The Concept of Expiatory Sacrifice in African Traditional Religion in Comparison to Early Christian Thought

Sin is generally conceived in African communities as any act that is contrary to the will and directions of the Deity (Awolalu 1976: 279). African traditional religion acknowledges the presence of sin in the world and, as a result, emphasizes the need for expiatory sacrifice. Many African creation myths, akin to the Christian view, suggest that from the beginning God maintained communion and fellowship with man until the latter sinned and God set up a barrier which cut man off from the unrestricted bliss of heaven, and in effect made him isolated from God (Awolalu & Dopamu 1979: 215). Although there are many differences between African Creation and Fall stories and the Christian account of the origin of sin, there is some similarity with the Christian view in their emphasis on sin as the ultimate cause of the break in man's earlier sweet fellowship with God. However, the Christian notion of an original sin in which all humanity became partakers by birth is foreign to African traditional religious thought.

At any rate, in African traditional beliefs sin has wide consequences. Sin in African belief does not merely isolate the offender from God's gracious presence, but as Awolalu & Dopamu (1979: 218) puts it, "disrupts his well-being as well as that of the society in which he lives." In fact, in African traditional societies, outbreaks of epidemics or natural disaster in a community were at times traced through divinatory processes to the sin of a single individual member of that community. In other words, in a way similar to the Christian notion of inherited sin, African traditional religion shares the view that a person's violation of the divinely laid down orders could bring misfortune and untold hardships to the members of their family and the entire community to which they belong. Hence, the sin of one person is also by extension the sin of his or her own people.

Owing to a popular African belief that sin cannot go unpunished, considerable efforts are usually made in African traditional religion to make the expiation for sin necessary to check divine wrath. As Cornelius Olowola (1993: 47) notes, sacrifice plays a central part in the traditional religion of Africa. Expiatory sacrifice in particular forms a vital part of the African traditional way of life, Africans believe that sin and expiatory sacrifice go hand in hand. That is to say, where there is sin, sacrifice becomes a necessity. And no sacrifice is too big in African society to bridge the gap between human beings and the gods.

The Yoruba word *etutu* better illustrates the African notion and significance of expiatory sacrifice. From the root *tu* (meaning, to appease) from which came the word *tutu* (wet or cool), *e-tutu* carries the notion of "that which cools" or "that which appeases." Hence, *etutu* (expiatory sacrifice) among the Yoruba has the import of keeping cool that which is hot, or that which is disastrous or catastrophic (Adewale 1988: 93). In other words, for the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria, expiatory sacrifice is that which appeases the wrath of the super-human beings or cools their anger against human violations of divine laws. A community infected with a plague owing to the wrath of an offended deity is restored to normal protective and providential relationship with the god(s) at the performance of the prescribed sacrifice in expiation of the offence(s) committed against the god(s).

Blood occupies a significant place in the African concept of expiatory sacrifice. In fact, in African traditional religion expiatory sacrifice is incomplete without the shedding of blood (just like the Christian maxim "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin"). In traditional religion the blood of animals or even human beings is used to avert evils in the land. Blood is believed by Africans to have both propitiatory and purifying power. The blood of the victim so shed is believed to stand as a substitute for the offender(s), and to give satisfaction or a cooling effect to the hot anger of the offended god(s). Awolalu identifies six types of sacrifice among the Yoruba: namely, Thanksgiving and Communion Offering (*Ebo Ope ati Idapo*), Votive Offering (*Ebo Eje*), Propiatory Sacrifice (*Ebo Etutu*), Preventive Sacrifice (*Ebo Ojukoribi*), Substitutionary Sacrifice (*Ebo Ayepinnu*), and Foundation Sacrifice (*Ebo Ipile*) (Awolalu 1979: 143–59). *Ebo Eutu* (expiatory sacrifice) is the most significant of them all when it comes to pacifying the anger of the gods or making compensations for wrongs. The blood of the sacrificial victim stands to substitute for both the life of the offender and that of his or her entire community now under the wrath of the gods.

The highest type of sacrifice in African traditional religion is human sacrifice. Although this practice has become illegal in modern times, one cannot altogether doubt the fact that it may still be practiced in some societies, albeit secretly, to meet special ritual demands. According to E.B Idowu, human sacrifice was made (in Yorubaland, for instance), whenever it was believed that someone needed to die as a sacrifice of appeasement in order that the community might be saved from one evil or danger or the other (Idowu 1975: 119). Some important details of the ritualistic elements of human sacrifice in traditional Yoruba society is given below by Idowu:

> The victim of human sacrifice was usually made to bless the people in some prescribed way which bore upon the occasion of the sacrifice. S/he was then given a special message which s/he was to deliver on arrival in the presence of the Deity or the divinities. Then followed the actual sacrifice when s/he was ritually completely buried alive, or buried with just the head showing above the ground; his/her throat might be cut before s/he was buried—then his/her blood would be drained and his/her extremities with certain members of his/her body cut and these put together would be exposed in the shrine; his/her

> corpse also might be exposed in an open place: there the carrion birds and the weather would eventually finish up the remains. The greater the avidity with which the carrion-birds disposed of the body, the better omen it was believed to be for the cause for which the sacrifice was offered. However, in spite of the fact that expiatory sacrifice is a common practice in African traditional societies, the Christian notion of reconciliation of the estranged humanity to God through a single expiatory sacrificial act of a God-Man victim appears foreign to African thought. Although human sacrifice was a common practice in some African societies, there has been no single case of an individual victim taking away the sins of the entire African race, let alone the sins of the whole world. In fact, the whole Christian idea that humanity came under slavery to sin through the fall of the primeval man and therefore needed a Saviour or Redeemer, as earlier mentioned, finds no place in African traditional religious thought. Even the deity *Ela*, a type of Christ in Yoruba pantheon of gods, is not conceived as a sacrificial victim for the redemption from slavery to sin but rather as *Olodumare's* special emissary solely entrusted with the responsibility of restoring order to the world set upside down by *Esu* (the Devil). Hence, the title *A t'aye se* (Repairer of the world) often used by the Yoruba for *Ela*. (Adeoye 1989: 246)

In some African societies there may exist cases similar to Christ's expiatory sacrifice. There are some stories of individuals who died as savior gods and goddesses in attempts to save their communities from one evil or the other, while others were simply offered as sacrificial victims to appease the gods of the land. For instance, there was also among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria the *Osu* system whereby some individuals perceived to be social outcasts or outfits were dedicated and offered to the gods in a blood covenant for the ritual purification of the community. The *osu*, that is, the person so dedicated, was believed, after a communal prayer led by the shrine priest, to carry away all troubles, sicknesses, and all other sorts of misfortune in the community (Idika 1983: 23). As earlier mentioned, some sacrificial victims died as savior-gods and goddesses. For instance, *Ayelala*, a popular goddess among the Ilaje and Ijo Apoi people in Okitipupa, Western Nigeria, was a slave girl—a devotee of several divinities, offered by the people to appease the gods and cleanse the land of the heinous crime of sexual immorality committed by one Keko with Chief Temetanan's wife (Awolalu 1979: 41–5). Critically analyzed, this type of sacrifice is more substitutionary than expiatory, going by Awolalu's classification of sacrifice. In fact, the name *Ayelala* is not really the proper name of the victim but rather her cry of dereliction at the point of death (an Ilaje dialect word which by interpretation means "the world is incomprehensible" or "the world is wicked"), which shows that she was being put to death for an offence someone else had committed (Awolalu 1979: 42).

Another example is that of the myth of Oluorogbo's sacrifice by Moremi, the wife of the king of Ile-Ife (in the present Osun State of Nigeria). But critical examination of the surrounding events reveals that the sacrifice of Oluorogbo carries no connotation of atonement or pacification of the anger of the god(s).

Rather, it was a votive sacrifice (Yoruba, *Ebo Eje*) in fulfillment of the vow made by her mother,[2] Queen Moremi, to the goddess River Esimirin if she would grant her assistance to uncover the secret of the power of the Igbo invaders (of eastern Nigeria) who frequently besieged and pillaged her land, Ile-Ife. Oluorogbo's death did not in any way carry away the sins of Ife people as did the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice of Oluorogbo finds more parallel with the biblical story of the offering of Jephthah's only daughter (Judges 11:29–40) than the supreme sacrifice of God's only Begotten Son for the expiation of the sins of humanity.

Similarly, the salvific act of Queen Moremi (the Ife goddess) cannot be described as an expiatory type of sacrifice, just as vicarious suffering since the sacrificial act in no way involved the shedding of her own blood. According to the story, she offered herself to be captured by the Igbo invaders in a calculated attempt to uncover the secret of their power. After discovering it, she escaped back to her own people and unveiled the secret to them. As a result, the Igbo invaders were later conquered and suppressed by the Ife people.

Eleguru, the savior-god of the Ijebu-Ode people is another example in Yoruba religious tradition similar to the sacrificial death of Christ. Eleguru was a diviner-priest who voluntarily sacrificed himself to pacify the Lagos Lagoon goddess as a way of making a lasting solution to the constant flooding of his land believed to be caused by this goddess, which resulted in the yearly loss of life and property (details in Awolalu 1987: 7). This sacrifice allegedly led to the withdrawal of the Lagoon from the people and an abrupt end to the perennial disaster. This sacrificial act shares some resemblance to that of Christ in that Eleguru as a good type of Christ willingly offered himself for the well-being of his people. Similarly, as in the self-sacrifice of Christ, Eleguru also doubled as both the priest and the sacrificial victim. Eleguru did not only offer himself, but as a diviner-priest he was in fact the one who divined and prescribed himself as the sacrificial victim. These instances in African religious traditions notwithstanding, Eleguru's sacrifice is lacking in satisfying the conditions for expiatory sacrifice in the sense that there was no shedding of blood in the sacrificial act. Instead of being immolated, he was drowned in the Lagos Lagoon.[3] Besides, the voluntary sacrifice of Eleguru was more of scape-goatism than expiatory sacrifice in the sense that it was done on behalf of the people of Ijebu-Ode just to appease the threatening Lagoon goddess without any reference to any offence committed either by the entire community or an individual. In other words, unlike in the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, the

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[2] Queen Moremi vowed to the goddess Esimirin that she would give her anything she might demand if she could be successful in her salvific enterprise for Igboland. On her successful return the river goddess demanded of Oluorogbo her only son which she had no choice but to offer as compensation to the goddess.

[3] Traditions have it that Eleguru, the diviner-priest, in the sacrificial act sat with his diviner's tools on a magical mat which floated on the Lagoon and started moving as he was uttering some incantations until it reached a spot in the middle of the Lagoon where he allegedly sank and drowned, and was seen no more by his people.

sacrifice of Eleguru was not in any way made to wash away the sins of the Eleguru people (that is, the Ijebu-Ode community), but was instead more of what Awolalu calls above "preventive sacrifice" (Yoruba, *Ebo-Ojukoribi*). In fact, critically examined, none of the examples of the sacrificial acts of the savior-gods and -goddesses in African traditional religion can be put on the same plane as the expiatory sacrifice of Christ.

However, African traditional religious thought shares a similar notion with some early Church Fathers with regard to the devil's connection with sacrifice. In Yoruba religious thought, *Esu* (the trickster deity) is connected with sacrifice, though not as the Chief recipient (as some Church Fathers erroneously conceived in their interpretation of Christ's sacrifice) but as the general inspector appointed by *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) to see to the appropriateness of sacrifice and to carry it to heaven. This thought is, howeve,r alien to Christian belief on the grounds that Christians see the devil not as a deity of divine importance, but as a fallen angel and the arch-enemy of the Church purchased by Christ's expiatory sacrifice. In other words, while in Yoruba traditional religious thought *Esu* plays a very significant role in the acceptance of any given sacrifice by *Olodumare*, in Christian thought he has no real connection with any sacrifice meant for God because he is basically conceived as anti-God.

Similarly, the early Church's view that human nature was sanctified, transformed, and elevated in the incarnation and expiatory sacrifice of Christ finds no parallel in the African concept of expiatory sacrifice. In fact, that the whole of humanity became incorporated into the mystical body of a divinity who became incarnate to save or redeem mankind is foreign to African indigenous religious thought. Though the traditional Yoruba speak of primordial divinities like *Obatala*, *Orunmila*, *Oduduwa*, *Esu*, and *Ogun* who descended to earth in human form on divine mission (Awolalu 1979: 20–33), none of these is ever said to have been incarnated as an attempt to die as a sacrificial victim to redeem fallen human nature, not even *Ela* in Yoruba traditional societies.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that the concept of expiatory sacrifice is a common theme in both early Christian doctrine and African indigenous religious thought. Both share a similar belief in the necessity of expiatory sacrifice for atonement of sin and the importance of blood in the removal of sin. While both believe that in scope one person's sin could bring calamity on his/her family and entire community, the Christian notion of Original or Universal Sin in which all humanity became partakers by heredity is foreign to African indigenous religious thought. Hence, the Christian emphasis of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the entire human race is out of place in the African traditional religious cosmos. While indigenous religion has references to cases of sacrifices undertaken by some individuals (savior-gods) for the liberation of their different communities from

one calamity or the other, the notion of a single individual taking away the sins of the "whole world" through a single act of expiatory sacrifice finds no parallel in Africa. Thus, while African indigenous religious thought shares some similarities with the early Church Fathers' concept of expiatory sacrifice, the Christian concept is in many respects different in its nature and scope. The supreme example of vicarious or expiatory sacrifice in human history is explicitly found only in the early Church's concept of Jesus' atoning death. Its uniqueness is substantiated by its inherent universal power to bestow forgiveness from the original sin into which the whole of humanity became partakers by heredity.

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PART II
Diaspora, Youth, and Gender Dynamics

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Chapter 7
Researching African Immigrant Religions: Boundaries, Belonging, and Access

Abel Ugba

Introduction

This chapter is prompted both by my experience of investigating Pentecostal African immigrants and by questions I have been asked mostly by newcomers to this field of research. The questions revolve around the issue of access: How do I contact African Pentecostals? Can I simply walk into the church and ask for interviews? Will they accept me? Will it help if I dress the way they do? My professional ties with Pentecostal African immigrants date back to 2001 when I commenced a major project in Ireland.[1] Although immigrants from Africa were present in Ireland as far back as the seventeenth century (Mckeon 1997), substantial and variegated inflows began only in the mid-1990s. Knowledge about the composition and activities of earlier African migrants is scanty. The newer migrants consisted mainly of asylum seekers, students, migrant workers, and spouses of Irish and EU citizens. The 2002 census returned a total of 20,981 nationals of African countries. By 2006 the number had increased to 35,326, with Nigerians accounting for the highest national group (CSO 2002, 2006).

The censuses and other official statistics apart, the increased presence of African[2] immigrants had, by the 1990s, become readily noticeable as more and more of them engaged in economic, social and, in the most recent period, political activities. By the beginning of the 2000s many major cities had a noticeable presence of sub-Saharan Africans. Colourfully-attired African women and young men with stylish haircuts could be seen on major streets, while economic enclaves, populated mostly by Africans, had sprung up in many places, including central Dublin. In the Royal College of Surgeons and in other tertiary institutions and secondary schools, there was a visible increase in the number of Africans. In June 2007 a Nigerian, Mr Rotimi Adebari, was elected the Mayor of Portlaoise, the first "black" person to occupy that position in Ireland (*The Irish Times* 2007). The election of Ireland's first black mayor marked a change on Ireland's political

[1] The project, which lasted for about five years, culminated in the publication of Ugba (2009). Most of the ideas in this contribution were originally published in that book.

[2] The term "Africa"' is used here to describe immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and it excludes those from North and southern Africa.

landscape and it signaled a deeper, wider, and sustained involvement of African immigrants in Irish society.

Although all of these activities made African immigrants visible, religious activism, especially the formation of Pentecostal churches, represented the earliest and most visible symbol of the presence of newer African immigrants in Ireland. In many respects and for a variety of reasons, the churches were different from the other social and cultural institutions formed by African immigrants. For one, they represented dramatic and innovative changes on the religious landscape of Ireland, a predominantly Catholic country with little or no experience of African-led Pentecostalism. Another reason why African-led Pentecostal groups became visible so quickly was the rapid increase in adherents and groups. The first group was formed in Dublin in 1997 by Congolese-born Remba Osengo, but by 2001 when I commenced my research, many groups had sprung up within Dublin city and in the Greater Dublin Area. Their spread to other cities and towns was aided partly by the government's policy of "dispersing" asylum seekers all over Ireland. Motivated by church leaders who claimed a divine mission to awaken Ireland from spiritual slumber, "dispersed" African asylum seekers took their religion with them and established worship groups in state-sponsored accommodation centres or their living rooms. Others rented church halls, community centres, sports halls or the backrooms of high street shops. In 2000, *Metro Eireann* reported that about 40 "African" churches had been established in Dublin alone (*Metro Eireann* 2000). A report published in 2003 by the Irish Council of Churches estimated the number of "Black Majority churches" at 10,000 (ICC 2003) while the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Dr. Ivan McKay, put the number at 30,000 in 2004. According to the 2006 census, membership of Pentecostal/Apostolic groups increased by 156 per cent in 10 years while Evangelicals grew by 40 per cent (CSO 2006).

However, the real significance of Ireland's African-led Pentecostal groups, and the reason I was motivated to conduct my research, lies not in statistics but in the impact of beliefs/activism on the orientation/social location of members and on intra- and inter-community relations. Long before they attracted attention or scrutiny from the media and researchers, these groups had become dynamic community institutions and the fulcrum of social and cultural activities of many African immigrants. I first became aware of their pivotal role or significance because of my knowledge of the communities gained through formal and informal contacts with groups and individuals in the Greater Dublin Area since 1998. I was convinced not only of the importance of and need for the research but that it was do-able, especially by me. I believed (rather un-problematically) that my knowledge of the community and socio-cultural and "ethnic" ties to individuals and groups would guarantee unfettered access to ethnographic sites and respondents. However, the reality was more complicated, but ontologically significant. In the course of the research my "belongingness" to the community was questioned and scrutinized and differences/distinctions that I had not conceived surfaced. In this chapter I reflect on my experiences and their implications for research of the religious practices of African immigrants. My reflection responds, as much

as possible, to questions about access to respondents and ethnographic sites and whether ethno-national and cultural affinities facilitate (or hinder) access. The next section begins with a brief biographical note, which is meant to establish my connections to the research theme and respondents. This is followed by an analysis of my initial encounters with respondents and my problematic "insider" and "outsider within" statuses. The conclusion is preceded by a brief examination of my main investigation techniques.

A Brief Biographical Background

I had arrived in Ireland from Germany in April 1998 (having emigrated from Nigeria in 1992) and enrolled for postgraduate studies in journalism later that year. While studying I published articles in *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent* on themes relating to Africa and African immigrants in Ireland. These articles marked the beginning of my involvement with individuals and groups in the African communities in Ireland. My interaction with the communities deepened and widened when I became the founding editor and one of the publishers of *Metro Eireann* (www.metroeireann.com), Ireland's most popular multicultural newspaper. Eventually, I became a member of or served on the boards of several "African" community groups, including the Africa Centre and the theatre company *Arambe*. Involvement in these projects further broadened and deepened my contacts in these communities.

Getting to Know the Terrain

After initial ethnographic observation of places of worship in the Greater Dublin Area and some informal discussions with African friends and acquaintances, I decided to focus on African-led Pentecostal churches because of the reasons I have discussed above. The decision to examine specific themes relating to identity and the construction of boundaries/difference emerged inductively, following the results of preliminary semi-structured interviews and a focus group meeting. The focus group provided new insights, brought me closer to the leadership of the various churches, and helped to forge a working relationship between the various church leaders and me. In addition to the focus group meeting, I spent many hours of informal interactions with those respondents who had become my acquaintances. They and their entire families would visit me in my house. At other times, I (sometimes with my children) visited them in their homes and spent hours of "informal chats" while my children played with theirs. We also had delicious and elaborate dinners prepared in that uniquely "African" way at my home and at theirs.

After such visits or interactions, I would use the next convenient opportunity (usually immediately after the visit) to recall and document essential and relevant details or comments. No doubt some important details were lost as a result of the

time lapse and the limitations of human memory, but the real benefits of those informal interactions were not limited to what was said or remembered. Rather, it was the unspoken and the unique opportunities to observe my informants in as natural environment as could be, to have them converse and interact with me and with one another without any consciousness that they were being observed or documented. For example, I learnt much about Pentecostal teaching on fasting during one of these social interactions when on one of these visits to my house, Blessing[3] politely declined a meal of Pounded Yam and Egusi, but her husband and two children tucked into it. I insisted on knowing the reasons for her refusal to eat. For a long time she said nothing except that she could not and would not eat. After I reminded her that it was discourteous and un-African to refuse hospitality, she was compelled to say she could not eat for religious or spiritual reason. "Are you fasting?", I asked pointedly. "Well, you are not supposed to tell people that you're fasting," she responded, adding: "You know what the Bible says about the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing." Thereafter, we entered into a long conversation on fasting and related issues. Discussions like this were the main features of our informal social meetings and they provided deeper and robust insights into the beliefs, experiences, and perceptions of my informants and they have indeed enriched my accounts.

Access to Participants and Ethnographic Sites

The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) was the first group that I contacted because I had established ties with an official of the church long before I began my research. My contacts with the CAC started as far back as 2000 when I was still the editor of *Metro Eireann.* The church had, through one of its officials, placed advertisements in *Metro Eireann*, informing the public about the venue, days ,and times of its weekly services. The official became my acquaintance and, later, one of my key informants. I had many preliminary discussions with him and the other church officials I met through him in the initial stages of fashioning my research project. In 2001 I conducted semi-structured interviews with him and five other members of his church, including the pastor. I also convened a focus group meeting of all the interviewees to discuss the results of the individual interviews. The outcomes of these preliminary interviews and the focus group were instrumental in defining the course and central questions of this research. Whereas I had conceived of these churches, much in conformity with media and public discourses, solely as platforms where African immigrants seek to meet specific socio-cultural, practical, and emotional needs, my initial interviews and interaction with CAC members revealed that deeper and more complex issues were involved. It became clear that Pentecostalism is not simply "what they do" but, more fundamentally, "what they are." As a result of these initial discoveries, I decided to focus as

[3] Names have been changed at the request of respondents and to ensure anonymity.

much on what Pentecostalism makes members do as what it does for them. My preliminary findings made me realize that the beliefs/practices of these groups could be investigated using non-functionalist theoretical frameworks.

The majority of CAC members who participated both in the interviews and in the survey were recruited with the assistance of my key informant in the church. It was thus emphasized to me that I needed to cultivate a key informant in each of the four groups. My key informants were mostly officials or influential members who attended church services regularly and have a good insight into both beliefs and practices. Although the relationships we formed varied from one informant to the other, their role in my research was very similar. In the case of my key informant in the CAC, his role was sometimes limited to introducing me to fellow church members, but at other times he arranged meetings between the interviewees and me. On one occasion, an after-service announcement about me and my research was made to the entire congregation after my key informant interceded with his fellow officials. Thereafter, I experienced greater cooperation from church members in completing the questionnaires I had prepared. My informant also played the role of a "cultural interpreter," supplying detailed background information of specific church events and ceremonies (Richardson 1990, 1995; Van Mannen 1995; Walcott 1995). The insight I gained in the initial encounters with my key informant and other CAC members played a significant role in my decision to include more churches in my investigations.

"The Outsider Within"

However, despite the generous assistance and guidance of my key informants and many other participants, access to individual interviewees was sometimes problematic for a number of reasons. My racial background, my membership of the "African community," and phenotypical features did not always guarantee access to individual interviewees, although it made access to ethnographic sites and observation/documentation less problematic (see Adogame and Chitando 2005). For example, I did not stand out in the midst of church members as would a researcher of a different complexion or racial background. Consequently, my presence aroused little suspicion and caused minimum or no disruption of normal interaction among church members. Apart from our common racial background, many participants felt a sense of oneness with me because of our common immigration experiences. They interpreted my research but especially the expected outcome—"Doctor of Philosophy"—as both a personal benefit to me and a source of prestige for the entire community. One female key informant in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) said to me: "You're my brother. Your progress is my progress. And our progress is the progress of all Africans in Ireland." However, there were limits to this affinity or commonality. At other times in the ethnographic process my "outsider" status, defined mainly but not solely by my non-Pentecostal status, proved problematic. I will return to this point shortly.

In connection with observation and documentation, my writing material and audio equipment did not constitute a distraction because church members often bring their own writing and recording equipment. Many church members take notes during meetings or sermons. It is also not uncommon for others to take photographs or use audio and video recording machines. My presence and documentation activities did not therefore strike church members as unusual. As far as the majority of church members were concerned, I was no more than a worshipper bent on jotting down every word from the pastor's mouth. Although Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 49) argue that "the effect of the observer's presence can never be erased," I believe that my presence in ethnographic sites caused little or no disruption for the reasons I have mentioned. I therefore do not believe that the majority of participants "assumed situational identities that may not be socially and culturally normative," as Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 31) argue.

On the other hand, my privileged access and insight into the activities of these groups made me the "outsider within" which, according to Patricia Hill Collins (1991), possesses "a special standpoint" that enables him or her to produce "distinctive analyses." Collins notes that the distinctive standpoint of the "outsider within" derives from the encounter with the "paradigmatic thought of a more powerful insider community." She argues that African-American women intellectuals developed distinctive analyses of race, culture, and feminism because their unique platform provided them "with the benefits of white male insiderism" while repudiating its "taken-for-granted assumptions" (Collins 1991: 53). Her notion of the "outsider within" and Du Bois' (1996) idea of "double consciousness" resonate with Georg Simmel's (1921) conceptualization of "the stranger." In describing the peculiar composition of the stranger as simultaneously near and remote, concerned and indifferent, Simmel states that the "stranger" has the ability to see patterns that may be more difficult for those immersed in the situation or completely removed from it to see. Du Bois and hooks (hooks 1984, quoted in Collins 1991) focus on the double worlds of the African-American, which they both argue, have imparted on them a keener insight into issues of race and belonging. Du Bois (1996:5) refers to the distinctive and keener insight of the African-American as "second-sight, while bell hook calls it looking "both from the outside in and from the inside out" (hooks 1984, in Collins 1991: 36).

Applying the concepts of marginality and double vision to sociological inquiries, Collins (1991: 36) notes that, "'marginality' has been an excitement to creativity." She further states:

> As outsiders within, black feminist scholars may be one of many distinct groups of marginal intellectuals whose standpoints promise to enrich contemporary sociological discourse. Bringing this group—as well as others who share an outsider within status vis-à-vis sociology—into the centre of analysis may reveal aspects of reality obscured by more orthodox approaches..

In a similar way, I believe the unique relationship I have cultivated with Pentecostal African immigrants and the privileged access it guaranteed has enabled me to produce a distinctive analysis of the interrelationship between their beliefs and practices and social action or self-orientation. However, my "outsider within" status was counter-balanced by my "outsider" status at some stages in the ethnographic process (also see Adogame and Chitando 2005), as I now explain.

"The outsider"

Encounters with individual informants (rather than meetings with groups or ethnographic observations) highlighted the complexities of belonging and emphasized my problematic "outsider" status. The main criteria that defined my outsider status were my non born-again and non-Pentecostal credentials, as this pre-interview discussion between a male informant (and MFM (Mountain of Fire) minister) and me illustrates:

Researcher: *As I explained on the phone, I'm researching Pentecostal African immigrants in Ireland. I suppose we can begin the interview by hearing about your religious background, how you became a born-again Christian and a Pentecostal*
Informant: Are you born-again yourself?
Researcher: *If you don't mind I would rather keep my personal religious convictions out of this at this stage. I'm quite happy to talk about it when we've finished with the interview…*
Informant: *(cuts in) No, no, no, you've come to introduce your research to me; I want to introduce my Christ to you. So, are you born-again?*
Researcher: *I really don't want this meeting to be overshadowed by my personal religious history … I never shy away from discussing my own conviction; it's just that I'm here as a researcher and I would rather discuss my research first and my faith …*
Informant: (cuts in again) *Look, Christ died for you and for me. I'm under obligation to proclaim this message and warn of the consequences of lack of faith. This is my opportunity to proclaim it to you. Have you received Christ into your life? Are you born again?*
Researcher: (I realized that I wasn't going to win) *I'm a Christian. Born again? It depends on what you mean by it.*
Informant: *Born-again is a biblical term. It doesn't have two meanings. It is clearly stated—to be born-again is to be washed in the blood of Jesus, to repent of your sin, to give your life completely to God, be filled with the Holy Spirit and …*

After he ended his explanation I told him about my religious convictions and briefly explained the reasons for them. He acknowledged them but he made clear that I was in need of salvation and spiritual light and that spiritual rebirth was the only answer. Thereafter we proceeded to the interview. For the most part he

cooperated and we had an exhaustive discussion of his own spiritual journeys, Pentecostalism, and Pentecostal African immigrants in Ireland. However, there was no doubt that our initial exchanges affected and reversed the power relations and the dynamics of our conversation. I had arrived at his office as an "important" researcher from a respected Irish university, but our initial exchanges punctured this image by exposing my lamentable spiritual state, according to his definition of spirituality. The interview was no longer just about explaining his background and beliefs but also about educating and convincing me, given the passion and conviction with which he spoke.

Another informant, a female pastor (and a lawyer) in the RCCG, waited till after our interview to pose similar questions:

Informant: *Are you born-again?*
Researcher: *I'm a Christian.*
Informant: *That's what I thought when I saw your name. But are you born-again, spirit-filled and heaven-bound?*
Researcher: *I think a lot depends on what you mean by born-again?*
Informant: *I've just explained it. Have you repented of your sins and given your life to Christ? You see, it's not enough to be a Christian. The Bible says, "you must be saved". That is what the Bible says, not me. Are you convinced in your heart that you're saved? Which church do you go to? (I told her about my religious affiliations)*
Informant: *Hallelujah! Thank God for that but church membership will not save you. You remember what I said, before I became born-again I was very churchy, I attended church services regularly and they even called me "sister." But church does not save. Christ saves. You must receive him into your heart, he died for you …*

Again, the roles and power relations were reversed in the exchanges above. My informant did most of the questioning and I struggled to supply answers. Buoyed by her passion and convictions (but also by the presence of two subordinates), she imparted knowledge about spirituality and salvation and she consistently sought to expose my hollow spiritual state, according to her own definition of spirituality. We remained acquaintances after this encounter and she became one of my key informants and distributed questionnaires on my behalf.

Most encounters with individual interviewees had similar elements to the two I have reproduced above. Although they re-emphasized and reminded me of my "outsider" status, they contributed to robust discussions and outcomes. Most interviewees felt a need to proselytize or defend their faith the moment they interpreted our encounter not just as a meeting between a researcher and a respondent but also a clash between divergent religious views. They tended to be more prolific and nuanced in their analysis when they were impassioned, and they almost always were when they felt a need to proselytize or defend their faith.

The other markers of my outsider status included my relatively settled immigration status and my membership of an elite Irish university. A few participants

addressed me as "Dr." or "Prof." although they knew I was still to complete my doctoral program. This could be interpreted as a sign of respect but it could also have been their way of indicating that this was their heart's desire for me. I had not only been living in Ireland longer than many of them but I had also been post-nuptially naturalized. Many of the participants had precarious immigration status as asylum seekers or parents of Irish children still waiting for valid residence permits. I was sometimes compelled to discuss my own residence or immigration status in response to direct enquiries by some participants. On one occasion, after I told a male informant (in response to his questions) that I did not need a visa to enter the United Kingdom because I travel with an Irish passport, he responded: "Ah, I thought we were the same. You've no problems. You're an Irishman." Remarks like this rearticulated boundaries and differences that I had wrongly believed were not there, and they complexified concepts of sameness and belonging.

In-Depth Interviews

Most of my interviews took place in multiple sessions and they lasted for at least two hours on each occasion. They were tape-recorded. In these encounters with the informants, I was primarily interested in *what* they believe and *what* they do and *their* interpretations of the connections between beliefs and social action or self-conception. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 64) note: "Each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies." While careful not to present the impression of challenging their accounts or their interpretation of the Bible, I was determined to elicit complete, coherent, and relevant accounts that touch on the central questions of my investigation. This was particularly the case where the informant knew about my own religious conviction. I did not want them to interpret our meetings as a clash of competing religious views. That would have easily led to a breakdown of communication, trust, and rapport. I was not necessarily interested in why the informant had accepted a particular interpretation of the scriptures but rather in the implications of that interpretation for self-conception and social action.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 48), the interview is not a neutral tool but "a negotiated text" and a site "where power, gender, race, and class intersect." Because two or more people are involved in a specific interview situation, they argue that "the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes," and that the outcome is influenced by "the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity, and gender." Racial or ethnic factors did not pose major challenges in my interactions with the informants. As I have explained earlier, they made interaction easier while serving as markers of my "outsider within" status. Although my membership of an Irish elite university became a definer of my "outsider" status, it did not appear to have mattered much in the interactional interview moments because the themes

of the interviews were those informants felt very comfortable with and they often assumed the superior "expert" position, as my earlier illustrations demonstrate.

Fontana and Frey (2003) suggest that a feminist interviewing ethic transforms the relationship between the informant and the researcher into a relationship between co-equals and the exchanges are carried on in a conversational manner. I tried to achieve this aim mostly by allowing the informants to control the pace, but not necessarily the direction of the interview. I also endeavoured to show that I was interested in their well-being and their struggles to survive in a new immigration environment. I made an effort to give the impression that I would still be interested in them even if they were not participants in my research. Sometimes, this could mean hours of listening to "personal" troubles, and at other times, it meant offering advice in connection with specific immigration problems or writing a job reference or a letter of support to the Department of Justice.

Some church members who had agreed to do interviews with me failed to live up to their promises. They were either preoccupied with other commitments or were simply not motivated enough. Appointments with some pastors or church leaders were rescheduled many times as many of them appeared to spend the bulk of their time attending to "emergencies" or "urgent matters." Church members who were directly affected by the changes and uncertainties of Ireland's immigration and citizenship laws were too upset and unsettled to honour interview commitments. A few informants repeatedly made and cancelled appointments with me. It also became obvious that some members could either not appreciate the intellectual rationale for my research or did not agree with it. In a few cases, apathy bordering on disrespect marked the reaction of some church members to my invitations or entreaties. I was often asked the reasons or purpose for my investigations. I was sometimes asked to name the beneficiaries. Some of those who demanded such explanations did so out of suspicion and mistrust. Others simply did not want to spend time on a project that they believed had no direct or immediate benefit to their groups or that could even damage their reputation.

However, patience and caution on my part yielded good results in such circumstances. I was always prepared painstakingly to explain the purpose of my research and why I believe it would help, rather than harm them. I often told informants that their groups were among the foremost socio-cultural African-led institutions in Ireland and that my aim was to highlight this development and to document the role of their groups' beliefs/membership and the way members negotiated identity and difference. This sort of explanation was often followed by the question: "How does it benefit us?" In some cases I explained the likely political and social capital that could accrue to them when the State and the public recognize their pivotal position in African communities. At other times I told them that my research would inscribe and document the important role their institutions have played in the formation of African communities in Ireland for future generations.

Survey

I conducted a survey in order to elicit predetermined (De Vaus 1991) basic socio-demographic information on the membership of the churches mainly because I could not obtain such information from reliable secondary sources, including the churches themselves. The absence of a sampling frame meant that I could not adopt the random sampling technique to select the participants (De Vaus 1991). Participation was therefore mostly voluntary, although I aimed to have most social categories (gender, age, officials, non-officials, married, single, etc.) represented. I made many trips to places of worship to administer the questionnaires. My key informants solicited the cooperation of fellow church members and participated in handing out and collecting the questionnaires. Some pastors or church officials made announcements to the entire congregation, requesting members to complete the questionnaires. A few church leaders completed the questionnaire in the presence of the congregation both to encourage members to complete them and to disabuse their minds of any suspicion. Out of a total of 300 questionnaires I distributed, 144 (or 48 per cent) were completed and returned.

Visits to Ethnographic Sites

My visits to ethnographic sites began in 2001 and lasted till 2004, with month-long breaks in between. My aim was to observe every kind of public meeting and also attend group or committee meetings, where permission was given. While my presence at large public gatherings was hardly noticeable, it was definitely intrusive in small-group situations. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 49) note, "interactive observers are by definition intrusive." They also argue that objective observers and observations do not really exist because "any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity." They therefore conclude that all observations are "socially situated in the worlds of—and between—the observer and the observed" (2003: 31). I have no doubt that I was able to overcome many of these limitations because of the common background contexts that I share with my informants.

Lofland (1995) makes a connection between ethnographic observations and interviews, saying that the data gathered in the field often come through or are enhanced by informal interviews. This observation reflects my own experiences. However, I want to suggest a dialectical flow of influences rather than the cause-and-effect structure suggested by Lofland. While ethnographic data were enhanced by on-site interviews, the interview themes were most times based on the feedback from ethnographic observations in my case.

Note-taking was a major feature of my ethnographic activities. The nature and volume of notes depended on circumstances and themes. There were some occasions when I could not take notes during the events but had to engage in a post-event recollection and documentation. I often had to rewrite and structure my

hurriedly scribbled notes at the first opportunity after I had left the ethnographic site. Sometimes, I recorded events in a chronological order, especially if I was observing a service or group meeting for the first time. At other times, it was a real challenge to document the various activities that were taking place simultaneously. I would habitually arrive at the venue of a meeting or church service well ahead of the official starting time. In that case, I had enough time to describe and document the setting, including the seating arrangements, furniture and pre-meeting activities. It also afforded me the opportunity to talk to the early arrivals about their expectations and nature of involvement in the program. My notes usually included details about members' dress code, the dominant medium of conversation, the themes of pre-meeting interactions, the order of meetings, the names and ranks of participants and the degree of the pastor's involvement. Data from ethnographic observations have enriched every part of my research but especially my analyses of the histories and activities of the groups, their membership, administration and identity/difference.

Secondary documents

Sources of secondary data studied include church pamphlets, in-house magazines, church programs, invitation leaflets, posters that advertise special programs, and audio tapes of pastors' sermons. These materials were collected over a period of three years, beginning in 2002. On a few occasions they formed the basis of formal and informal interaction with the informants. I paid particular attention to the circumstances of their production, the use of pictures, and the concept of self which was projected through them. For example, some churches take particular care to include people of different racial backgrounds in posters/leaflets in order to signify a universal or inclusive attitude. They also use "universal" images like the opened pages of the Bible or the image of a dove which, in biblical traditions, implies peace. At other times, the faces of prominent African Pentecostal leaders are splashed across these posters and leaflets, but only if such leaders are participating in the programs being advertised. The faces on posters often reflect contentment, happiness, and joy. Some posters specifically invite people to come and receive the solutions to their problems, including all sorts of illness. It was interesting to compare the self-portrayal of these churches as indicated in their own media and their portrayal in the secular national Irish mass media. The data I gathered from printed material, including RCCG's in-house magazine, enhanced my analyses of the history, activities, membership, and administration of the churches. I also transcribed some sermons, read the transcribed texts many times and extracted themes relevant to my analysis of identity and difference.

Conclusion

Laurel Richardson (1995: 198) names informants' oral accounts, in-depth interviews, case studies, and ethnographic observations as some of the techniques of qualitative research. In this analysis I have demonstrated how and why I have applied these and other techniques. Despite their limitations, including well-founded concerns about their neutrality, I believe that these techniques succeeded in providing unique insights into church members' interpretations of beliefs and social experiences. My research progressed inductively, fashioned and refashioned by my experiences with informants and my encounters in ethnographic sites. It can therefore be concluded that my informants have unwittingly taught me how to research them without limiting my inquisitiveness and experimentation.

I have approached the data collection both as an "outsider" and an "outsider within." I therefore have no intention of denying the implications of my circumstances and location for objectivity and partiality: my account of Ireland's African Pentecostals is a situated or contextualized analysis rendered from a particular viewpoint. However, Richardson (1990: 28) reminds us that partiality and subjectivity "are not the research and writing disadvantages that positivist empiricism proposes." She states that there is no objectivity in social analyses because all perspectives are situated. As she puts it: "There is no view from 'nowhere', the authorless text. There is no view from 'everywhere,' except God. There is only a view from 'somewhere,' an embodied, historically and culturally situated speaker." I therefore hope that this personal reflection has provided answers to specific questions about boundaries and access, some of which I enumerated in the introduction. I also hope that my experiences will serve as an incentive to future researchers and enhance sociological investigations of the practices of Pentecostal African immigrants.

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Chapter 8

Àìní obìnrin kò seé dáké lásán, bí a dáké lásán, enu níí yo ni: Women's Leadership Roles in Aládůrà Churches in Nigeria and the USA

Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome and Elisha P. Renne

Introduction

> *Àìní obìnrin kò seé dáké lásán* / Having no wife calls for positive action
> *Bí a dáké lásán, enu níí yo ni* / To keep quiet is to invite trouble and inconveniences
> *Níní ejó, Àìní òràn* / Having a wife is as difficult as having none …
>
> (Abiodun, 1989: 7)

> As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says.
>
> (1 Corinthians 14:33–4, RSV, quoted in Omoyajowo (1982: 201)

As these examples from Yoruba sacred oral texts, known as Odù Ifá, and from the Bible suggest, Yoruba women have been represented in both reverential and restrictive ways. Yet women in Nigeria's African Initiated Churches (AICs) play numerous and crucial leadership roles without which the churches would be unable to survive. While men dominate most churches in prominent leadership roles and monopolize the exercise of visible power, women have been able to attain public leadership roles and institutional power in some churches. Paradoxically, branches of such churches in the United States do not replicate such structural and institutional powers for women. What are the narratives that frame, support, and challenge the ability of women to exercise power in Nigeria and what narratives marginalize them there and abroad? What are the causes and consequences of the power of women, or the lack thereof, in both church and society?

Aládůrà (prayerful ones or literally, owners of prayer) women and men share a belief in the efficacy of prayer and fasting, visions and symbols (as indicative of divine revelation), spiritual/miraculous healing, and active congregational participation in very loud, ecstatic, and demonstrative worship. Many of the churches also combine Christian and Yorùbá religious practices (Adogame 1999; Crumbley 2008; Peel 1968). This chapter compares the leadership roles of women

in Nigeria and the USA, in order to identify some of the factors that contribute to (or detract from) women's leadership roles in Aládǔrà churches. These churches were founded among the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria as a response both to missionary marginalization of the new Christians and to contemporary problems encountered by Nigerians in the early twentieth century during British colonial rule. These problems included personal and economic problems encountered by those who ultimately became leaders and members of the churches.

While much has been written on the Aládǔrà phenomenon in Nigeria (Crumbley 2008; Omoyajowo 1982; Peel 1968), in other African countries (Sackey 2006; Theilen 2003), and in Europe (Adogame 1999; Harris 2006), less is known about the impact of Aládǔrà churches and contemporary African Christian immigrants on American social and political life. There is inadequate understanding of the rationale behind the efforts of ministers, religious workers, and pastors of African churches, whose missionary efforts constitute a reverse evangelization from the former movement of Western missionaries to the African continent. Although South–South missionizing—from and to Southern hemisphere countries—began earlier, South–North evangelizing has grown vigorously, driven by increased impoverishment in Africa and the ascendancy of neoliberal economic and political policies including Structural Adjustment Programs.

The growth in African evangelization in the Northern hemisphere is also significantly affected by burgeoning African immigration. There were approximately one million Africans in the United States in 2000 (see Brittingham and de la Cruz 2004). A range of missionary churches proliferate with glorious abandon. Many of the churches have African immigrant members only, but a growing number of church leaders say that their mission, as originally conceived, charges them with the responsibility of bringing all peoples under the umbrella of Christianity through their churches. Some mainline denominations also make efforts to service their African immigrant population by sponsoring the immigration of ministers to provide pastoral care for African immigrants (Okome 2004). This situation raises several questions concerning the nature of contemporary African immigrant Christianity in the USA. For example, how is international migration shaping American religious practice? What are the similarities and differences between Christianity's African and African-American variants? How do religious beliefs and practices associated with these churches permeate daily life and political engagement?

In the scholarly and popular imagination, gender, leadership, and power in the AICs have multiple, disparate meanings. The role of church women, ideally and in practice, and the implications of such roles for the church and society at large, have been contested (Oduyoye 1995; Olajubu 2003). Rather than formulating an abstract notion of objectivity, this chapter focuses on the interpretation and meaning derived from competing discourses on gender and power, their historical antecedents, and their contemporary implications in religious expression in Nigeria.

Gender, Religion, and Power in Yorùbá Cosmology

Yorùbá cosmology recognizes the non-gendered nature of the supreme deity, Olódùmarè, and the Yorùbá pantheon of deities encompasses both male and female divinities. The liturgy, praxis, and hermeneutics of Yorùbá religion emphasize the complementarity of males and females. For Olupona (2004), gender fluidity in Yorùbá religious traditions and religious discourse may be unintelligible and inscrutable to Western perspectives. Also, Olupona (2000) considers "orality, divination, and gender dynamics" to be strong themes in African indigenous religion, which are replicated in the Aládŭrà churches.[1]

Nonetheless, Yorùbá religion is dominated by men and the predicament of contemporary Yorùbá women may be seen in ancient myths depicting the quandaries experienced by Yorùbá deities. While the imagery superficially conveys an appearance of egalitarianism, it conceals male chauvinist ideology and practice. Oduyoye (1995) maintains that men dominate Western Christian thought as well, because of particular interpretations of the Bible. While the Aládŭrà churches allow for more women's participation, the tendency to favor literal interpretations of the Bible reinforces the authority of husbands and traditional female roles of wives and mothers. Ultimately, Odudoye sees both Christianity and Yorùbá culture opposing the empowerment of women within Aládŭrà churches.

Oduyoye's research leads her (1995: 148) to observe that African Initiated Churches (AICs) include women to a greater extent than is the practice in the mainline churches, although they may not incorporate women's perspectives in church doctrinal decisions. She also contends that most of the pastors in AICs do not have formal theological training. Combined with their literal belief in the Bible, this causes them to be suspicious of critical approaches to Christian doctrine and praxis (Oduyoye 1995: 149). Unfortunately, this belief in biblical authority often supports culturally sanctioned gender roles. For Oduyoye (1995: 150), one reason pastors reject women's leadership in the AICs is the belief that women's assertiveness indicates their desire "to become like men and reject their womanhood," a desire derived from contemporary women's liberation, which is neither biblical nor African. Paradoxically, there is no stigma attached to male celibacy, which is not construed as "rejecting … manhood." As Oduyoye (1995: 151) argues, whether it is in the Aládŭrà churches or in mainline churches, women are allowed only limited leadership. Even when Captain Christiana Abiodun Akinsowon became the leader of the Cherubim & Seraphim Societies of Nigeria, it was as "supreme head of all the women" and not as Ìyá Alâdúrà, which would parallel the title of the male leaders. To underline this point, Oduyoye notes that nine ranks are reserved for men, while only five are available to women in the Cherubim & Seraphim Church, a point also made by Omoyajowo (1982).

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[1] Oduyoye (1995) argues that while Western feminist thought is derived from Judeo-Christian thought, it looks favorably on the assertion of the female in the divine.

Olajubu (2003) contends that the constitution of Yorùbá indigenous leadership informed the practice of Christianity. Like Oduyoye, she argues that all the mainline churches maintain a hierarchical and male-dominated institutional structure that limits women's roles in the exercise of formal power. However, Yorùbá women were able to draw upon traditions of women's centrality in religious rituals and made inroads into Christianity, where they are dominant in church worship, associational life directed at accomplishing corporate religious goals, and to a lesser extent, as ordained ministers. In the Aládŭrà churches, women went further, founding churches in which they became the senior ministers in charge (often called overseers). Many also played the role of visionaries who prophesied in a manner that directly influenced the construction and reform of the church. Even in these spaces, women remain grossly under-represented, and only dominate as part of church membership. These circumstances are not only applicable to the Aládŭrà churches, they are prevalent in other Christian churches. Uta Theilen (2005) makes a similar point about black women in Methodist churches in South Africa; under-representation of female ministers in the mainline churches occurs throughout Africa (Kanyoro 2001). In the USA, female pastors of all races and ethnicities have also complained that a "celestial ceiling" blocks their recruitment as ministers, in general, and as high-powered ministers with large congregations (Banerjee 2006).

Predominance of Men, yet Significant Women's Leadership Roles, in Early Aladura Church History

The Aládŭrà churches emerged due to resistance to the European domination of missionary churches introduced to Yorùbáland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Christianity offered attractive, alternative modes of worship, liturgy, doctrine, and the praxis of spirituality; it also provided opportunities for learning skills that enhanced church members' economic and political success. Thus Christianity provided education, marginal political rights, better training and the consequent possibility of increased pay, and Christians could aspire to become incorporated into the emerging socio-economic milieu. However, incompatibilities between Christianity and Yorùbá religion included monogamy, monotheism, male dominance replacing negotiable gender relations, and women's subordinate church roles. Many tolerated the indignities associated with the new religion, but women realized that there were few leadership roles for them.

The problems of the 1920s in Nigeria, which included influenza, bubonic plague and smallpox epidemics, as well as famine, a failing cash crop economy, and the Great Depression, spawned increasing discontent among Yorùbá Christians and non-Christians alike. Some suggested that a revival was needed and many preachers and prophets exhorted believers to repent and rededicate their lives to God. The Aládŭrà movement emerged out of this restiveness.

In the Cherubim & Seraphim (C&S) Church, an Aládŭrà church founded in 1925, male church leaders, including Moses Tunolase Orimolade and H.A. Phillips

(Omoyajowo 1982), predominated. Yet women also had leadership roles in the early C&S Church, not surprisingly, because of the spiritual power of women in Yorùbá religion; Captain Abiodun Emanuel, who co-founded the Church and Madame Christianah Olatunrinle are the most well-known examples (Omoyajowo 1982; Peel 1968). Also, within Yorùbá systems of thought, women are believed to be central to the cosmic balance (Lawal 1996).

According to Peel (2002: 136), both "Christianity and early church life in nineteenth century Yorùbáland … were profoundly shaped by the gender conceptions prevalent in indigenous society and religion." Although the Òrìsà were not gendered, their devotees assigned gender attributes to them. Peel argues that Christianity initially attracted young men but they stood to lose social standing upon conversion because they could not continue practices that demonstrated men's prestige, including polygyny and membership of secret societies. Many women embraced the new religion and have dominated Christian congregations ever since. For women, the ability to form *egbé* or associations, the honorific use of the term "mother," and other social practices associated with Yorùbá culture were incorporated into Christian practice.

Struggles for Power in the Early Aládŭrà Church

Omoyajowo (1982) has admirably examined the early history of Aládŭrà churches, including the power struggle between Orimolade and Abiodun Emanuel. In Omoyajowo's view, "No Yorùbá society in 1928 would easily accept the overall leadership of a woman. Even today [1982] the stigma is still present in the Church" (Omoyajowo 1982). The Aláké of Abéòkúta's decision in 1934 to appoint Abiodun as head of the C&S women's sections doubtless reflected the general Yorùbá opinion on such matters. Similarly, there was the question of age, as Abiodun's leadership problem emerged after she turned 21, when she became legally, if not culturally, an adult. However, this law-based argument was contradicted by the efforts of Aládŭrà women who founded churches on the basis of visions associated with the Holy Spirit. The idea that women could not be church leaders was also contradicted in the example of the Aládŭrà Western Conference which sought to mend the three-way schism within the organization in 1931. W.F. Sosan, the first General Leader of the C&S, stepped down for Mama Ondo, Christianah Olatunrinle, a former Iyalode of the Anglican Church, who founded her own C&S church after disputes with the Anglican Church, some arising out of the church preventing her from speaking (Omoyajowo 1982: 72–6).

This situation raises the question of what had changed in Yorùbá society between 1928 and 1931 that made what was portrayed as a flagrant violation of Yorùbá norms—when Abiodun sought to lead the church—acceptable when Madam Olatunrile reported that she was told in a vision that she ought to lead the Western Conference. Omoyajowo presented Olatunrile's supreme leadership as resulting from a unilateral conciliatory move by Sosan, but the decision was obviously acceptable to the other members of the Western Conference or it would

not have materialized. What then made this seemingly aberrant idea acceptable? By 1934, when the Alake of Abeokuta intervened to make peace, it was time again to determine who would be the Supreme Leader of the C&S. There were three candidates: Captain Abiodun, E.A. Davies, and A.W. Onanuga. Davies won this three-way election and as Omoyajowo (1982: 80) tells us, "Abiodun later criticized the method of electing a spiritual leader by ballot and argued that obviously; she was the only right choice."

If we take seriously the Western Conference's acceptance of Olatunrinle's leadership purely on the strength of a vision, what makes Abiodun, who was right in saying that she was "a Living Founder of the Society," so unacceptable? It was probably a mix of her personality and youth—including her unmarried and childless status—that made the clash between Abiodun and Orimolade inevitable. Isichei (1995) relates that Captain Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon (Emanuel) was born into a prosperous Lagos family. Orimolade, an established prophet in Lagos by 1920, woke her from a protracted trance that occurred on Corpus Christi Day, 1925. While Orimolade was recognized as Baba Aládŭrà until his death in 1933, Abiodun tried, but failed, in her leadership bid after his death. She based her claim on that fact that there were female prophets in the Bible, and female leaders in the British Empire (e.g. Queen Elizabeth II; Isichei 1995: 281). Why did Abiodun not make a claim based on women's leadership and power in Yorùbá society?

Other examples of female church founders in the Aládŭrà movement include Akanke Igbalaolu, who founded and led the Redemption Band of the Cherubim and Seraphim; Sarah Amope founded and led Oja Igbo Number 1 in Ibadan; Mother in Israel Esther Mewaiyewon founded and is leader of first Onitsha branch and Mount Zion in Warri and Sapele; and Mrs. Adebiyi in Kaduna (Omoyajowo 1982: 200–1). Women also have lines of formal power within the church that parallel mens'. For example, they can rise up to the status of Mother Cherub, Mother Seraph, Captain, and Mother in Israel. The male equivalents are Apostles and Senior Apostles. The United Church of C&S also has the High Spiritual Mother, which Ursula King claims is equivalent to the Archbishop, and is as influential as the Baba Aládŭrà (Hackett 1995: 269). Agbala Daniel Church was founded by Archbishop Dorcas Olayinka, and one of the most popular music stars of today's Pentecostal gospel trend in Nigeria, Lady Evangelist Dr. Bola Are, is a member of Agbala Daniel. Stella Ajisebutu founded the Water of the Rock Church.

Crumbley (2008) makes the excellent point that it is important to analyze local gender-systems as well as the economic and political relations within society. In the early days of the Aládŭrà church, Nigeria was under British colonial rule that introduced a new "modern state." In neo-colonial Nigeria today, there is another type of domination where the colonizers are not visibly present on Nigerian soil, but their powerful influences on the lives of Nigerians persist. The Aládŭrà church has also become part of this global phenomenon. For Crumbley (2003: 584–5), three dynamics inform the situation of women in the Aládŭrà church in terms of their ability to hold and exercise structural power within church institutions. These are: intersecting ambiguities in both Western and African gender practices,

which both empower and disempower women; particularities of doctrine and institutional history; and the reinforcing impact of environment and development on the ritualization of female procreation (Crumbley 2003).

Although Crumbley tends to read prohibitions against Aladura women empathetically, she does not pay sufficient attention to the ways in which the movement's adaptation of Christianity to Yorùbá culture incorporates local understanding of women's roles, status, and position in society. Feared and revered, Yorùbá women are believed to have the power to disrupt the natural order of things if provoked; thus Yorùbás believe that women must be propitiated and handled with care. Yet Aládůrà discourses minimize Yorùbá ideas about women and privilege biblical injunctions instead when they talk about women's role within the church. What motivated this fervor? One does not fight what one believes is powerless. Many Yorùbá and Nigerians, regardless of faith and/or doctrine, believe that invisible forces of darkness, expressed as witchcraft and demonic possession, have palpable and even generational influences that must be fought. Misfortune is never accidental, there are no coincidences. It is thus considered careless and negligent to leave things to chance. Many who consult Aládůrà churches for solutions to personal problems operate according to this mindset, and believe that prayer, holy water, anointing oil, candles, and the power of the word (read from prescribed Bible passages, or uttered as prescribed by Aládůrà prophets and Elders) can cure diseases, protect a believer, and open the door to transform problematic situations.

Women have always played significant roles as spiritual leaders, visionaries, and priestesses in many parts of West Africa, including Nigeria and Ghana (Sackey 2006), Thus what may seem to be a twenty-first century phenomenon is really a carry-over from past cultural religious systems and values (see Emanuel 1962; Olupona 2003; Badejo 1998; Olajubu 2003; Adogame 1999; Peel 1968; Sackey 2006). These earlier values were challenged and the influence of earlier religious systems was substantially reduced, with conversion to Christianity and Islam a result of the combined influence of the hegemonic tendencies of these world religions and colonialism. Although some see this view of Yorùbá history as overly romanticized (Bateye 2008; Oduyoye 1995), as we see it, neo-colonial social values (enduring anachronisms from the Victorian Christianity of the missionaries and the Victorian culture of the colonialists) combined with indigenous, Christian, and Islamic discriminatory practices toward women, reinforce an ethos that restricts or delegitimizes women's leadership as it challenges basic understandings of the role of women within mosques and churches.

Hierarchy, Schism, and Unity in the Aládůrà Churches

Aládůrà Churches are very hierarchical and, to a greater degree than the mainline churches, have experienced a significant level of divisiveness, causing the establishment of new congregations and even entirely new churches. The schism between the Cherubim and Seraphim society led by Captain Abiodun and the

Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim (ESOC&S) led by Orimolade is one of the earliest examples of this tendency. However, there have also always been efforts to unify the various factions. One such effort was described by the President of the Nigeria Association of Aládǔrà Churches, His Divine Grace, Prophet of the Highest, Baba Aládǔrà Dr. Olapade Olapade-Agoro. According to Baba Aládǔrà Agoro, the current structure of the Association was established in 1964. Over 1,200 churches are members, and each has a separate organizational arrangement. There is a chapter of the association in each of Nigeria's states, and each chapter is divided into zones. The President of the Association combines these responsibilities with those of Chairman of the General Conference and the Executive Council. The Association has established socio-cultural and educational programs "on issues such as the role of women, family planning, church growth and development, youth camps etc."[2]

Many leaders of the Aládǔrà have grappled with and attempted to respond to the tendencies toward fission within the Church. Both Orimolade and Abiodun Emanuel made some efforts, and although Emanuel's efforts were rebuffed by Elders who balked at allowing a woman to become Ìyá Aladura, she was still able to inspire many of the churches to re-unite under the umbrella of the C&S Society in 1986 but, unfortunately, she died shortly thereafter. The late Baba Aládǔrà GIM Otubu was more successful. While he was no doubt a visionary, erudite, and charismatic leader, some of the support he received can be attributed to the tendency to favor men as leaders and the reluctance by most men to be submissive to a woman leader. Since the ESOC&S sees itself as the inheritor of Orimolade's vision as kings (by virtue of the rod and kingly garments given to Orimolade in a vision), and this vision was interpreted in the context of what was the norm at the time: that Yoruba monarchs were understood as an all-male club, and women understood as unable to approach kings/male monarchs. One of my informants kindly gave me (Okome) what he said was evidence of God's approval for male leadership, a quotation from Psalm 82:6—"I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High'," —and supported the idea that the combined influences from Bible and culture make it inevitable. But this Psalm in its entirety also forbids injustice and oppression, and calls for God's judgment upon the unjust, so, it should probably not be so blithely taken as incontrovertible evidence of a biblical injunction for men's leadership. Today, it is considered received and incontrovertible knowledge that women cannot enter the church chancel, although, unlike in the past, they can approach the altar. Such attitudes are usually glossed over as traditional responses and many even claim that it is a taboo or anathema for a woman to lead worship. There are also a number of biblical references that are used to support this discriminatory practice.

According to Prophet Dr. Gabriel Olubunmi Fakeye, General Leader of the C&S Movement (Ayo Ni O!) Surulere District, Lagos, the factions within the

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[2] Summary of presentation by the President, His Divine Grace, Prophet of the Highest, Baba Aládǔrà Dr. Olapade Olapade-Agoro.

C&S contribute to the development of the evangelical mission of the Church. Each faction focuses on one of the five ministries of Jesus in the following manner: Eternal Sacred Order C&S: Administration of the Cherubim and Seraphim; C&S Society: Preaching the gospel; C&S Prayer Band: Prayer; C&S Movement: Evangelism; C&S Sacred Order: Sanitize the Church. He claims that the factions will reunite very soon and collectively spread the gospel (Ajayi 2006).

An Inculturated Church: Aládŭrà as an Expression of Synthesized Yoruba and Christian Spirituality

Increased clarification of Aládŭrà doctrine and praxis can be gained from understanding Yorùbá culture and religion, where women's natural life cycle and the mysteries encoded in it are believed to be more powerful than any other spiritual force, and thus must be contained. The prohibitions against women are not the only ones in the church. No members should drink alcohol, eat pork, or use charms. They also must bathe if they have sexual intercourse prior to attending church services.

The Odù Ifá that begins this chapter's title raises questions about Oduyoye's assumption that Yorùbá culture is responsible for discrimination against women. Research on the ESOC&S seems to confirm this point, since the women interviewed, as well as some of the men (Prophets and Elders), attribute the prohibitions against women as an essential part of what makes their church distinctive and as "our tradition." They explained that in "our tradition, women are believed to be unclean when menstruating and after childbirth." In past practice, a woman had to be cleansed through ritual bathing combined with special prayers before entering the sanctuary. Today, special prayers tend to suffice. In addition, some elders explained that women are prohibited from approaching the king in Yorùbá tradition, and as "kings," Aládŭrà founders, who were after all, Yorùbá, integrated this into their doctrine (Interview, Brooklyn ESOC&S, February 22, 2009). Crumbley's (2003, 2008) excellent research on gender, impurity, and power in Aládŭrà churches in Nigeria takes up the matter of prohibitions, rightly framed as one of the most glaring examples of Aládŭrà proscription of women's presence in the sacred spaces of their sanctuaries. One would have to be blind not to see this in the ESOC&S. But rather than see these prohibitions as indicating a restriction of women when impure, it might seem more accurate to interpret the prohibitions as evidence of a fear of the disruptiveness of women's *àse*, and thus, a fear of the power of their blood to establish their priorities in sacred spaces. Abiodun (1989) tells us that women are believed to have this *àse* from birth, and Yorùbás believe that such powers can be used for good or evil, and propitiate women as *àwon ìyá wa* to placate them so that they are encouraged to deploy their powers for good rather than evil. Alâdúràs influenced by Yoruba cosmology saw a need both to circumscribe and valorize women's power.

The esè (verse) from the Odù Ifá in the chapter title is also useful as one of the expressions of the Yorùbá philosophy of life that subtly indicates the power

of women in society, a power that was invoked more overtly in times past, but now can only be apprehended through a deliberate refusal to be deflected by the distractions of the Yorùbá embrace of Christian, Western, Islamic, and other values in the long process of globalization.[3] The verse indicates that not having a wife ought to be taken very seriously because it symbolizes existential instability for the unfortunate man. Without understanding this premise as a first step, namely that Yorùbá women's power is established as *àse*, and that this is not just a product of a romanticized historicization of the past, it is impossible to grasp the basis of Yorùbá women's power. Using modern rules of evidence, it is possible to discern that Yorùbá women's power is not a recent gift bestowed by missionaries and colonial imperialists, or by formerly enslaved but freed returned Africans who brought Christianity Western enlightenment to the Yorùbá and their African neighbors. Archaeological, aesthetic, mythological, religious, and linguistic evidence attests to the power of women in Yorùbá society, as well as to the normalization and ability of women's exercise of such power from antiquity (Abiodun 1989; Idowu 1962). For example, Oduduwa, the human originator of the Yorùbá people who became deified, is presented as masculine by some and as feminine by others (Abiodun 1989: 1).

The liturgy, praxis, and philosophy behind Yorùbá religion also show evidence of the acknowledgment of women's power and a combined reverence and fear of women, which combined with interpretations of the Bible, may explain the prohibitions against women that are found in many Aládŭrà churches. For the Yorùbá, the belief that women have *àse* or prophetic power that enables them to accomplish their intentions, whether for good or ill, means they should be propitiated, deified, and in some instances, incorporated into religious praxis (Abiodun 1989: 1–18). In Yorùbá religion, Òshun, the deity of the waters, who is believed to be indispensable to all human endeavor, whether political, economic, religious, or social, exemplifies this point, evidenced in part of her *oríkì* (praise poetry):

> She is the wisdom of the river
> Where the doctor failed
> She cures with fresh water
> Where medicine is impotent
> She cures with cool water. (Abiodun 1989: 8)

[3] We date this globalization process back to the first contact between Yorùbás and other peoples. We also conceive of globalization as an ongoing process that is sometimes episodic, thus, one can argue that the most recent phase began with the end of the Second World War and continues to date. As it concerns political economy, this phase also shows evidence of ending with the current global meltdown, with a new phase in the process of developing.

Alâdúràs share a parallel belief in the efficacy of *omi àdúrà* (prayer water), which is thought to heal all ailments; in addition, many healing efforts are made at streams, rivers, and the ocean.[4]

In Yorùbá religion, Òshun (the originator of the waters/deity of the waters) is foremost of the women considered *àwon ìyá wa* (our mothers), who have the power of life and death, control over the *orí* (essence of a human being), with the power of procreation, fecundity, and destruction. For this reason, Òshun's presence, and by extension, that of women is considered crucial to the sustenance of life and order on earth. Òshun is considered the source of potency for most male-dominated cults like the Egúngún, Orò, Gèlèdé, and Ifá (Abiodun 1989: 3; Murphy and Sanford 2001).

One possible consequence of women's increased power within religious institutions is that it may frighten men who are concerned with maintaining male-dominated structures (Sackey 2006). Sackey notes that such power may positively devolve to transforming society toward embracing women's leadership in economic and political systems. Yet Yorùbá society is not gendered in the same way as Western ones. Strictly speaking, one cannot refute the existence of differential roles and power for males and females, but it is also crucial to understand that gender is not embodied, and that it is impossible to use orthodox Western or Western-influenced understandings of gender to capture the essence of individual and social action. It is also impossible to argue that in Nigeria colonialism has not affected Yorùbá society and effected changes in the conception and exercise of power or that contemporary Yoruba society embraces positive conceptions of women's role in society as powerful actors in all respects.

Indeed, many references to women in Nigerian popular culture present men as always powerful, and women as weak and deferential. Nonetheless, we maintain that a deep reading of culture that goes beyond the superficial shows shadows of women's ancient power among the Yorùbá. Such a reading also reveals the difference between Yoruba non-embodied conceptions of gender and of Western embodied concepts of gender which prevail in the USA, despite feminists' attempts to separate the sociocultural from the biological bases of these distinctions.

In the twentieth century, we see examples of women such as Madam Tinubu, Iyalode of the Egba, who was a renowned, wealthy trader and benefactor of the Egba kingdom and people. We also see flashes of women's power and their celebration over time among the Gèlèdé (Drewal and Drewal 1983; Lawal 1996). We see women's power in the maintenance among the Yorùbás of the essential complementarity between male and female in society. Contrary to the tendency to claim that Yorùbá women have a bigger burden to bear because they are required to be married, as the esè from the Odù Ifá that begins the chapter shows, Yorùbás also believe that an unmarried man is most unfortunate and must correct this problem. Yet many readings of Yorùbá society have rightly shown that in the social hierarchy, wives are the least

[4] See also Renne (1991) on Yoruba connections between water, whiteness, and spiritual presence.

privileged because they are marrying into patrilocal, patrilineal families where women wield more power as sisters and daughters born into a lineage, who are considered oko/"husbands" by all women who mary into the lineage. Nonetheless, such women eventually gain power based on seniority, economic acumen, and their attainment of motherhood. While there is a tendency to believe that such power is garnered only through the physical biological manifestations of motherhood, there is no such requirement. Instead, while it is desirable to bear children, it is more important to raise children. Thus, fostering children is an integral part of Yorùbá culture.

Peel attributes the early appeal of Christianity to Yorùbá women, who were able to adapt to Christian observances to some extent by bringing in the social practices of their people into the church through *egbé*, and the honorific titles of "mother" (Peel 2002). Aládůrà churches, to a greater extent than the mainline churches, embrace these cultural practices. The Aládůrà carry this to greater heights through the institutionalizing of titles like Senior Mother in Israel, Mother in Israel, and other women's titles drawn from names of virtuous women in the Bible. The ESOC&S also has the titles of captain (Abiodun Akinsowon Emanuel was the first), Mother Cherub, and Mother Seraph. The three special mothers can only be found in Nigeria and are voting members of the Advisory Board that makes policy for ESOC&S Churches worldwide. While they are only three out of a board of thirty members, they are also able to veto decisions that they find unacceptable. Women's requests for changes in church policy are carried through them to the Board's attention. Thus, some Church innovations that broaden women's participation have been introduced by the special mothers. For example, Mother Cherub Olugbusi, wife of the late Baba Aládůrà Olugbusi (who preceded the late G.I.M. Otubu), requested that Wednesday be instituted as a special day for women's prayer. The request was approved by the Board, and Mother Olugbusi also prescribed the mode of worship for the Wednesday women's prayers.

According to Sackey (2006), "the religious or church platform is first and foremost a strong forum for social change." This statement should be seen in the context of the interplay between gender, power, and leadership in the Aládůrà churches, as well as domestic and international challenges to discrimination against women in contemporary Nigeria. The international system has consistently asserted support for gender equality in documents including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform of Action, and, from the African continent, the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights. The Nigerian government has assiduously signed all these international instruments and also rhetorically offered its support for women's rights, and some organized action toward pressuring the domestication of international instruments is undertaken by women's religious organizations. Further research is needed to demonstrate the extent to which these groups include Aládůrà women.

There are also interesting examples of Aládůrà women at the forefront of the most influential and popular expressions of a combination of Yorùbá and Christian aesthetics in the production and recording of praise music. Wákà, Àpàlà, Rárà, Senwele, Jùjú, Highlife, Fújì, and Oríkì are some of the genres whose distinctive influences have put a stamp on Christian worship songs in Yorùbá. Evangelist Bola

Are of the CAC, a thirty-year veteran of Yorùbá gospel music, is an example of artists who produce this music. The late I.K. Dairo, renowned Highlife musician, was an Aládŭrà, and his songs are still loved. Ebenezer Obey began as a Juju musician, he moved into Juju gospel music, and is now a pastor of a mega-church. Sunny Ade's music sometimes shows flashes of Aládŭrà discourse, for example, when he talks about Holy Michael using his sword to fight his enemies. Sunny confirmed in an interview that he became interested in music as a result of early influences in the Aládŭrà church. His mother was a member of the C&S Church, and the music he encountered there propelled his initial foray into the music world. He never looked back. At times, when Sunny had problems—at least as read through the valence of his music, his reference to Aládŭrà music, which attests to the spiritual power of God to work through Holy Michael's sword, give a flash of this Aládŭrà beginning. However, Sunny is quite ecumenical in his embrace of African liturgy, as he also uses *ofò*-like incantation in his music.[5]

Aládŭrà choirs incorporate the gospel variant of indigenous music into their worship, singing at prescribed times and also spontaneously whenever the spirit moves an individual member of the choir (and also the Mothers in Israel and prophetesses) during the sermon, thanksgiving, after testimony and prayer, in a manner that responds to the exhortation and other parts of the service. There is a great deal of improvisation, sampling, and remixing that goes on in a seemingly effortless way, but in reality, it bears witness to the diligence and dedication of the choir, and their keen awareness of musical trends. During our fieldwork in 2008–09, Okome had the pleasure of hearing the same songs at secular parties thrown by Christian "born again" Nigerians as she did at the ESOC&S Aladura churches in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Lagos, Nigeria. These songs are part of a growing genre of Nigerian gospel music, including "Ko s'oba bii re/Igwe" by Midnight Crew, songs by Bola Are, the Good Women Choir, and a wide array of musicians mostly based in Nigeria, but also with a very strong transnational presence. This music is disseminated on very affordable CDs and DVDs as well as on YouTube and other social media.

It may also seem remarkable that quite a few Nigerian female politicians are Aládŭrà. Prominent Aládŭrà women in politics at the time of writing include the current deputy governor of Lagos State, Princess Sarah Sosan, Oyo State House of Assembly, and the Chairman of the House Committee on Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Olufunmilayo Orisadeyi, who, incidentally, is the only female member of the 33 members of that state's current House. However, the prominence of Aládŭrà women in this respect would only appear to be extraordinary if one does not grasp the enduring character and power of women's influence in Yorùbá

[5] Rachel Olubukola Bolarinwa, also known as "Senwele Jesu," is a younger artiste who does something that Are disapproves of: use indigenous aesthetics beyond drums and other percussion instruments in Christian praise worship. Senwele is indigenous to Ilorin, associated with Muslims. It can, and has been used in èfè ribaldry that calls attention to the pleasures as well as the consequences of carousing by men and women. Another famous example is an artiste known as Ìyáládùké Bólódefèélójú.

cosmology, and how this permeates even a religious expression that manifests a dominant male face. Some indication of this can be seen in Yorùbá religion and art, including that of the Gèlèdé, Ifá, and Òshun. It can also be seen in the discursive turns of Yorùbá language, and finally in the practices of everyday life, which are, after all (whether this is recognized or not), influenced by Yorùbá cosmology.

Conclusion

Olupona (2003) discusses the meaning of homeland in sacred Yoruba cosmology and examines how these ideals continue to influence thinking and practice in contemporary Nigeria. Similarly, we have examined how foundational ideas about the powers of women represented in sacred Yorùbá cosmology, including those associated with *àse* and generation, underwrite their participation in C&S churches in Nigeria. While this chapter has focused primarily on the participation of women in C&S churches in Nigeria, some preliminary observations about the leadership positions of C&S women in Nigeria and the USA can be made. We argue that underlying religious and social ideologies have supported women's historical leadership roles in Yorùbá society and in the C&S Church and continue to do so, which may be seen in their roles as church founders and as prophetesses in Nigeria. Furthermore, the social importance of motherhood and extensive networks of family support, as well as greater church attendance and larger churches, provide more leadership opportunities for women as ESOC&S church leaders there. On the other hand, Nigerian-American women who belong to US-based ESOC&S churches have fewer leadership opportunities, in part because of smaller and less frequently attended churches. It is interesting to note, however, that Abiodun Emanuel's daughter is the current head of the Society's churches in the USA. Yet it is also the case that the cultural ideals associated with women's power in Nigeria are not held by the majority population in the USA, a situation which undermines women's church leadership there. Indeed, despite US campaigns for gender equality, an ideology that focuses on embodied gender and which tends to exclude other ways of understanding gender and power reinforces this situation. Thus, while the two sources of support—ideological and social—for women's leadership roles in C&S churches in Nigeria have historically waxed and waned—as has been seen in the career of Captain Abiodun Emanuel, these ideals and practices continue to underwrite Nigerian C&S women's position within the C&S church in ways that distinguish them from C&S women in the USA.

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Chapter 9
The Place of Second-Generation Youth in West Indian Pentecostalism in the Diaspora—New York City and London

Janice McLean

Introduction

Within various Pentecostal traditions the Christian scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) are given a place of divine authority—they are the inspired Word of God.[1] However, this position can also be applied to a specific translation—most often the Authorized or King James Version of the Bible. Intricately linked with the divine inspiration of the Christian scriptures is the belief that they contain the infallible rule for faith and conduct, that which is needed to navigate through life.[2] As such, within the realm of parenthood, the Christian scriptures may function as a parenting manual—instructing parents in the manner in which they should nurture their children. Pivotal in this instruction is the admonition to communicate the knowledge of God to their offspring, in order to produce God-fearing and upstanding members of both church and society. One scripture that is primarily used to communicate this belief is Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he [she] should go: and when he [she] is old, he [she] will not depart from it" (KJV).[3] Within the West Indian regional context, this scriptural admonition can become interwoven with cultural dimensions to produce a practice in which many children, despite their parents' sporadic church attendance, are sent to Sunday school and are

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[1] Hollenweger (1972: 291–307); Miller and Yamamori (2007: 148). As a result, members of various traditions are not expected to question or criticize the biblical text. One consequence of this perspective has been theological ignorance or the dismissal of any knowledge of the German church struggle in terms of biblical criticism as well as recent developments within European theology.

[2] One recurring statement heard among the members of various Pentecostal traditions is "The Bible contains the answers to every problem. If it is finance, marriage, children, anger, life, etc., the Bible gives you a way to deal with these issues."

[3] In recent years various Christian ministries and church leaders have begun to question this assumption in regards to the interpretation of this particular scripture. They argue that rearing a child in a Christian home and bringing or sending them to church and Sunday school does not necessarily guarantee that they will become a Christian, remain one, or return to an adherence of faith after a hiatus. See Swindoll (2006: 6–20); PowerPoint presentation: www.inhisgraceinc.com/ChildDISC.ppt and website: http://insightforliving.typepad.com/iparent/2007/11/a-better-way-to.html, accessed January 20, 2010.

taken to church to be dedicated or christened. Martha Beckwith, in her discussion of Jamaican folk life with regards to the practice of christening, states:

> The child is early brought in relation with the established church. The christening occurs at from one to six months of age, sometimes later. It is an important ceremony, since [it is believed that] an unchristened baby "any ghost can carry away," and, as some think the unbaptized become "wandering spirits" and "belong to the heathen people" (and the ghost of a heathen is "the badest ghost in life"), it is evident that the Christian rite should if possible be administered early.[4]

Although Beckwith is correct in her argument that many children are brought into contact with the established church early in their lives, her assertion that the impetus for this contact is primarily to "protect" the child from malignant forces is problematic. First, adhering to such an assertion is short-sighted and denies the complexities that accompany religious beliefs and practices in any context. Second, it does not give adequate space for the examination of other reasons that may underlie this practice: namely, Christian belief, family tradition, or cultural tradition—in which church attendance and participation are perceived as an indicator of one's status within society (Henriques 1968 [1953]: 83; Toulis 1997: 156–7). Addressing these issues is especially important when one notes the seminal position that the perpetuation of religious beliefs and practices, and familial and cultural traditions, holds among West Indian families within the Diaspora.[5]

During the past four decades, the welfare and state of immigrant children, particularly second-generation youth, have emerged as a central topic within academic and political discourse in the United States and Britain. In the USA, the discussion is primarily focused on Mexican and Asian youth, who comprise the majority of this demographic.[6] In Britain by contrast, a significant amount of attention has been given to investigating the state of West Indian immigrant youth. However, this examination has primarily focused on particular social

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[4] Beckwith (1929: 58). It is important to note that although some people within Pentecostal churches may call the dedication of a child "christening," this act is not believed to be one in which the child becomes incorporated into the church. Instead, the dedication or presentation of the child is a public demonstration that the parent(s) are making a commitment to raise the child according to Christian values and teach him or her about Jesus.

[5] It should be noted that, both in my research and within my family, there have been cases of children being brought to church to be christened or dedicated by parents who do not regularly attend church. In this case, one of the major reasons for conducting such an event is family tradition—whereby the dedication or christening ceremony provides a forum for the celebration of the birth of the child.

[6] Portes and Rumbaut (2001a; 2001b); Portes (1996); Zhou and Bankston III (1998). In the texts where West Indian immigrant children are discussed very little attention is given to the discourse surrounding their interaction with issues of faith and religion. See Waters (1999); Kasinitz et al. (2004; 2008).

issues such as academic underperformance, criminal and gang activities, and anti-social behavior (Goulbourne and Chamberlain 2001; Cashmore and Troyna 1982; Richardson 2007 [2005]). As a result, minimal attention has been given within such discourses to an investigation of how West Indian second-generation youth are practicing and appropriating their Christian faith. Given the prominent role that religion plays within the lives of migrants, it is imperative to investigate how this specific group of immigrant youth are practicing and articulating faith. How does their religious adherence within the Pentecostal church communities compare to that of their parents and grandparents? What role does Christianity play in their lives? Are the Pentecostal churches in which they participate places of acceptance, empowerment, disempowerment, or marginalization? By analyzing qualitative research data collected in New York City (NYC) and London, I will seek to highlight salient features emerging from the West Indian[7] second-generation youth's interaction with religion and to examine the possible effects this could have on their interaction with the host societies.

The New "Home": The Diaspora Context

Before discussing how West Indian second-generation youth are appropriating and practicing their faith, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the Diaspora context in which they live. For many youths, this is the context that constitutes their "home." As a result, the Diaspora becomes their primary point of reference against which all other contexts are measured, including the islands that are their parents' homeland. It is also this context which plays a pivotal role in the manner they are nurtured, and socialized, and how they engage with Christianity.

For the majority of West Indian immigrants, the two primary determinants of their place of residence in NYC and London upon their arrival in these two cities were the job market and family ties (Byron and Candon 2008: 129; Boyd 1989: 642–3). Thus, they lived in the places where their skills and labor were needed and where they also had familial and social networks that could assist them in gaining access to jobs and other social services. In the majority of cases, these places were within the inner cities.[8] In the USA, the majority of the immigrants lived among other minorities, especially African Americans, while in Britain, they lived among

[7] Throughout this chapter the term "West Indian" is used to denote people from the former British colonies within the Caribbean region. It should be noted that although this term is rarely used in Britain, where "Afro-Caribbean" is the more preferred term, it is still prominent within the US context. Given the comparative nature of this chapter and the need for a common term that adequately relates the second-generation youth being discussed with the islands within this particular region, the term "West Indian" was chosen.

[8] The exceptions here are those migrants who entered both the US and the UK in a professional capacity. For them, alternative residential patterns in the suburbs now became a viable option. See Byron and Candon (2008: 153).

the larger, white, working-class populations (Crowder 1999: 79). In both contexts, the immigrants and their children encountered communities that were experiencing violence, psychological despair, and socio-economic and political depravity.

Confronted with this reality, many West Indian immigrants in the USA sought to set themselves apart, by "maintain[ing] the distinction between themselves and American blacks and to avoid relegation to poor black neighbourhoods or to American's most oppressed racial group" (Crowder 1999: 108). "Separation" was accomplished on various levels. Spatially, it took the form of establishing distinctive residential enclaves, which enabled the immigrants to preserve their ethnic and cultural heritage. Socially, "separation" was expressed in the formation of social organizations, especially religious organizations, in which the immigrants could occupy leadership positions, and discover "ties to job opportunities and interlacing ties which reinforce parental authority and values vis-à-vis the second generation" (Waters 1994: 804).

Within their residential communities in Britain, West Indian immigrants and their children also encountered "an exclusive and impenetrable image of British society, backed up by the ideology of race and racial superiority, which had for so long been an essential pillar of imperial power" (Philips and Philips 1998: 4). This was an image that pronounced them "not welcome.". Therefore their colonial heritage was of no consequence, to be British was to be white and no space was given for an alternate definition (Foner, 1979: 41; Jackson 1985: 88). Consequently, the immigrants found themselves being classified as invaders who had come to corrupt the romanticized idea of the pristine British nation.[9] This classification was perpetuated at various levels of society: housing, politics, employment, and family life. The West Indian migrants' reactions were varied, and included disillusionment, the creation of enclaves and social organizations, and active engagement with society.[10] Among the primary social organizations formed by the immigrants were the Pentecostal black-led or black majority churches.[11]

As the immigrant children come of age in the USA, they are facing an economy that had been undergoing a series of dramatic changes since the 1950s. Two such changes have been the emergence of multi-national corporations across various industries and the movement towards a "free market" economy which is believed to promote economic efficiency while maintaining the rights of the individual. One

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[9] The notion of a pristine British nation was a fallacy perpetuated by Enoch Powell and others for political reasons. See Phillips and Phillips (1998).

[10] All of these reactions were a way for the immigrants to regain some sort of equilibrium. In each of the reactions the West Indian migrant underwent a process of re-articulation of identity. One in which the interaction with the current social context gave rise to several "West Indian" identities being celebrated and maintained as well as giving room for the emergence of new ones.

[11] See Jackson (1985); Grant and Patel (1990). See also Hill's (1971) argument that the formation of black-led church was due to various cultural, social, and theological differences between black people and what existed within white Christianity.

consequence of these changes has been the outsourcing of various manufacturing jobs from the largely urban locations to other areas and/or some developing countries. Thus in the area of employment, second-generation immigrant children are now facing a widening gap between the educated high-wage earners and the high-school drop outs, and a decrease in viable economic opportunities that could help them to attain some form of economic security. Simultaneously, these second-generation immigrant children have been developing an attitude of entitlement: that is, having grown up in the USA they will not perform the menial jobs that their parents did in order to get ahead.[12]

Since the 1980s, the British economy has also been experiencing dramatic shifts. While there has been the expansion of industries focused on personal, protective, and professional services, the economy has also experienced a decline in the food and drink, transport, textile, engineering, and telecommunications industries. The disappearance of these industries served to remove many of the ethnic minority population, particularly males, from the ranks of the employed (Bryon and Candon 2008: 86). For the second-generation immigrant children, especially males, these developments were particularly devastating since their entrance into the job market coincided with the decline in the very sectors which were a traditional source of employment for many West Indians. As a result, skill level and qualifications have become highly important. These developments were further exacerbated by the reality that many of these young men enter the job market with fewer qualifications than their white counterparts (Gillborn and Mirza 2000; Blackstone 1998). For second-generation females, in contrast, their prospects were slightly better because their academic performance was better than that of their male counterparts (Berthoud, 1999: 23).

Given the importance that qualifications have assumed within the employment sector, it is imperative to investigate the educational experience of immigrant children in the USA and Britain. In the USA, public education is perceived to be "the main vehicle for equalizing opportunity in a diverse society" (Conroy 1994: 129). However, for many youth in the inner cities this equalizing opportunity never becomes a reality. For although they have access to public education, the compound effect of social, economic, and political factors may undermine this objective for a large percentage,. Therefore,

[12] The parents who immigrated legally and possessed certain professional qualifications, primarily in the nursing and education fields, were able to obtain good salaried positions. Unskilled or illegal immigrants had to compete with others for the low-wage service jobs that were available. It is necessary to note however, that for the illegal immigrant the situation was more precarious, as they may often have been subjected to various kinds of exploitation by employers or have been involved in illegal economic activities. The sentiment of entitlement is also linked with the immigrant parents' goal that their children excel and achieve the economic mobility that they were unable to.

> in a disruptive urban environment caught between rising hopes and shrinking opportunities, younger members of native-born minorities have become increasingly skeptical about school achievement as a viable path to upward mobility and have thus responded to their bleak futures with resentment toward adult middle-class society and with rejection of mobility goals. (Zhou 1997: 987).

Since many of the West Indian second-generation youth attend these same inner city schools, they enter an environment where students shape each other's perception and expectations. However, it is worth noting that the impact this process has on the immigrant youth is directly related to the identities that they construct.

For the majority of the West Indian immigrant youth in the UK, their encounter with education was also marked by several obstacles (Pryce1979: 120; Rex and Tomlinson 1979: 208; Sewell 2000 [1997]; and Richardson 2007). These were expressed in the form of exclusion, lower expectations, the perpetuation of various stereotypes, and differential treatment towards minority children, especially for black males. On the whole, many immigrant children are excluded because of behavioral problems or for exhibiting cultural-specific behaviors: for example, wearing different hairstyles or walking in what some would consider an "inappropriate manner." According to Richard Majors (2001: 2): "Teachers often label or view a Black child who demonstrates certain culture-specific behaviours as 'having an attitude problem' or even being 'ignorant' rather than characterizing the child as one who has pride, confidence and a positive self-esteem and cultural identity."

Within the British context particularly, the obstacles that many West Indian second-generation youth confront in the job market and education is part of a much deeper issue—that of racism. It should be noted that racism is not only perpetuated within social systems but also in everyday life. Ascribing an everyday perspective to racism is fundamental because it highlights the process by which certain "everyday practices become part of the expected, of the unquestionable, and what is seen as normal by the dominant group" (Essed 1991: 50). For many black males, there is also an additional dimension—that of gendered racism. As men of color, their presence there has helped to facilitate the emergence of a legacy of historical and social constructions "in which they are often demonized or positioned as a threat to the majority society" (Graham 2007: 56). When such stereotypes and public representations are combined with constructions of masculinity the result is the manifestation of racism along gender lines. Thus for many second-generation West Indian youth, particularly the males, racial issues are a prominent part of their lives from which there seems to be minimal respite.[13]

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[13] One factor contributing to the pervasiveness of racism in the lives of blacks has been location: that is, they live and work in close proximity to whites. In many of these interactions they are treated with suspicion, or in a manner that gives credence to the various stereotypes that have emerged about West Indian youth.

Identity Construction among Second-Generation West Indian Youth

Another crucial factor that exerts profound influence on how immigrant youths' religious beliefs are shaped and practiced is the way they are constructing identities. Given the racial dynamics in the NYC context that encourages many West Indian immigrants to maintain the distinction between themselves and the wider African American community, the second-generation youth often find themselves faced with a dilemma. As a result of being born in the USA, many lack their parents' accent, or other identifying cultural characteristics that would enable them to ethnically "separate" themselves from the wider African American population. As a result, many are considered to be African American by both their peers and the wider society. Within such a context, second-generation youths have to decide which ethnic identity they will adhere to. Do they conform to their parents' ethnic identities, or do they reject these identities and embrace African American ones instead?

For the second-generation youth, identification with their parents' ethnic identities may result in them being ostracized and ridiculed by their peers, who may perceive such expressions of these identities like getting good grades or speaking proper English, as "acting white,", being an Oreo.[14] It should be noted that adopting their parents' ethnic identities also creates a level of dualism and tension because, although they see themselves as "West Indian," those identities may not always be clear to other people. The construction of these dual identifications may also result in the "second generation [being exposed] to a great deal of racism" (Waters 1999: 293). This is because many Caucasians will treat them as African Americans until they find out that they are second-generation immigrants. For the second-generation immigrant youths who choose to become African American, they are placed in "conflict with their parents' generation, and most especially with their parents' understanding of American blacks. The assimilation to American culture is most definitely to black America: they speak 'black' English with their peers, listen to rap music, and they accept the peer culture of their black American friends" (Waters 1999: 296). Linked with this African American identification is an opposition towards their parents' ideas, most notably in reference to their life strategy and child-raising practices (Waters 1999: 307). This "rebellion," as the parents call it, is met with a reassertion of parental authority, which in turn produces additional conflict within the family.

In the London context, the West Indian community holds a position within society that is similar to that of African Americans in the USA, namely that of a marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged ethnic group. According to Robert Beckford (2004:32), "a central feature of black life in Britain has been ubiquitous racial oppression." For the second-generation youth, however, this racial oppression takes on new dimensions as they become the recipients

[14] "Oreo" is a slang or informal word used to denote a black person who is perceived as embodying various characteristics associated with the dominant group within American society.

of "restricted employment opportunities, police discrimination, bad inner-city accommodation, inadequate education, [and a] whole cluster of forces emanating from white racialism" (Cashmore and Troyona 1982: 1). Within this environment, several identities emerge. Firstly, there are those identities that orient them towards their parents' homeland. Secondly, they may construct Black British[15] identities. Thirdly, they may construct identities that allow them to downplay the perceived distinctions between themselves and the wider white community.

West Indian Immigrant Children and Religion

Having briefly outlined some of the identities that are being constructed and negotiated by second-generation West Indian youth, and also the context in which they live, it is now necessary to investigate what religious expressions are emerging as a result of these processes within their lives. In the rest of this chapter I will argue that West Indian immigrant Christians and the Pentecostal communities in which they participate are having a significant impact upon their children. However, this impact is multi-dimensional and at times seemingly contradictory: that is, creating an environment in which immigrant children are accepted, empowered, and also disempowered. It is within these dynamics that the second-generation youths' religious beliefs are shaped and articulated.

Among the second-generation youth studied in NYC, the majority were constructing hyphenated ethnic identities which incorporated most of their parents' ethnic identifications but also gave some room for certain expressions that are unique to their present context.[16] Accompanying these identifications was an acceptance of many West Indian cultural and religious traditions. In a West Indian Pentecostal church in Brooklyn, for example, the worship service, liturgy, administrative structure, and religious tenor was organized in a fashion reminiscent of its West Indian heritage.[17] Thus the majority of the hymns that were sung during church

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[15] With this identification the immigrant children see Britain as home. They embrace what they perceive as common between themselves and the native white population, including language and literature and shared moral values. However, this is done in relation to their awareness of the racism within British society and their overt reaction to its presence. See Weinreich (1979: 103).

[16] In identifying themselves many of the young people interviewed described themselves as "Jamerican [Jamaican/American]," "American with Caribbean [West Indian] background," or "West Indian American."

[17] This dynamic was noted especially in the Friday Youth meetings. Although the majority who attended were American born, the youth meetings were organized in a fashion reminiscent of the West Indies. First you would have the praise and worship time and prayer. This was followed by a talk or Bible study led by one of the adult leaders which focused on admonishing the young people to live in accordance with the scriptures and not to "sell out" to the world. Following this, an offering was collected and then a closing prayer was said.

services were from the *Redemption Songs* hymnal.[18] With regards to the choruses, although some contemporary Gospel choruses were sung, primacy of place was given to those originating from the West Indies. In terms of administrative structure and leadership, the men are at the forefront. For example, during the Sunday worship, it was only the men—those who were the deacons and ministers of the church—who were allowed to sit on the rostrum. With regards to dress, both teenage girls and women are encouraged to refrain from wearing trousers to church and to have their heads covered. Within this context, however, certain changes were also observed. In the area of adornment girls and women within the congregation were now "allowed" to pierce their ears and arrange their hair differently. Among the young people there was greater freedom to talk about sex and other issues that they felt were pertinent to them. However, it is worth noting that these discussions were restricted to the Friday Youth meetings and were rarely discussed from the pulpit in the presence of the rest of the congregation. So although changes are being made, they are not affecting the overall structure of the community.

In Britain by contrast, the majority of the second-generation youth that I interviewed have adopted an Afro-Caribbean or Black British identification. Concurrently, the churches have being undergoing a demographic shift in that the majority of the members in the churches are now primarily second and third generation.[19] Although they have a minority presence among the senior minister positions in their Pentecostal denomination, their impact is being felt especially since they hold the majority of the other leadership positions. As a result, many West Indian cultural and religious traditions have given way to new expressions formulated within the British context. In a West Indian Pentecostal church in North West London, the church hymnals and pew Bibles have been replaced by contemporary choruses and Bible verses projected unto an overhead screen and two television monitors. The religious dictum concerning dress has changed in two specific ways. First, women are no longer prohibited from sitting on the rostrum, or leading worship while wearing trousers. Second, they are now able to preach with their heads uncovered. Another major change is the presence of women in key ministerial positions within the church.[20] Thus in the British second-

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[18] This hymnal, *Redemption Songs*, compiled by L.W. Munhall; musical editors Jno. R. Sweney, Wm. J. Kirkpatrick, and Jno. J. Lowe (Philadelphia: John J. Hood, c. 1889), has become a staple in Jamaica within a number of Pentecostal churches. It was noted on a visit to a church in Jamaica where the founder of this West Indian Pentecostal church in Brooklyn had previously served as a minister that this was also the hymnal used during their services.

[19] The first generation, now in their 60s to 80s, are experiencing a decline due to death or return migration to their island homes.

[20] Although the Church of God headquarters in the USA prohibits women from serving on the pastor council, Willesden has taken measures to change this by appointing two women as advisors to the council. Although they lack the formal title, these women function in the same manner as the other ministers within the congregation.

generation youths' expression of faith we witness marked changes in the church's administrative structure and liturgy.

In both Brooklyn and London, the West Indian Pentecostal churches function as a place of acceptance and empowerment for the second-generation youth. One feature observed in a West Indian Pentecostal church in Brooklyn worth noting is the sense of community that is fostered for second-generation youths. For many of them, this is their home church, that is, the one that they grew up in. As a result, many of the adults function as surrogate parents or family members who are able to discipline and counsel them on various aspects of their lives. Within the youth group, the main leaders are seen as holdinga parental role in the lives of the second-generation youths. Within this capacity, these adults are in constant contact with the youths during the week—making sure that they are "doing well" and maintaining the strict moral lifestyle that is expected of them.[21] As a result, the youths in the church form a tight-knit group—they are each other's friends, and they hang out together. According to one teenager:

> If you don't come to church you feel left out … You look forward [to] us hanging out. [There will] be days when we won't have practice for quite a few Saturdays and when we get together we get in trouble a lot because we [didn't] get to see each other. (interview, April 15, 2007a)

During the course of my fieldwork I asked several teenagers to quantify the amount of time spent on their mobile phones with their friends from church versus those from school. The majority responded that they spent most of the time talking to their friends from church.

Linked with the creation of a tight-knit "family" offering support and acceptance for the second-generation youth is the church's function as a place of empowerment and leadership training for these young people. In the Brooklyn context, the West Indian second-generation youth interviewed and observed ranged in age from early teens to early 30s. Most of these youths were involved in various ministries within the church. These included Sunday school teachers, Praise and Worship leaders, ushers, Youth choir members, and musicians.[22] For one second-generation male, leadership training came as a result of being encouraged to officiate at and organize a number of youth services. He describes his experience as follows:

> What evangelist [name withheld] used to do first was to give us, to start us to get bolder like giving a word [for the] youth service. So he'll [say to you] two weeks in advance, "so [name]" he use to do that to me all the time, "two weeks, you doing exhortation. Do it on whatever topic, you doing an exhortation". [His

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[21] This includes no drinking, pre-marital sex, or engagement in "bad" behavior.

[22] During the singing of the hymns, an adult woman would play the organ. Sometimes she would be accompanied by a young boy as well. This was also the case when the adult choir was singing. However, when the youth choir sang it was the young boy who played.

> response was] "Oh my God!"… [note the youth was encouraged to take total responsibility for this service]. So you'll have to think of a topic, you've got [to] think of people who you gotta ask to come and bring forth your topic. [laugh] Oh gosh! That was the hardest thing to do but that was a stepping stone … it pushed me out there, it made me know how I have to present myself on that level. (interview, April 1, 2007)

These leadership and personal skills were not only used within the churches but became transferable skills that the second-generation youth could also apply to their secular jobs. Another informant highlighted this dynamic in the following way: "I work in corporate America, [where] a lot of things are gauged on how the person is perceived or how others interact with them so this church helped me with that a lot as far as presenting myself" (interview, April 15, 2007c).

For many second-generation youth in London, the church has also functioned as a place of acceptance and empowerment. Many of the youths that I interviewed held leadership positions within their church. These included members of the pastor's council,[23] coordinator of the Saturday School Programme, Sunday school teachers, Choir director, and member of the Ladies ministry board. According to one informant, the church has not only provided her with the skills that enable her to be involved in public speaking, and relate to people from different generations but also to perform certain tasks in her job. She states: "when you're out, maybe in a secular job or outside of this church community, you realize that you're able to do certain things. But then you think, well where did I get that training? It may be [it] was from the church" (interview, July 9, 20007). This empowerment feature of the church was also confirmed by a second-generation male informant who stated:

> I think I've gained confidence, maybe from doing things in church that perhaps I didn't have in school, having the opportunity. Being pushed to do things a little bit more in church more that I was being pushed in school has given me perhaps more confidence. And I feel more confident in terms of public speaking and communicating with groups of people. (interview, July 8, 2007)

This interview underscores how pivotal the empowerment dynamic remains, especially in regards to Afro-Caribbean youths, particularly for males. For in a society where they are expected to underperform or be involved in gangs and criminal activity, the push to be engaged in various kinds of leadership is very significant. Intricately connected to the church being a place of empowerment is the fact that it is also a place for support and guidance. According to one informant,

> church more or less has played a big, big role in terms of people giving me directions, and setting an example for us. Especially the older people in the church

[23] The term "pastor's council" designates the group of leaders who assist the pastor in governing the local congregation.

> they more [or less helped to] curb me you know. Sometimes I would be naughty. They sa[id] things out of love but you didn't see it at that young age … [but] as you grow older I see why they said [that] to me. (interview, July 16, 2007)

It is also noteworthy among this group that when they were growing up the majority of their close friends were also involved in church.

Having discussed the ways in which these West Indian Pentecostal churches empower and support the second-generation youth within their midst, it is also necessary to investigate the ways in which these congregations may also marginalize or disempower their youth. In the US church context, where there is a strong emphasis on maintaining West Indian religious and cultural traditions, it seems that very little space is created for second-generation youths to adopt African American identities or to orchestrate major changes to, or within, the administrative structures of the churches and their overall systems. In fact such action, particularly wanting a change of the cultural norms governing the churches, may be perceived by many of the first-generation congregants as disrespect and/or "rebellion." It should be noted that although I did not come across any informant in this setting who had adopted a strict African American identity, I did find one informant who was more pro-American in comparison to the others. It was interesting to note in the group interview conducted with various 1.5-[24] and second-generation youths, including one of the youth leaders, how his divergent views were addressed. In most of the responses, especially those by the youth leader, his views were perceived as a "misunderstanding." Thus his view on the church's lack of outreach to the youth within the community, which he believed needed to be addressed by the senior pastor, was perceived as a need for everyone to know their roles and not wait on the pastor to do things (Group Interview April 14, 2007).

From my observation of this and other immigrant congregations within the Brooklyn context,[25] I see this teenager's view as significant because in this context lasting change can only take place with the approval of the church leadership. Coupled with the need to maintain cultural and religious traditions is the creation of an atmosphere that some second-generation youth may find boring or irrelevant. Evidence of this was witnessed in the lack of participation noted among several young people over the course of my fieldwork. It is not uncommon to see some of them playing with their mobile phones, talking with their peers**,** sleeping, or doodling during the Sunday service. These were probably young people whose church attendance was mainly due to familial obligation. One edict that I have encountered during my involvement both in fieldwork and my own membership

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[24] An immigrant is designated as 1.5 if they migrated to the host country before or during their early teenage years. See Rumbaut and Ima (1998: 1–2).

[25] In many of these congregations the senior minister and founder has primary authority over everything that happens in the church. Especially in an area in which one is seeking to change missional perspectives, to act without approval could be seen as trying to usurp authority.

within a West Indian Pentecostal church is "as long as you live in this house you will have to attend church." Such a stance ultimately results in the second-generation youth dissociating themselves from the church and maybe Christianity itself once they are able to leave home.[26]

Another way in which these religious communities can serve to marginalize or dis-empower the immigrant children in their midst is by failing adequately to prepare them to engage with society. Sometimes in these churches' attempts to provide their second-generation youths with a "safe" and supportive environment, they can also create a very sheltered one which may make it difficult for the young people effectively to navigate the social challenges that they will face upon leaving home. This is how one informant articulated her experience:

> So when I went away to school [university] and was living there, it was like out of the protection of church and home and where I was really raised. I wasn't exactly living; I wasn't reinforcing anything that I learned here. … Again coming out of, not having grown up with, say you know, a lesbian or a homosexual here and just having [it] in your face constantly and all these new ideas they present in the classroom and you know and challenge what you know. We never had those kind[s] of discussions here to say, okay when you go way to school, you gonna maybe come up against this, or cults on campus will try to draw you. (interview, April 15, 2007b)

Within the London context, one telling critique of the church by the second-generation youth has been its seeming failure to engage with the "real" issues that they face within the society. This lack of room within the church for their perspectives—many of which are focused on seeing systematic changes implemented within the church and wider society—has resulted in the exodus of some second-generation youth and their subsequent involvement in other social and religious groups, like Rastafarianism who strive for a more active engagement with society.[27] For those who remained, they have sought to use the knowledge that they had gained from living in the London context to assist in gradually achieving changes within the West Indian Pentecostal churches in which they participate. It is necessary to note, however, that even among those who remained, the churches did at times function as places of disempowerment and marginalization. Like their US counterparts, many were also ill prepared to face life away from home. Another area of marginalization came in the form of the pressure placed on pastors' children. One informant said:

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[26] On a personal level I have also noted this reaction among some of my relatives who are 1.5 and second-generation youth and some young men that I had contact with while I attended a West Indian Pentecostal church in New York.

[27] This would include organizing protests in response to what is perceived to be police injustice, or engaging the wider society in discourses around race or related issues.

> [There] was a lot of pressure, a great deal of pressure. And I suppose it's hard to articulate it perfectly, but to sum it up you pretty much were highlighted and pinpointed most times and it was incumbent upon you to be really responsible in terms of the faith. Some of it was fine, you could just deal with it. But it was when it became difficult [that] you kind of thought, "Well aah this is a bit difficult, this is a bit, it infringes on who you're as a person and in terms of your development". In particular I think of the church as [being] very strong on no makeup and no jewelry at the time. And when I was growing up, at the age of fourteen [or] thereabouts you wanted to experiment a little bit. [But] in fact you can't do that, you're [the] pastor's daughter, you can't do that. And I just thought, "Oh I can't wait until I'm old enough [and] I can just leave you know". (interview, July 19, 2007)

Thus for this informant, her position as the pastor's daughter and the accompanying expectations from the members of the church, in particularly the first-generation congregants, united to produce a perception that the church was a place where her development as a second-generation youth was hindered and ultimately a place where who she was and her experiences were not accepted. It is necessary to note that, although this informant was currently very active within the church, this involvement had been preceded by several years in which she had minimal contact with the West Indian Pentecostal denomination in which she was raised.

Conclusion

The impact and role that religion plays in the lives of second-generation youth cannot be understated. For many, it provides them with the very social identity and religious tools necessary to navigate the waters of adolescence and adulthood. For others this process becomes short-circuited by the immigrant Pentecostal communities themselves and their objective of creating a space of belonging and empowerment for the immigrant, especially the first generation. As the immigrant communities in both New York City and London become more established within those contexts, it will be important for them to begin to re-evaluate their praxis. It is in this regard that the London churches have something to teach the US congregations. Since they have already felt the brunt of the exodus of the second generation due to their failure to engage with the issues that they find relevant, they are now in a place to testify to the need for engaging with the youth and the wider community in order to keep the church growing and not lose the next generation. What the churches in both contexts will have to grapple with in the years to come is the significant task of relating faith to the present second and third generation. These are the children that have been raised with the Internet, sound bites, and other advanced technologies. For these children, the "old" forms—the one hour lecture-styled sermons, the covering of the head, the prohibition on wearing casual clothes to church, the unwillingness

to discuss pertinent issues from the pulpit—may not be a viable form of ministry. What will this engagement with society and immigrant children look like? These are hard questions, and answering them may call these religious communities to seriously re-examine their theology and praxis. Central to this engagement may be a call for an incarnation—a process whereby the church's theology and praxis will need to take on attributes that will enable it to be expressed in a format that the immigrant children can relate to and also understand.

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Chapter 10
Religion and Masculinities in Africa: An Opportunity for Africanization

Ezra Chitando

Introduction

The study of religion in Africa[1] is a product of external influences. The discipline has been closely related to the experiences of the continent and its encounter with "outsiders." To a large extent, the study of religion in Africa has been shaped by European traditions (Ludwig and Adogame 2004). The implication has been that the methods and approaches adopted in the study of religion in Africa have been derived from "outside." For a continent that has waged liberation struggles, this comes as a major point for debate. How can African scholars be subservient to the theories and methods of their erstwhile former colonizers? Can African scholars of religion have the confidence to take the discipline in a different direction, as they respond to African realities? Such questions lie at the heart of debates on developing African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

This chapter utilizes the emerging field of religion and masculinities to explore the opportunities for Africanization. It argues that the discourse on religion and masculinities in Africa provides a valuable opportunity for African scholars to be creative and illustrate the possibility of doing religious studies with an African flavor. The dominant argument is that African material will necessarily color and influence the study of religion in Africa. Having come to Africa, the study of religion in Africa dare not, and in fact cannot, remain the same. In the first section, the chapter outlines male dominance in the study of religion in Africa. In the second section it describes the discourse on gender in the study of religion in Africa, paying particular attention to women's issues and the subsequent marginalization of men. The third section briefly explains the factors that have given rise to attention on masculinities in Africa, laying emphasis on the impact of the HIV epidemic. The fourth section examines how the theme of religion and masculinities offers a valuable opportunity to African scholars to chart a new path in the discipline. It analyzes the opportunities for Africanization. In conclusion, the chapter argues that the Africanization of religious studies in Africa must be undertaken urgently.

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[1] "Africa" is a multivalent term. It is used in a general sense to cover Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. While there are notable differences in the growth of the discipline in the area under analysis, there are sufficient similarities to justify the generalizations.

Male Dominance and the Study of Religion in Africa

The study of religion in Africa has generally been gender blind until very recently. This is due to the reality that the pioneering scholars in the study of religion were European and later, African *males*, who did not pay attention to the dynamics of gender. In his useful application of the ideas of Edward Said to the study of African Traditional Religions,[2] Henk J. van Rinsum (2003: 58–60) suggests that Geoffrey Parrinder could be regarded as the patriarchal authority, with John S. Mbiti and E. Bolaji Idowu as "followers and elaborators." In this scheme, Jacob Olupona, Friday Mbon, and Umar H.D. Danfulani would be the "new authorities." As is apparent, the succession line is exclusively male.

The study of religion in Africa has therefore been (and continues to be) a male-dominated discipline (Chitando and Chirongoma 2008; see also the chapter by Olademo in this volume). In line with the development of the discipline in Europe, male scholars, interests, and methodologies have been dominant. While it might appear controversial to describe methodologies as "male," it must be appreciated that approaches such as the phenomenological approach are not gender neutral. Although they purport to be "scientific and scholarly," they are very much an outcome of male interests and preoccupations. By carrying over the dominance of men in religious studies from Europe to Africa, the discipline missed an opportunity to have a different outlook on Africa.

Male scholars have been shaping the direction of religious studies in Africa since the 1960s when it sought to establish itself more firmly on the continent. Across the various regions, it was male scholars who were replacing departing European scholars. In this regard the coalescence of indigenous and European patriarchies has played a major role in excluding women from religious studies. Patriarchy privileges male interests, needs, and even frivolities. As a result, a visit to most departments of religious studies in Africa will familiarize one with male "gate keepers and patriarchal authorities."[3]

It is important to highlight the fact that the dominance of men in religious studies is in keeping with the general absence of women in higher education in Africa. There is need to appreciate the "politics of exclusion in higher education" (Moja 2007) and the historical factors that have led to male dominance. An awareness of the historical and ideological factors that have kept women away from higher education will enable one to put the absence of women from the study of religion into proper prospective. Thus:

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[2] There is greater gravitation towards the term "African Indigenous Religions." However, I retain the term "African Traditional Religions" due to its recurrence in the literature consulted.

[3] The approach to power in African academia (as indeed elsewhere) is characterized by the dominance of the "power over" paradigm, in contrast to the "power with" paradigm. While the former induces suffocation, the latter promotes solidarity and a shared vision.

> Women in Africa (as is the case the world over) generally entered academia later than their male counterparts. A systematic and deliberate colonial policy ensured that African women were excluded from the various "ivory towers" that dotted the continent. Not only did missionary education disproportionately extend educational opportunities to males, but men's education was also accorded higher priority than that of women … A variety of factors, including the emphasis on domestic chores, generalized conditions of poverty and the overarching influence of patriarchy, combined to make access and entrance to academic institutions for women a mirage for much of the colonial period. Women were a rare commodity in the annals of academia, and were Africa's true 'drawers of water, and hewers of wood". (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango 2000: 3–4)

In line with the observation in the above quotation, men have dominated the academic study of religion in Africa. The situation in religious studies remained unchanged until the late 1970s and the 1980s when some departments of religious studies in West Africa began to employ the occasional women lecturer. It was only in the 1990s, through forceful work by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter, the Circle) led by the Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye, that more departments of religious studies began to recruit female scholars. However, the situation is far from being satisfactory as the percentage of women within the discipline remains very low. As with their counterparts in theology (see Phiri 2009), African women undertaking religious studies face numerous challenges. However, when they forced themselves on to the scene, they began to pay attention to the issue of gender.

Gender and the Study of Religion in Africa

Since the 1990s, the Circle has played a major role in ensuring that gender is put on the agenda of the study of religion in Africa. Although most of the Circle activists are theologians, others are also involved in religious studies. Yet others straddle both worlds.[4] Circle authors have challenged the church in Africa and departments of religious studies to take women's issues seriously. Whereas previously the departments of religious studies had given the impression that religion meant the same to men and women, female scholars have sought to highlight the significance of religion to women (as opposed to what it means to men).

African female scholars of religion have sought to challenge the dominant approaches to the discipline by paying attention to the status of women in the various religions of Africa. In particular, they have dwelt on the status of women in African Traditional Religions, Christianity, and Islam. Whereas male scholars

[4] A separate study is required to explore the relationship between theology and religious studies in Africa. However, a number of practitioners have moved between the two areas with relative ease.

have tended to describe these religions in general terms, female scholars have been more interested in retrieving women's voices. In her book, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, Oyeronke Olajubu clarifies this stance thus:

> Where people extol complementary gender relations, but accounts of people's culture and religious traditions present the male as the active participant and the female as docile and passive, there is a valid reason for the hermeneutic of suspicion. This is very true of Yoruba religious tradition, which is the focus of this work. There is need to retrieve, reinterpret, and reevaluate previous assumptions about women in religious traditions to arrive at the center point where all voices are heard and respected. (Olajubu 2003: 7)

The focus on gender has been accentuated by the Circle's focus on HIV and its impact on women and girls in Africa. The Circle has emerged as the most consistent group writing on HIV, religion and gender in Africa (Dube 2009; Chitando 2007: 58). The Circle has demonstrated how inequitable gender relations buttressed by religion and culture have left African women and girls more vulnerable to HIV. Female scholars in religious studies and theology have shown how religion and culture have been abused to condemn women and children to premature deaths in the era of HIV in Africa (see Dube in this volume). Whereas approaches such as phenomenology call upon scholars to be neutral, female African scholars have spoken out in favor of restructuring religions in order to achieve gender justice.

By placing emphasis on women's religious experiences, female African scholars of religion such as Isabel A. Phiri have forced the discipline to become conscious of gender dynamics. Although many male scholars of religion have resisted applying the tools of gender analysis to their work, it is fair to say that the face of the discipline has been affected decisively by the arrival of female African scholars. While some male scholars condescendingly dismiss gendered approaches to the study of religion in Africa,[5] it must be acknowledged that female scholars have been productive and effective.

Emphasizing women's religious experiences, however, has had the effect of effacing men from the discourse on gender. This has had the negative effect of suggesting that men do not have a gender. Whereas gender means the socially prescribed roles for men and women, the trend has been to focus exclusively on women. Around 2000, it became clear to gender activists that there was a need to bring men back into the discourse on gender and HIV. As a result, there has been a notable increase of interest in masculinities and religion in Africa. For example, the *Journal of Constructive Theology*, published in the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, has devoted two full issues to the theme of masculinity (12.1, 2006 and 14.1, 2008).

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[5] Incredibly, some male lecturers (in some African universities) contend that publications on gender must not be considered in promotion processes, as "gender is not academic"!

Masculinities, HIV, and Religion in Africa

Recognizing the importance of men in the response to HIV, there have been calls to pay more attention to the social construction of men. It has become generally accepted that society plays an important role in shaping men. It is society that prescribes what men may or may not do. Of significance has been society's double standards regarding the sexual behavior of men and women. Whereas women are expected to be chaste and restrained, men are excused when they have multiple sexual partners. Furthermore, men are far more often than women the perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. Such observations have led to calls to pay more attention to masculinities in the time of HIV (van Klinken 2009). The plural, masculinities, is used as there is no single way for being a man across religions and cultures.

Religion is a major force in the construction of masculinities across Africa (and in other parts of the world). As a guide to belief and action, religion equips its adherents with ethical standards. African Traditional Religions, Christianity, and Islam all have certain expectations regarding men. To a large extent, they construct men to be the leaders and to control women and children. Through their sacred writings/oral traditions, myths, inherited beliefs, and practices, they project men as having priority over women. As with other religions of the world, they are patriarchal (Sharma 1987). Faced with the challenges of HIV and gender-based violence, activists in Africa have been calling for the transformation of masculinities. They contend that religion has a role to play as it has promoted aggressive masculinities. For example, many men cite the scriptures of various religions to defend their authority to "discipline" women. Others maintain that as "heads," they have a license to make decisions without consulting women. In most instances this leads to gender-based violence as women resist such abuse of power. In short, religion has been implicated in promoting death-dealing masculinities in the time of HIV and gender-based violence (Chitando 2007).

Realizing the strategic importance of working with boys and men in the face of HIV and gender-based violence, there have been growing calls for the transformation of masculinities in Africa and globally. An abuse of sacred texts and traditions by men has allowed men to project having multiple sexual partners and using violence as "divinely sanctioned." Furthermore, the processes of urbanization, Arabization, and Christianization have had a telling effect on how men in Africa express their masculinities. Thus:

> The fact that Arabization and Europeanization demonized African ethnic masculinities as primitive, heathen and barbaric, did not bar the latter from cross-pollinating with the formers' influences and across ethnic divides. As a result, the current African elite masculinities are predominantly crossbreeds and hybrids of indigenous masculinity and western modernity. To prove that they are men, many African leaders sacrificed their own lives and those of innocent

> women, men and children at the altar of their own masculine ambiguity. (Men for the Equality of Men and Women 2008: 21)

There is a growing appreciation that religions can play a constructive role in challenging men to be change agents in the face of HIV and gender-based violence in Africa (Manda 2009). Men must be challenged to have new approaches towards power. This will require rigorous analyses of the religious and cultural factors that inform aggressive masculinities. Researchers in different African contexts will need to interrogate the African appropriation of sacred texts in Christianity and Islam, as well as the use of oral traditions to support patriarchal dominance. Deconstructing and reinterpreting these texts to transform masculinities must be undertaken in order to discover and deliver "the justice men owe to women" and acknowledging the "positive resources from world religions" (Raines and Maguire 2000).

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that there is a growing interest in the area of masculinities, HIV, and religion. As this is a new area of research and publication, there is room for Africanizing. However, before illustrating how the area of masculinities and religion can have "African traditions," there is a need to grapple, briefly, with the very concept of Africanization. I undertake this task in the following section.

Africanizing Religious Studies: A Characterization and an Overview of the Challenges

The discourse on religion and masculinities in Africa avails a number of opportunities for Africanizing the discipline. However, there is no unanimity on either the meaning or desirability of Africanization. In general, Africanizing refers to the process of ensuring that African concerns, issues, methods, and personnel are reflected in a given discipline. With special reference to religious studies, Africanizing the discipline implies that a student studying religion in Africa should be able to interact with African concerns, issues, methods, and personnel in an African university. Walter Kamba, the University of Zimbabwe's first black Vice Chancellor, offers some useful insights on Africanization following his appointment in 1981 (Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980):

> It became necessary for the University to have its feet on Zimbabwean soil … It became essential to have a new ethos and orientation rooted in the new reality of Zimbabwe. To say this was not in any way to deny the unquestionable importance of the international dimension. There was, however, a need for the University of Zimbabwe to play, and be seen to play, a more active and meaningful role in the development of Zimbabwe. (Zinyemba 2010: 17)

From the foregoing quottion, one can argue that Africanization implies that institutions of higher learning "have their feet on African soil." They strive to

grapple with African issues and endeavor to find African solutions. However, they do this knowing fully well that universities necessarily have an international dimension. They must ensure that African students are not alienated in their studies. In the case of religious studies, it is vital that students experience the discipline as reflecting an African ethos. The bulk of the material encountered should at least speak to the real-life situation of the student. The textbooks accessed and examples used must reflect African realities. A student studying religion in Harare must be exposed to a setting that is different from a student studying religion in London (religious studies as "having its roots in African soil"). Of course, both students will have a lot in common, as both would be drawing from a common discipline called religious studies (religious studies as having "the international dimension"). However, a longer narrative would be required to provide a more detailed analysis of the assertions made here.

The Africanization of religious studies faces a number of challenges. First, the discipline itself did not originate on African shores. Rather, the discipline has its origins outside the continent (Chitando 2008). This poses a major challenge to the discipline in an African context. It implies that African practitioners of the discipline are heavily influenced by the formulations of the pioneers. The vision, procedures and goals have already been framed, forcing most practitioners to utilize pre-existing categories and concepts. This "burden of history" has meant that most African practitioners of the discipline have to be content with rehashing the methodologies and conclusions that were reached by the European ancestors of the discipline. Since "African ancestors" of the discipline are still too few, African practitioners of the discipline have had to become "mediums" of European ancestors.

Second, alongside the challenge of the discipline having an external origin, the Africanization of religious studies in Africa has been compromised by the absence of vibrant methodological schools. Apart from the pioneering work done in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Botswana, and Zimbabwe, most departments of religious studies in Africa continue to rely on publications from outside the continent. This sad situation remains in place, years after the process of decolonization set in. Most reading lists on African Traditional Religions, for example, are made up of the earlier publications by Mbiti and Idowu. There has been very little innovation and expansion of the scope of the discipline. Even a recent essay on "Methodological Problems in the Study of African Traditional Religions" by Mike P. Adogbo (2005) hardly brings any new insights on method and theory to the study of these religions. In the absence of rigorous theoretical reflections on the assumptions and approaches within religious studies in Africa, it has been difficult for "African traditions" to emerge.

Third, apart from the theoretical conundrum is the book famine that characterizes the study of religion in Africa. Most religious studies courses are totally dependent on textbooks that were published in Europe and North America. There have been notable publishing initiatives in Kenya and South Africa, but these remain inadequate. In Nigeria, considerable progress has been made, but mainly within the area of biblical studies through the Nigerian Association of

Biblical Studies. A significant publication within the discourse on Africanization is *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa* (Abogunrin 2005). There is therefore a crying need for African scholars in religious studies to follow this lead and reflect on the process of Africanization.

Finally, there are some African scholars of religion who are uncomfortable with the very concept of Africanization. Given the intractable problems that Africa faces, it is understandable that some scholars would be wary of embracing a concept that seems to imply accepting the "ugly face" of the continent. Africa continues to struggle economically, socially, and politically. The HIV epidemic has worsened the continent's image as it gives the impression of a diseased and dying continent. Others contend that Africanization implies the lowering of "standards." They are convinced that the concept is laden with ideological assumptions and results in accepting mediocrity in the name of Africanization.

Despite the challenges and misgivings surrounding Africanization, I am convinced that the study of religion in Africa must prioritize the process of Africanization. Failure to undertake Africanization implies that the discipline will struggle to have a meaningful impact on the continent. I am also persuaded that the area of religion and masculinities offers useful insights into the process of Africanization. The following section therefore appropriates the theme of religion and masculinities to probe opportunities for Africanization.

Religion and Masculinities: Opportunities for Africanization

The foregoing section has outlined some of the major challenges facing the quest to Africanize religious studies. In this section, I seek to highlight how scholars working on religion and masculinities in Africa have ample scope for Africanizing in their academic endeavors. I argue that although concepts and material developed by scholars outside the continent are helpful, African scholars should not feel bound to work only within the parameters that have been set by their counterparts from elsewhere.

Placing Masculinities within Research Efforts in African Religious Studies

One of the key aspects of Africanization is to ensure that African concerns are at the center of research efforts in religious studies. The theme of masculinities must find a place in the study of religion in Africa in the face of the HIV epidemic. If the discipline is to be contextually sensitive and relevant to the lived realities of Africans, it must grapple with the theme of masculinities. The Circle has done well to bring gender to the fore. However, female scholars have tended to focus exclusively on women's issues. To complement this process, there is need to undertake research into religion and the formation of masculinities in Africa.

For too long, the study of religion in Africa has waited for topics to come to the fore within the discipline in Europe and North America and then follow suit. This is the "follow my leader" mentality that continues to stifle the growth of the discipline (Chitando 2002: 278). It is probably for this reason that the study of religion in Africa continues to struggle to integrate HIV within its purview. Since HIV has not received attention within the discipline in Europe and North America, most African scholars do not feel confident to tackle it within their research, teaching, and community engagement activities. Paying attention to masculinities within the study of religion in Africa will ensure that a key issue on the continent finds space within the curriculum. The fact that this theme has not yet received a lot of scholarly attention implies that African scholars will not feel compelled to look to Europe and North America in order to find "guidance."

The study of the interface between religion and masculinities in Africa is an urgent undertaking as it will provide policy makers with helpful insights during the time of HIV. Although the study of religion is often taken as an end in itself, the crisis brought about by HIV implies that this is a luxury that Africa cannot afford. Pursuing knowledge for the sake of knowledge is indeed the mandate of the university, including universities based in Africa. However, accessing life-saving knowledge is equally urgent in the context of Africa. I shall return to this theme below. Consequently, the study of the relationship between religion and masculinities will equip students, lecturers, and the general public to begin to draw up strategies for effective interventions.

Research efforts in religious studies in Africa must be directed towards the transformation of masculinities in the face of HIV and gender-based violence. This must become an urgent undertaking. Scholars in the various areas of religious studies must utilize the opportunity to reflect on how the current masculinities have not been beneficial to African communities. Writing on Islam in general, Trad Godsey has suggested the need for new conceptualizations of masculinity. According to him:

> The redefining and reformulation of masculinity in the Muslim world to allow manliness to be expressed as weakness and vulnerability has both a Qur'anic and Prophetic precedent. While the AIDS pandemic creates an urgency for change, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* have always contained tools to reconstruct manhood in a way that achieves greater gender equity for women and men alike. (Godsey 2009: 125)

The approach that Godsey adopts in Islam needs to be followed in the reflections on masculinities in African Traditional Religions, African Christianity, African Islam, African Buddhism, and other religions found on the African religious market. How does a particular African religion shape the values that men hold dear? To what extent do these ideas of manhood pose a danger to women, children, and other men? What are the redemptive values found in these religions and how do they challenge hegemonic masculinities that define manhood in contemporary

African societies? Interacting with such questions will enable African scholars to indigenize scholarship on religion and masculinities and make it relevant to the struggles against HIV and gender-based violence.

By paying attention to the interface between religion and masculinities, African scholars would have chosen to focus on a theme that is of existential significance to African communities. They would have been guided by African issues and concerns in their selection of the theme and its implications for the struggles against HIV and gender-based violence. While Randi R. Warne (2000: 147) notes that (Western) scholarship that reflected on maleness and masculinity developed a high profile in the 1980s and 1990s, it has not had an impact on the study of religion in Africa. By taking up the theme of religion and masculinities in the time of HIV, African scholars would be addressing a timely and relevant issue.

Utilizing African Material to Understand African Masculinities

Alongside giving priority to African issues and concerns, Africanization also implies utilizing African material to clarify (religious) concepts and phenomena. For example, if the term "religion" has been notoriously difficult to define in European and American religious studies, the question arises as to how or whether "religion" in Africa clarifies (or even, complicates) the concept. Similarly, studying religion and masculinities in Africa provides ample opportunity to expand the meaning of masculinities. How does religion and culture in Africa socialise men to understand themselves as men? Are there specific African notions of manhood that are at play? How do indigenous rites of passage such as circumcision contribute to the formation of masculinities in Africa? By responding to such questions, the study on religion and masculinities in Africa can provide valuable insights into the discourses on masculinity.

In studying the interface between religion and masculinity in Africa, African scholars must not blindly follow theories on masculinity that have been formulated in other contexts. To say this is not to suggest that there is a sense in which Africa is not part of the human race. Rather, it is to highlight the need for African scholars to summon enough courage and confidence to formulate their own theories of masculinity. They have an opportunity to amplify the relationship between religion and masculinity, using African resources and phenomena. This task is best executed by African scholars, as I shall argue below.

From the foregoing, it follows that African scholars of religion who venture into the theme of masculinities must charter new approaches to the phenomenon. Since the factors that form masculinities are shaped by specific contexts, African scholars must "mine" the African context to provide new perspectives on masculinities. In undertaking this exercise, African scholars must give priority to data on masculinities from African communities. Too often, African phenomena are forced to fit into imported theoretical schemes. Some scholars have distorted African material to force it into these foreign theoretical schemes.

Utilizing African material to understand religion and masculinity also implies that African scholars must be willing to take the oral nature of African communities seriously. For example, there is need to pay attention to proverbs and their role in forming masculinities. African scholars need to interrogate proverbs that promote dangerous masculinities and draw attention to those that call upon men to be peaceful and tolerant. Furthermore, African scholars must make use of myths, folktales, music, and other forms of communication in their analyses of the factors that inform masculinities in Africa.

Applying Research Results on Religion and Masculinities for Social Transformation

One of the biggest challenges facing the academic study of religion in Africa is whether it is relevant to the process of social transformation. Critics wonder why scholars of religion demand respect when their teaching and research activities do not readily translate into an agenda to change African communities for the better. The question can be posed more directly: can the study of religion in Africa afford to be "only scholarly" and not contribute practically to the resolution of challenges facing African societies? It would appear that Africa cannot afford to pursue "knowledge for the sake of knowledge" (Chitando 2008: 121).

Research results on religion and masculinities in Africa must be harnessed in the struggle for health and well-being. It would be futile to come up with research results that are relevant to the struggle for gender justice and fail to disseminate these results in a way that promotes active engagement in society. What is the value of discovering, for example, that certain religious beliefs and practices promote dangerous masculinities in the time of HIV, and then fail to embark on practical strategies to construct alternative masculinities? I am convinced that the study of religion and masculinities holds a lot of promise in terms of enabling scholars in the field to become socially engaged.

Embarking on transformative masculinities in the time of HIV and gender-based violence would enable departments of religious studies in Africa to engage in what Paulo Freire called "the pedagogy of the oppressed." In applying this methodology, lecturers would ensure that education leads to freedom by engaging students in exercises that tackle real-life situations. In the context of religion and masculinities, students would grapple with how religion often sponsors destructive masculinities. They would then work towards transforming these harmful masculinities. According to Freire:

> Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world, and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly

> less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed. (Freire 2004: 81)

Conclusion

The academic study of religion in Africa needs to set its own agenda and to give priority to issues that vex African communities. In this chapter, I have drawn attention to the theme of religion and masculinities in the face of HIV and gender-based violence. I have argued that researching on this theme provides sufficient scope for Africanization. As the theme has not yet received a lot of scholarly attention, there is potential for African scholars to shape this particular area of research without feeling that some European or American "expert/s" will not approve of their approaches. In closing, I must reiterate that the area of religion and masculinities has existential significance. Thus:

> Masculinities have come to the fore in contemporary discourses on the HIV epidemic. There is a need to interrogate men's sexual behaviour, men's violence against women and men's ineffective leadership in the time of HIV. Departments of religious studies in Africa must become sites of struggle where these themes are examined and alternative masculinities are formulated. Graduates of religious studies must emerge as competent gender activists who critique aggressive masculinities. They must be actively involved in mobilising their communities to promote gender justice in the wake of HIV. Working with boys and young men, they must prepare a generation of men who are committed to partnership and mutuality. (Chitando and Chirongoma 2008: 67)

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Chapter 11
Rethinking Women, Nature, and Ritual Purity in Yoruba Religious Traditions

Bolaji Bateye

Introduction

There are parallels in the creation myths of many African cultures depicting nature or the earth as feminine. History often presents women and nature as used, exploited, manipulated, and overall rendered impure. The aim of this chapter is to suggest a rethinking of the notion of womanhood and nature. I have selected Yoruba indigenous religions to facilitate this process. The central theme is purity, which denotes among other things, cleanliness, wholesomeness, and spotlessness, especially in the physical dimension. Efforts have been made to deal extensively with this, particularly in the light of the Yoruba religio-cultural milieu. Purity as relating to women affecting the environment is a topical issue today. Accordingly, this chapter examines this standpoint on purity in the light of women in Yorubaland being seen to have responsibilities as custodians of a culture that perpetuates positive attitudes and activities that are healthy for their environment. The chapter adopts the feminist hermeneutical approach in the collection and interpretation of its data.

"Earth is Mother and Mother is Earth"

Catherine Acholonu has rightly noted that the image of woman as the primeval temptress and destroyer is foreign to African peoples. Traditionally, Africans view *woman* as the primeval mother of all, deserving of worship and veneration; the provider of justice, riches, wisdom, and children; the protector of the land, which is her womb, and into which life will eventually be swallowed. Woman as temptress, woman as destroyer, are themes that arrived in Africa with colonialism, Christianity, and Islam (Acholonu 1995: 4).

Symbolism is used freely to depict the image of women. For example, a World Council of Churches publication, *Ministerial Formation*, of 1994 adopted the captions: "The Tree of Life" and "The River of Life" to depict women as follows:

> In many cultures, a woman symbolizes the earth (mother earth). As women bear children, so also the earth generates life (*sic*). The river of life represents the womb where life begins. From the earth life will arise, if there are no rocks as

> obstacles to block growth. When a woman is battered, violated or degraded, she will seek to survive from her life experience and her identity becomes the source of her strength … and accepts herself as a full human being, created in the image of God, a woman finds her strength.[1]

This symbolism aptly describes the representation of women in many cultures of the world. In the same vein, Estella Lauter writes*:*

> …instead of being a repository of natural substances to be mined, the earth is a source of transformative stories. "She is not dead matter to be plundered, wounded matter, from which renewal flows. The two bodies, woman's and earth's, are sympathetic. Consciousness of earth's pain allows the woman to feel and accept her own pain. Earth's intelligent survival of disaster is a model for woman's survival. Instead of being mother, whore, or crone, this earth is my sister (*sic*).[2]

From their earliest contact with African peoples, Europeans posited that the African's closeness to nature meant distance from God. To tame, domesticate, civilize, de-nature, and de-spirit Africans became the mission of American plantation owners and the process to affect control over an African population. These attempts at religious acculturation also occurred in Africa as well. However, early written records attest to African people's maintenance of a spiritual connection with the land and the power they derived from these associations (Zaudite-Selassie 2007: 38).

Nature in African Traditional Religion

It must be noted that the term "nature" is used interchangeably with the term "environment." There is no gainsaying that African religion entails a theology of nature. However, Kwesi Dickson lamented that this has not been fully studied and evaluated. He offers reasons to support the interpretation of African religions as a theology of nature. He writes:

> Usually the gods of Africans are interpreted as "nature gods", and on the surface, at least, it appears that they are: the Supreme Being is the creator of all things, giver of sun and wind and rain; Spirits have their abode in rivers, rocks, mountains, and trees; medicines are extracted from roots and leaves; and charms are usually made of physical substances. Nature, then, is the background against which religion is expressed and deity contracted. (Dickson 1983: 102)

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[1] "The Tree of Life: The River of Life" is adapted from the title of World Council of Churches (1994). The rape and degradation of women and the symbol earth are the concern of these captions and are used on the inside front cover.

[2] Lauter (1984). Chapter 2, written with the assistance of Dominique Rozenberg, analyzes the work of visual artist Käthe Kollwitz; Chapter 8 focuses on poetry by women.

If the foregoing does not provide sufficient grounds to recognize the place of nature in African traditional life, then surely Oduyoye's statement linking the mystery of nature to power structures that more often than not exclude women must be relevant. Oduyoye (1995: 31–2) commented: "Several West African communities have exclusive men's secret societies associated with creation and agriculture that provide the means for keeping order in the society. This is true of the Ogboni and Oro of the Yoruba and the Poro societies in Sierra-Leone."

Theorizing Purity Cross-Culturally

An exposition of culture is necessary before we theorize about purity. "Culture" has been defined as a whole way of life characteristic of a human society or grouping. Citing the Cultural Policy for Nigeria, Richard Okafor defines culture as: "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours" (Okafor 1997: 3).

Culture has both material and non-material components. The non-material aspect comprises inner behaviour, attributes, ideas, desires, values, and norms which are expressed in the form of customs and folklore…(Akintan 2002: 3). Mary Douglas is undoubtedly the best-known contemporary anthropologist who has dealt extensively with the subject-matter of purity. Her classic interdisciplinary collection of essays on *Purity and Danger* (Douglas 1966) examines the various ways in which the human body symbolically represents an agent of forming and maintaining identities. Quoting Mary Douglas, Fiona Bowie (2000: 45).writes:

> No experience is too lowly to be taken up in ritual and given a lofty meaning. The more personal and intimate the source of the ritual symbolism, the more telling its message … The body is a model, which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries, which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures. We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.

In any scholarly discussion of the concept of purity, the context must be identified. The Yoruba adage, *bayi laa se ni'le wa, eewo ibomiran*, translated as "this is how we behave in our house (hold)," comes to mind. Douglas's illustration of the body as a bounded system finds varying meanings, depending on the people and the culture in question. She goes on to give different and remarkable cross-cultural illustrations of the connection between purity rules and social structures. One focal point is her use of the terms "medical materialism" and "mystical participation."

These are defined respectively as: "attempts to explain away purity rules by reference to scientific, medical, or hygienic principles" and "the assumption that all rituals and regulations of *primitive* peoples are wholly irrational and have only a magical or mystical significance" (Bowie 2000: 46). Shafer Ingrid (2002: 121–36) has also dealt extensively with the nature of personhood. The foregoing provides a solid background for our discussion of purity among the Yoruba.

Ritual Purity and Yoruba Traditional Society

It is the Yoruba belief that Olodumare, the Supreme Being, is the creator and owner of society. Accordingly, the activities and actions of humans in society should be performed in a manner that is pleasing to the Supreme Being. Therefore, for the well-being of humans and society, humans should regulate their conduct accordingly. The government of society is seen as a religious affair. It is a system for sustaining a relationship between humans and the spiritual world, which comprises the Supreme Being and the pantheon. For this reason, the paramount Yoruba chief establishes a link between members of society and the gods. Thus a law-abiding society governed by the chieftaincy is guided in ways that are in harmony with the will of the Supreme Deity. Departure from this is considered objectionable and polluting. The concept of purity upheld among the Yoruba is based on conduct that is in holistic harmony.

Yoruba society regards cleanliness as paramount for the general well-being of the cosmos. It is noteworthy that purity for the Yoruba is an all-encompassing concept. It extends beyond the physical—keeping things clean and hygienic—to the metaphysical, even to the abode of the gods. This is because the Yoruba believe that one must be pure before one can approach Olodumare or his intermediaries. To repeat, in Yoruba traditional religion, purity is essential to approaching the gods and goddesses. In an exclusive interview with a herbalist,[3] the *Irunmọlẹ̀*[4] gave rules that suggest virtues that must not be ignored. An attempt to do so can throw the whole community into chaos. The *Irunmọlẹ̀* regarded purity as the most desirable quality that should be aspired to and maintained in Yoruba land.

Selected Yoruba Sayings on Purity

The Yoruba have sayings, adages, and proverbs to capture the essence of almost any subject-matter. In his study of the traditional culture of the Yoruba people and

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[3] This interview with a herbalist from Modakeke, Ile-Ife who wishes to be anonymous was carried out on May 15, 2008.

[4] The term *Irunmọlẹ̀* means earth-spirit (possibly from imọn = knowledge and ilẹ̀ = land, soil, earth) which is now used as a general term for spiritual/divine beings. See Hallgren (1988: 71).

citing relevant sources, Roland Hallgren (1988: 138) writes: "The Yoruba language … is exceptionally rich in proverbs (*owe*) … proverbs are one of the storehouses of the collective wisdom of the Yoruba forefathers, so that accurate transmission and correct use of proverbs are important features of the Yoruba culture."

In a collection of proverbs, Bolaji Olayinka (1997) also corroborates the above assertion that Yoruba proverbs (*owe*) are among the supreme collective intellectual achievements of Yoruba culture. They are quintessential to the collective wisdom of the Yoruba people, and are usually expressed in language forms of astonishing beauty, power, and subtlety (Olayinka 1997: 214). In emphasizing the essence of purity, a Yoruba saying, that is more often than not chanted, ridicules the impure and unclean and those that live in dirty environments:

Ọbun rairai
Ọbun ki lo se to toju ile?
O bimọ, O ko t'ọju ọmọ
Kudu legereode
Ile ko yatọ si ibi t'ệlệdệ nsun.
E wa wo ile ọmọluwabi bo se nja fikan,
E wa wo aisan onigbameji ran ọmọ oloorun
Imoọtoto b'ori arun m'ọle
E je ki a tọju ọmọ. (Bateye 2007)

The foregoing verses refer to a dirty woman and seek answers as to why she refused to take care of her environment and surroundings. It is lamentable that even her children are at risk as they are not properly cared for. Her house is likened to a pigsty. The saying goes on to contrast her filthy state with that of what it considers a healthy individual should be. The lesson is that cleanliness is essential for good health. People are encouraged to keep their houses spotless and children neat.

There is also a saying among the Yoruba that: *Imọtoto ile l'olori oun gbogbo, ệni fệ 'binrin ọbun, o'fowo rệkệ ệdệ*, that is, "the cleanliness of a house is paramount, whoever marries an unclean woman has his money set on traps," We may want to ask ourselves a very relevant question, why do both sayings talk about women? The answer is that the Yoruba strongly believe that female folk are the possessor and controller of the house and environment. This implies that if the woman is habitually clean, it follows that the husband and everyone in the house would also be clean. Many virtues that symbolize purity are meant to be embraced by the women folk. According to Yoruba belief, the woman is meant to take care of the man and so not much is expected from the man in terms of purity and the virtues that embrace purity. The task of the man is mainly to protect the woman and make ends meet for the family.

Another saying goes thus: *ọbun rairai Ni yio k'ệru afinju wộ'le*, which literally means "it is the very filthy woman that will bring in the luggage of a clean and fashionable person" (*sic*). Like the previous one, this saying also deals with gender; a wife who is dirty in all aspects of life will eventually make her husband seek

another clean and fashionable woman as his wife. The irony of it is that the one who is supposed to be the senior will literally carry the belongings of the new wife to the house. The foregoing saying is intricately linked to the concept of purity. This is because the Yoruba believe that women play a major role in the harmonious well-being and sanctity of a community. They thereby mystically regulate the flow of the seasons, fertility, and fecundity (Bateye 2006e, see also 2006d).

What follows is an exposition of the concept and practice of the purity system among the Yoruba. It examines ways Yoruba society conducts itself with regard to purity in terms of stigma and deviancy labelling theory. The concept of purity in Yorubaland is the act of remaining unblemished in the sight of God and humans. This emphasizes living harmoniously in relation to nature, divinity, and personality. If one comes into contact with something that stains one's purity, people exorcise the individual to remove the stigma or contamination.

Spheres of Purity among the Yoruba

The Yoruba divinity Obatala is the divinity of purity. Factors attributed to his being pure include the wearing of white clothing, drinking pure water every day, not taking alcoholic drinks, for example, palm wine, and abstaining from eating meat.[5] If eventually he comes across those things that are taboo to him, then such things blemish his purity. To remain unblemished and to maintain such a state of purity, it means those things that are taboo for him must not come near. Purity among the Yoruba encompasses various spheres. It cannot be rigidly compartmentalized as many of the spheres overlap.

Purity as an Act of Cleansing

People consciously share in individual or communal acts that bring about physical and spiritual wholesomeness. The oracle might prescribe certain steps that an individual should take in order to ward off evil resulting from ritual impurity. On a communal level, the Ife *edi* festival readily comes to mind. During this period a chief priest ordained for this purpose ritually carries the "ritual garbage" of the community to the forest. The "ritual garbage" is symbolic of all the evils in the community.[6] Purity in this sense presents the stance that people are seeking safety from the threat of evil.

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[5] Interview with Deji Adekunle Obembe, a renowned Ifa Priest and school teacher in Ile-Ife, April 26, 2008.

[6] Interview with Madam Wemimo Olayinka on May 5, 2008. Historical facts also corroborate this assertion.

Purity as Celibacy or Deliberate Sexual Abstinence

Conscious celibacy or sexual abstinence is seen as a form of purification. It is commonly practiced among those in high positions of power: that is, the priests, priestesses, and medicine men and women. It is believed that the act of copulation which stems from the goddesses of the earth/fertility has a way of reducing the potency of ritual powers. Hence, periodic or total sexual abstinence is believed to elevate the individual to a high realm of spirituality. In some instances, strong marriage vows that prohibit extra-marital activity are designed to ensure the purity of sexual union within the marriage contract, transgression of which leads to pollution that requires intense acts of purification if the offender is not to be killed as a consequence of breaking the vow (Bateye 2006e, see also 2006c).

Purity as Contact with Sacred Objects and Sacrificial Blood

Objects that have been set aside for the use of gods and goddesses are handled with great care. As is the case among other world religions, such holy items as relics of the saints and sacraments are treated with great care. It is believed that the utterance of prayers has cleansing value and is an important source of purification. As in many other parts of the world, blood in the Yoruba worldview has symbolic significance, whether it is sacrificial or menstrual. While sacrificial blood represents the substance that is pleasing and desirable to the gods, female reproductive blood is to the contrary. To the Yoruba, menstrual blood is considered not only impure in itself, but also as a potential source of contamination of what is deemed holy.

Purity as Circumcision

As in many African societies, transition to adulthood among the Yoruba is the time for prophylactic rites of purification. These rites protect the initiate from pollution during his or her state of liminality. It is believed that the uncircumcised is intrinsically polluted, which threatens the harmonious well-being of the community. More often than not, a total state of purity is not attained until the last rite of transition to adulthood.

Purity as Fasting

Fasting represents a symbolic and ritual act of sacrifice to honor the divinities as well as a means of cleansing the body. This may be observed periodically and as prescribed by the oracles. Similarly, in Islam the month of Ramadan is designated as a time for fasting, and Christians use the Lenten period as a protracted period to commemorate the passion of Christ. Until recently, Roman Catholic Church members fasted, especially on Fridays, to recall the passion of Christ. Generally, intense fasting as a form of purgation is widely associated with states of visionary ecstasy. Typically, the religious specialist prepares himself or herself to receive

extra-sensory and supernatural visions by abstaining from food and drink for long periods of time. Some become extremely emaciated and undergo symbolic death and eventually experience intense spiritual illumination.

Purity as Abstaining from Taboos and Unethical Behavior

From the foregoing perspective, another dimension of purity includes abstaining from those things that are regarded as taboos or unacceptable to one's religious obligations. "The term taboo (*tapu*): 'sacred' powerful and dangerous, usually associated with the avoidance of certain places, objects, or people. The term has been extended to refer to the avoidance of totemic animals or plants, or prohibitions on marrying of certain classes of kin (*sic*)" (Bowie 2000: 136).

Many things are taboo for different people, ethnic groups, and specific divinities. Taboos are prohibited actions, the breaking of which is followed by a supernatural penalty. In order to grasp the significance of the supernatural penalty, we must have a clear understanding of what a covenant relationship is. A covenant relationship with a divinity puts one under the obligation to obey all the regulations of the cult and observe its taboos (Awolalu 1979: 212). The Yoruba word for taboo is *eewọ̀*, which means, "things forbidden," "things not done." In the Ifa text *Odu Irosun Obere, eewọ̀* is conceived as sin or something that contravenes social norms. The message is that in a breach of any of them, one has personally desecrated the sanctity of the land and has offended someone. The text reads:

Ikun awo mọ̀gan, asa awo mokiti,
Okẹ̀rẹ̀ f'itakun sona nii s'awo egbeegun.
Ẹ̀yẹ̀le awo koto. Ẹ̀ga sese nii s'awo alegbede.
Awon mararun nii s'omo ikofa ile Ọ̀runmila.
Ifa ko won ni dida owo, won moo da,
O ko woọ̀n ni o okooro ẹ̀bo ni hiha won mo ha.
Ọ̀runmila wa sawo lo Egbe to jina gbungbun bi ojo,
Awon meta d'ale, awon meji nikan lo sooto.
Ọ̀runmila ni a kii se ko moo ba ikun awo mogan lo,
Eewo ko moo ba asa awo mokiti.
Bi n ban bi ni, ko moo ba okere fitakun sona tii s'awo egbeegun lo.
Ẹ̀ni ẹ̀lẹ̀ni ni ko moo ko feyele.
Ile rere l'egaa wo. Owo wa ese ngbon
Ati wole Barapetu a ba won lerin.
Ko wo momo wa kese momo gbon
Ile Barapetu ko l'ẹ̀ru

It can be translated as follows:

Ikun the Ifa priest of mọ̀gan
Asa the Ifa priest of mokiti

Ọkere who often makes a creeping stem
plant its pathway is the priest of egeegun.
Eyele the Ifa priest of koto,
Ega sese the Ifa priest of agbalede.
These five Ifa priests were once apprentices under Ọrunmila.
They were taught the art of divination to a perfection stage.
They were taught how to imprint Odu symbols.
They were also taught the preparation of sacrifices to a triumphant level.
Ọrunmila later traveled to far distant Egbe.
Three of them betrayed him and only two were loyal.
Ọrunmila declared (in a curse): things forbidden will always follow ikun,
The Ifa priest of mogan,
Taboos will always follow asa, the Ifa priest of mokiti,
Vengeance will always follow okere, the Ifa priest of Egbeegun,
who always makes a creeping stem his pathway.
(Contrarily he pronounced blessings on eyele and ega)
May people provide for places of abode for eyele,
May ega always have good places to rest (perch),
The hands are shivering, the legs are shaking,
To enter Barapetu's house is fearful.
Hands to stop shivering and
Legs to cease shaking,
No trepidation in Barapetu's house.

(from interview with Deji Adekunle Obembe, April 26, 2008)

Taboos may be general or particular, moral or ceremonial, secret or public, or merely imposed by custom. In this regard therefore, some taboos of a general kind are meant to apply to the entire community irrespective of clan, gender, or social status. In some cases they may apply only to males or females. Great festival occasions such as the annual festival in respect of an *orisa*, require a great deal of preparation by the officiating priests. They have to prepare themselves in order to be worthy and acceptable before the *orisa*. They have to observe certain *ewo* or codes of conduct, avoiding, coition, cursing, and fighting among other things, and they abstain from taking certain types of food, fruit, and drink, depending on the divinity in question (Adogame 1999: 127).

It must be noted that breaking taboos may not be morally wrong but sacrilegious for the cult concerned. For example, the Yoruba worshippers of the Orisa-nla divinity are forbidden to drink palm wine. This is because he is the divinity of holiness, and although it is not morally wrong for one to drink alcohol in moderation, it is forbidden for worshippers to do so in order to attain a higher level of perfection. It is noteworthy that worshippers of a particular divinity may not observe the taboos of other divinities. For example, while the worshippers of Orisa-nla may not drink palm wine, it is compulsory for the worshippers of Ogun to do so.

Furthermore, the breaking of taboos among the Yoruba signifies the desecration of the sanctity of things, places, or people and making them profane. To bring back purity, therefore, requires sacrifices and ritual actions. There are offences that are gender specific. These are generally taboos that discriminate against women. These feature prominently in relation to masquerades in that it is considered abominable for their secrets to be divulged to women. It is considered a bad omen for women to be seen going out at night during the Oro festival that celebrates the essence of masquerades. This author concurs with Adogame's findings that

> while most rituals seem to be performed either on women or because of women, there abound several central cults from which women are excluded …Women in Yoruba land are forbidden and excluded from handling the instruments of divination such as Ifa, their major means of learning about the will of the Supreme Being, divinities and ancestors. The exclusion of women from some community rituals had obvious political and social implications. .(Adogame 1999: 128)

Adogame goes on to assert:

> Religious provisions against pollution and de-sacralization of sacred space and time is keenly observed by women. Purification rituals, particularly on menstruation, are very common among women. In Yoruba religion, loss of blood through menstruation is believed to defile a woman and all that she touches. It is believed to render impotent or reduce the efficacy of any herbal medicine or charm. (Adogame 1999: 128)

Corroborating the foregoing, the renowned African feminist theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye states: "In the practice of traditional religion, a menstruating woman becomes untouchable; she is like a person preparing an offering. She is surrounded by the spirits to whom she is being offered; she must be avoided by mere mortals and she herself must avoid the company of others" (Oduyoye 1995: 116). It is paradoxical that blood is both sacred and taboo, that menstrual blood is treated ambivalently among the Yoruba. Oduyoye goes on to write: "On the other hand, free-flowing menstrual blood is seen as nature's sign of hospitality, and a preparation for the arrival of the ancestral spirits. Yet when this blood touches people who have no business getting close to it, it becomes a pollutant" (Oduyoye 1995: 119).

Furthermore, our research findings corroborate those of MacCormack and Draper. In their study of aspects of female sexuality in Jamaica, they asserted that, for women, menstrual blood signifies sexual and creative strength, but its loss is defined more ambivalently. Menstrual loss puts women in a "cold" and vulnerable situation, but it also cleanses them, therefore having a health-promoting and strengthening effect (MacCormack and Draper 1987; cf. Zauditu-Selassie 2007). They made the submission:

> "Menstruation is necessary to prevent us getting sick" and "The passing of blood shows you are in good health". A common expression for menstruation was that it was literally to "see your health". The same principle applies to the passage of other bodily substances such as urine and faeces. They should pass freely and unhindered to ensure inner cleanliness and thus health. (MacCormack and Draper 1987: 156)

Thus, purity among the Yoruba is intricately associated with health matters. This in itself is an all-encompassing phenomenon. Individuals and communities periodically flush out any waste material that may damage the equilibrium (Bateye 2006e: 8). Another dimension of purity is that of doing away with unethical behavior. This opens the Pandora's box of moral conduct. Rules for moral conduct, unlike those relating to taboos, have virtually universal applicability. Marcel Onyeocha has noted that because of a lack of literacy in traditional Nigerian society there was no written moral code of conduct. Nevertheless, moral laws were very much in existence. He commented: "Moral laws were generally conventional and regulated the individual members of the community and the entire community as a whole" (Onyeocha 1994: 113). It is significant to note that such laws cannot be called societal laws in the sense of regulations as no one can claim authorship of these rules of conduct. Their validity lies in the tradition that was handed down by the forebears of one generation to another. Subjects covered by Yoruba traditional moral codes include theft, rape, falsehood, cruelty, and murder. Sanctions concerning these violations of traditional morals are not gender discriminatory. Furthermore, according to the Yoruba, a person who lives a life of purity would not commit any act of betrayal. The Yoruba Ifa literary corpus contains a series of statements on this issue. For example, an Ifa text, *Odu Eji Ogbe*, says:

> *Ofofo nii p'ẹ̀ru, epe a si p'ole*
> *Alajọbi nii p'ayekan to ba s'ebi*
> *A gb'ori ile ajeku, agbori ile a j'eja,*
> *A gb'ori ile, a se bajẹ̀, asẹ̀ d'ọwọ ilẹ̀ ti a jọ mu.*
>
> Tale bearing kills a slave, cursing kills a thief,
> Family curse kills an erring member,
> We stay on the earth and ate rat (meat) together,
> We stay on the earth and ate fish together,
> We stayed on the earth and you betrayed the other
> Vengeance belongs to the earth on which we took
> a (solemn) covenant. (Bateye 2006a: 2)

Falsehood and covenant-breaking are condemned by the Yoruba. They say *ọdale a ba'le lọ*, that is, "a betrayer will perish with the earth." Honesty and frankness are highly valued virtues in the Yoruba *ẹ̀lẹ̀fẹ̀* (jester), who is expected to be an

agent of morality. The Yoruba say: *otitọ kii s'ina ironii f'ori irọ gbe*, which means, "truthfulness does not miss the way but dishonesty goes astray."

Purity vis-à-vis Stigmatization and Discrimination

Stigmatization and discrimination arising from impurity are found among the Ibos in eastern Nigeria, where a group of people called the Osu are ostracized as outcasts. Stigmatization is usually restricted among the Yoruba to cases dealing with health matters such as leprosy, mental disorders, and epilepsy. However the advent of the HIV and AIDS pandemic has made its victims become included in this category of stigmatization (see Bateye 2006b and Manus and Bateye 2006). The fate of people living with HIV is likened to that of Ibo Osu and Hindu "untouchables." For this reason, there is a reluctance for them to come out into the open. They bear their suffering in secret, in what Bateye has termed "a conspiracy of silence" (Bateye 2006b: 12). In the same vein, Manus lamented that:

> Many, many including staff and students have not yet brought themselves to accept that HIV infection is not a sufficient proof of someone's immoral life-style. Many members of the church and the theological community have not yet come to fully understand factors like ethnicity, gender, poverty, and sexual orientation as factors that are contributive to the spread of HIV/AIDS. (Manus 2005: 9)

In this context, this chapter agrees that there is still much to be done to make people reject stigma and discrimination. We need to revisit and correct certain unpleasant expressions and terminologies with which people label those living with HIV/AIDS. For the Yoruba, a notable label is *arun ti ko gboogun*: that is, "the disease that defies medication." Among the Ibo people, Manus provides vivid examples such as *obiri n' aja ocha*, "stick", "the divine rod," "sign of the end-time." He goes on to assert that

> such remarks are rather dis-empowering and murderous. Most of our institutions are high concentrations of PLWHAs [people living with HIV/AIDS] but whom, due to the damaging stigma and discrimination; refuse to declare their HIV status. Theological education should engage in active reflections and rigorous critique of our socializing influences in order to transform the campuses into HIV/AIDS friendly environments (Manus 2005: 9).

The detection of such in a person would bring shame not only to him or her but to the entire family. The Yoruba have a custom whereby marriage is regarded not as that of an individual but a contract between two families. When a suitor visits the family of his intended spouse, members of that family are dispatched to spy out and collect information about the suitor's family history. Such information is usually on health matters such as incurable diseases. Detection of HIV in a particular family

would cause it to completely lose its standing in society. Such a family would receive the stigma of impurity. Apart from these notable exceptions, stigmatization in Yoruba land is exercised as a traditional means of policing whereby those who have committed any offence in society although carried out in secret are literally brought out into the open and much to their shame. This is usually carried out through songs of insult, satire, and ridicule. It is significant that those singing such songs cannot be prosecuted in a court of law. Accordingly, this provides an avenue for society to confront deviant behavior without fear of harassment.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the concept of purity among the Yoruba in the midst of the clamor for safeguarding the environment. It has given a cross-cultural exposition of scholars' theories about culture and purity. The chapter examined Yoruba sayings on purity, recognizing the diverse spheres of purity and the stigmatization arising from them being broken. It is significant that people who are impure or polluted by communal reckoning, experience various forms of alienation. Even those who are mentally ill or mentally handicapped and, in recent times, living with HIV/AIDs suffer stigmatization and discrimination. Although women may not suffer sexual abuse in the context of purity, their self-esteem is more often at stake. It is noteworthy that women's roles in ensuring purity in all its ramifications cannot be over emphasized. This engenders a peaceful and eco-friendly atmosphere, and, above all, safeguards the integrity of creation.

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Chapter 12
The Impact of Christian Women's Organizations on Nigerian Society

Dorcas Olu Akintunde

Introduction

Women in Africa generally, and Nigeria in particular, play various roles as carers, mothers, and teachers. They also play significant roles in developing spiritual awareness and knowledge of human nature. They teach the principles that distinguish right from wrong. They encourage children to relate positively to each other and to take responsibility at family, local, and national levels. Similarly, they inspire them to participate fully in the community and help to develop an understanding of citizenship. The task of teaching the richness and diversity of culture and traditions also falls on women's shoulders. At the societal level, women are known to constitute the bulk of traders and farmers, while some engage in politics and others in technical professions. In the religious sphere, specifically in the traditional religion of the people, they serve as priestesses, diviners, healers, praise-singers, and the like. In Christianity, women are known as evangelists, preachers, and choristers, as well as constituting a good proportion of other church workers.

However, their areas of operation extend beyond their various religious organizations, as they engage in numerous humanitarian activities and ministries. This chapter explores the activities of Christian women's organizations within and outside their groups and the impact these have on Nigerian society at large.

The subordination of women has a long history which has affected their participation in theological education and in the ministry of the church. It is, therefore, expected that women are viewed from this negative perspective by the church in Africa generally and by the Nigerian churches in particular. The doctrine propagated made priesthood an exclusive function of the male, whereas, in African traditional religion, priesthood was shared by both male and female. For example, among the Zulu, women played prominent roles as rainmakers, a position highly esteemed among the people (Nthamburi 1991: 122). The Akan of Ghana also have the institution of Queen Mothers, who play the role of priests (Oduyoye 1998). In the worship of Obatala among the Yoruba, women are the principal characters, and the Ato in the Egungun (masquerade) festival is a woman (Faseke 1998).

It is, however, important to note that there was a remarkable change in the nineteenth century, when women left their supportive and listening roles to be active in the propagation of the gospel and in the spread of Christianity. The Disciples

of Christ and the Christian Women's Band of Missions, founded in Cincinnati in 1874, made a tremendous impact in missionary activities in the Middle East (Blish 1952). Hollenweger also mentions a number of female Pentecostal missionaries working in situations where men find it difficult to evangelize. In like manner, at the beginning of the twentieth century the majority of the missionaries from Europe and USA were women, and they engaged in mission work such as teaching, nursing, volunteer work in prisons, Old People's Homes, and orphanages (Zimmerman 1985). The role of women is not only noticed in Europe; it is equally recognized in Nigeria, as discussed below.

Christian Women's Groups in Nigeria

Women have always served as the backbone of church-related work (Aquino 1994: 43). Maria Clara Bingemer reiterates this view thus:

> Women carry on their shoulders a large part of the actual work of the Church. In the base community and the parish, in the schools, movement and pastoral work, women, both nuns and laywomen, are present as coordinators, catechists, enablers, giving of their best, their time, their warmth, their strength, their guts, their lives, even their blood. (cited in Ayegboyin 1996: 28)

It is clear from the citation above that women are not passive in church activities; rather, they contribute to the renewal of the church, combining experience with commitment to new ecclesial structures in Christianity. This has led to the formation of women's groups. Notable among these in Nigeria are the Foursquare Women International (FWI) of the Four Square Gospel Church, the Women Missionary Union (WMU) of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (1916) (see Awolalu 1976), and the Catholic Women's Union (CWU), of the Catholic Church. Others include the Women's Guild and the Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church, the Women's Fellowship of the Methodist Church, the Women's League of the African Church and the Ladies Praying Band of the Church of the Lord (Aladura). There are also the Dorcas Band of the Seventh Day Adventists, the Ordained Minister's Wives Association (1972) and the Good Women Association (GWA) of the Christ Apostolic Church (1944). The Young Women's Christian Association, on the other hand, is interdenominational.

However, this trait is not limited to Nigerian society, as such organizations exist in other countries. Examples are the Ladies Aid Societies in North America, the Interdenominational Women's Union Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands, which was founded in 1861, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, incorporated in 1874 and the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church founded in 1869 (Steady 1978). In their different contexts, their presence is felt within and outside their denominations. Let us consider their aims and objectives.

Common Characteristics of Christian Women's Groups

Because of lack of space, we cannot discuss the aims and objectives of these women's groups individually. But what they have in common and what they have set as general targets include the following: to live a sincere and steadfast Christian life; to promote the religious, moral, and social advancement of church members; to engage in educating the children, by instilling the fear of God in them; to contribute to the progress of the church; to care for the sick, the aged and the poor, among whom are widows; to ensure that women live according to the articles of faith guiding the church; to train younger women in vocational work; to awaken in members a sense of social responsibility, aimed at improving their communities; to commit members to faith as Christians in order to understand Jesus Christ and to share his love for all people.

Other objectives are to grow in the knowledge and love of God; to develop prayer and spiritual growth in families; to study the Word of God and to reflect it in family life and marriage so as to distinguish them in society; to uphold Christ's teachings on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding; to encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church; to maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer; and to promote conditions in society favorable to stable family life and the protection of children. A glance at these objectives indicates the scope of their ministry within the church and society at large. We shall, therefore, consider their contribution to, and impact on, the growth and development of the church in Nigeria.

Impact of Christian Women's Groups on the Growth and Development of the Church

It is not an overstatement to claim that women form the backbone of the church in Africa (Protus: 1995). They constitute the major contributors to church finances (Tetlow 1985: 23). They are very much concerned about the church, and form the majority membership everywhere. Tetlow's comments also show that women are for others and are concerned about continuity and unity in the church (Bosch 1997: 328). Women are an intrinsic part of church and society and scholars have proved their preponderance over men (Deberg 1996). Acting individually or as groups, they make a remarkable impact on the church. Corroborating this, Bosch observes that

> the societies were all organized on the voluntary principle and dependent on their members' contribution of time, energy and money … People of the most modest position and income became donors and prayer supporters of projects many thousands of miles away. Women came along, to play a leading role in various agencies, far earlier than they could decently appear in most other walks of life. (cited in Ayegboyin 1996: 145)

Acknowledging this, Deberg says "North American Christianity has been profoundly shaped by women's organizations. Many Protestant congregations owe their survival to Ladies Aid Societies. Large scale denominational efforts were organized and financed by women's missionary societies. The Roman Catholic Mission to America depended on women in religious orders" (Deberg 1996: 318–19).

Thus, women in Christian ministry spend their resources, time, and energy for the advancement of "God's kingdom on earth.". And this is true of Christian women's organizations in Nigeria as exemplified in the activities of the Women Missionary Union and the Good Women Association; the former have established churches through WMU summer schools and camps. Similarly, many old mission churches have been implanted with new enthusiasm and eagerness through the Holy Spirit (Oshun 1983; Olayiwola 1987). In like manner, the Good Women Association of the Christ Apostolic Church has gained converts to the church through various outreach programs. The group has been involved in house-to-house evangelism and distribution of tracts in market places and other centers (Falusi 1982). The Association is also known for the gift of prophecy—a channel through which the Lord speaks to his people, directing their affairs and protecting them from all evil.

Furthermore, these women's groups are renowned for their visiting work, especially as they engage in counseling and, in most cases, distribute gifts such as dresses, money, and foodstuffs, for new converts as well as for 'lukewarm' members. This is typical of the communal life of Christians in the early church (Ayegboyin 1996: 145ff.). These groups were also able to contribute to church growth and devise interesting programmes for the youth in spiritual and social activities, thus encouraging them to be active members of the church.

Notable among the contribution of Christian women to ministry is the financial support given to the church. The Women Missionary Union for example, contributed annually to the six different kinds of offerings in the convention: that is, during the weekly Convention Fund, Mothers' Day offering, Baptist Women's Day of Prayer, Home Mission offering, and the Young Memorial Scholarship Fund (Fiorenza 1983; Manus 1987; cf. Schottroff 1995: 69ff.). The Good Women Association, in like manner, contributed one pound and seven shillings in 1944 towards evangelism under the leadership of Madams D.T. Ajayi, Bolajoko, Odubanjo, Brown, and Johnson. Therefore, women have gone beyond providing menial services in the church. They have been fruitful by making good use of the gifts, skills, and potential which God has given them.

The Role of Christian Women's Groups in Society

Here we want to examine the role and impact of Christian women's groups within Nigerian society, in order to assess how women have left their passive roles in society and are now actively involved in the welfare of their society. These roles can be seen in the areas of education, health, philanthropic activities, welfare services, and prison visitation (Deberg 1996: 319).

Education

"Educate a woman and you educate a nation" has remained the guiding principle for Christian women. This is evident from a series of success stories about women in the field of education. The Catholic Women Organization (CWO) lays emphasis on the education of girls generally, with the aim of preparing them for their future roles in church and family, and the education of youths for the widening opportunities of life. Similarly, the Mothers' Union of the Anglican Diocese has a scholarship scheme for students at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions (Ayegboyin 1996: 153). In like manner, the establishment of a vocational school at Oke-Bola, Surulere Street, is linked with the efforts of the Young Women's Christian Association. This group provides hostel accommodation for young women in particular to prevent their falling into unscrupulous hands in society. Adult literacy classes were also organized and career development centers were instituted. These had in no small measure raised awareness for women who up to then had been engaged in traditional domestic duties. In essence, women's awareness and dignity are being uplifted, thus creating in them aspirations for leadership roles in all fields of human endeavor.

Mention must also be made of the involvement of both the Good Women Association and the Women Missionary Union in the educational sector. The Good Women Association founded the Babalola Memorial Girls Grammar School, Ilesa, Osun State in 1959 for the education of girls in general and, particularly, of the Christ Apostolic Church girls (Mbiti 1988). The Women Missionary Union has been involved since 1942 in giving scholarships to Baptist girls, and particularly, to those in Baptist Girls College, Idi Aba, Abeokuta with the cooperation and assistance of the sister body in the USA. Coupled with this, Baptist girls have benefited from the Association's overseas scholarship which has enabled beneficiaries to study outside the country (Ezeanya 1976). The Women Missionary Union establishes primary, secondary, and special institutions, as well as opening small-scale industries in some areas. They also have premarital counseling centers, where girls are counseled in order to avoid pre-marital sex, and on how to choose life partners and careers. Girls learn handicrafts like weaving, tie and dye, household decoration, and confectionary making. With these efforts, the women's groups have succeeded in employing education as a means of molding people of all ages according to societal needs.

Health Care Delivery

Christian women's groups in Yorubaland embark on health delivery for their communities and firmly uphold the maxim *ilera loogun oro*, "Health is Wealth." Mbiti (1988) rightly observes the following about women in African religion: "Women are extremely valuable in the sight of the society. Not only do they bear life, but they nurse, they cherish, they give warmth, they care for life… ." Likewise, Ezeanya (1976) celebrates the position of women in indigenous communities.

As members of the community of faith (Mainor 1988), women take health and healing seriously. They provide resources to assist in restoration to perfect health. For these women's groups, a human being is created to enjoy a healthy body, mind, and spirit. Illness, in their perception, is an anomaly to be addressed and eradicated. Therefore, they share with the church in its mission of healing and reconciling, binding up wounds, ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, and giving of their substance to those who suffer.

In Nigeria, there are Catholic Hospitals run by Reverend Sisters which, by their degree of commitment, dedication, and care cannot be compared with the standards existing in government hospitals. Similarly, we must mention the roles of the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) Sisters in the medical area. Leper colony and homes for the handicapped were established for the care of the inmates, who are not just accommodated and fed, but taught to be self-reliant, through the teaching of handicrafts.

The care of the motherless was also one of the major concerns of the Mothers' Union of the Anglican Communion. In Ilesa Diocese, the Union took over the case of the children left by a couple who were involved in a domestic accident. The establishment of the Christ Apostolic Church School of Midwifery in 1959 by the Good Women Association was a landmark. Thousands of midwives who have trained in the school are now operating in different parts of the Mission within and outside Nigeria. The (Ile Igbagbo) "Faith Homes," staffed by experienced and trained midwives have become a spiritual refuge or a haven of hope for many within and outside the assembly. Worthy of note is the Women Missionary Union's commitment towards the promotion of good health and the prevention of communicable diseases peculiar to women and children.

Philanthropic Activities

Visits to orphanages, prison yards, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, schools for the deaf and dumb, schools for the blind, isolation camps for lepers, and the like during festive periods reveal and confirm the enormous philanthropic spirit of Christian women in ministry. Both print and electronic media feature the donation of clothes, food-stuff, cash, and so on to these homes by women's groups. The Good Women Association, the Women Fellowship of the Methodist Church, and the Foursquare Women International were all at one time or another present at these homes to assist the inmates in kind and cash.

Prison Visitation

With regard to prison ministry, the Women's League of the African Church, the Ladies Praying Band of the Church of the Lord (Aladura), and the Ordained Ministers Wives Association of the Christ Apostolic Church play important roles.

Mrs. Aina, the President of the group in the Christ Apostolic Church, declares that the Association was moved by the Civil Liberty Organisation's report in 1993 about the plight of female prisoners. The report states: "in most female prisons, childbirth takes place without adequate medical attention or infrastructure. Most of these children grow up in prison and are kept there sharing the same cell with their mothers and other inmates." (Ehonwa 1993: 15).

There was also the case of a nursing mother of a 14-month-old baby held in detention since November 1985, which was reported in one of the Nigerian newspapers (*The Guardian,* Lagos, September 1, 1990). The extent of damage done to such children cannot be imagined. There are negative traits which children acquire during their stay in prison, which later have effects on the overall development of such children. Similarly, the psychological damage imprisonment has done to such children plays a significant part in their mental and social development. The members of this society also note that the absence of good feeding, adequate medication, or clothing can hinder a child's development. Corroborating this, the Civil Liberties Organisation in its 1993 report says:

> The prison is an abnormal environment for a child and it affects all the development and socialization phases of the child. The quantity and the quality of food is grossly inadequate, and this leads to malnutrition, and retardation of some development process such as intelligence at an early stage, when the child needs them most. A child reared in this state will find it difficult to adapt in the mainstream environment, as the child is already being groomed as a deviant that will come up and swell prison population in the near future. (Ehonwa 1993: 15)

Such children will become a nuisance not only to themselves but to society at large. So the women's societies embarked upon ministry to Prison Houses in Ibadan and its environs like other charitable organizations that are concerned about the plight of inmates and especially that of women and children. Numerous inmates have been converted to Christianity. For example, at the special programs organized during Easter 2000, 30 were baptized, while 18 others gave their lives to Christ. Similarly, female inmates have been helped to acquire skills which have facilitated their smooth rehabilitation. The majority of the inmates have also benefited from counseling sessions and consequently found solutions to their psychological problems. There has also been the provision of drugs for the treatment of minor ailments of babies and pregnant inmates.

For these women's groups, the notion that we are all interrelated and whatever affects one affects all holds sway. However, there are still other areas where the Christian women's groups ought to look into in order to achieve an egalitarian society.

Conclusion: Looking Ahead

From what has been said above, it is clear that these Christian women's groups have made a tremendous impact on Nigerian society. However, much more could be done in their pursuit of a holistic ministry. Christian women in ministry can assist in alleviating the problems faced by widows in society. Widowhood rituals are detrimental to the health of women, while some infringe upon their rights in the economic sector (Mama 1996: 79). The establishment of a "Widows Venture", through which women in this category could be gainfully employed would in no small measure solve some of their financial problems. Similarly, Christian women's groups in Nigeria could emulate the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, which published a manual for the counseling of widows that included advice on how to cope with such things as depression and neglect. Widows in that context have benefited immensely from this as the manual also guides on the period that the widow could observe mourning rites without compromising her faith. It also contains suggestions about things to keep widows occupied throughout their period of seclusion.

Women's groups could cry out against the exorbitant bride price which reduces women to objects or property to be owned. Eradication of this practice would allow the man to regard the wife as a partner rather than cattle "brought with a huge amount."Women in Christian ministry should assist women who engage in prostitution. A survey conducted by Amina Mama suggests that most African women engaged in prostitution do so as a means of alleviating poverty, while some venture into it in order to be able to feed their children (Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State, news bulletin, May 27, 2001). Sex workers should be counseled that there are decent and honorable ways of caring for children and scouting for survival without desecrating the "abode of the Holy Spirit." They should be made to realize that their bodies are sacred and it is only when they respect their bodies that people will respect them. Thus, churches, government and NGOs should be called upon by women's groups to set up small-scale ventures to employ prostitutes in alternative vocations.

The organizations should develop an interest in cases of violence such as rape or wife battering. Survivors of rape find it embarrassing to report such cases to the law enforcement agencies because of the public shame and social stigma. However, with the establishment of a center for such purposes, women would not hesitate to disclose their plights to officials. Women's groups should be actively involved in the war against AIDS. The fact that women have no control over their spouse's sexual partners makes them vulnerable to this and other sexually transmitted diseases. Thus, the women's groups should spearhead the campaign for the eradication of prostitution, hold counseling sessions, and appeal to all and sundry to be faithful to their spouses. As religious groups, this could be achieved through campaigns within the church and other houses of worship.

Women's groups should be involved in promoting the reproductive rights of women. Counseling as to the number of children one should have for proper upkeep and training, and safeguarding the health of the mother in order to reduce

the high mortality rate, should be issues of concern. Collaborating with other women's organizations within the country will reduce this to the barest minimum. Other aspects of women's life that should be addressed are those of abortion and early marriage. A case in point is the effort of the Catholic Women Organization in Jos in May 2001. Members of this group turned out to condemn legislation in favor of abortion.

In addition, Christian women in ministry should champion awareness of the rights of women. Such rights which the majority of women folk are not aware of include the right to life, equality, liberty and security, equal protection under the law, and freedom from all forms of discrimination. Others are the right to the highest standard attainable in physical and mental health, the right to just and favorable conditions of work, the right not to be subjected to torture, or to any other cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment or punishment. Women are also entitled to equal enjoyment and protection as spelled out by legal rights and freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural and other fields. Most women in Nigeria probably live in rural areas and are low-income earners who do not enjoy the basic amenities of life.

In this chapter, we have traced the place of women in the history of the church, as well as assessing the role of Christian women in ministry in Nigeria. The chapter has challenged women's groups to pay attention to the areas of concern, particularly those that affect women in Nigerian society. The more attention they give to these areas, the more influence they can exert on the church and wider Nigerian society**.**

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Chapter 13

The Northern Nigerian Muslim Woman: Between Economic Crisis and Religious Puritanism

Oluwakemi Abiodun Adesina

Introduction

This chapter highlights the interface between religion and economics in the inner recesses of the Muslim stronghold of Northern Nigeria. Muslim women in the Northern part of Nigeria are among the most strictly secluded Muslim women in Africa (Coles and Mack 1991: 4). This disadvantaged position has placed a number of Northern Muslim women in a precarious situation, one that makes the adoption of coping strategies inevitable in a highly patriarchal society. From that perspective, this chapter looks at the individual lives, fate, and circumstances of Muslim women in that region within the contexts of economic adjustment, religious puritanism, and gender inequality. It seeks to evaluate the coping strategies adopted by Muslim women in the face of the rampaging doctrine of Islamic fundamentalism in an age of active economic crisis. By using the lives of two women convicted for *zina* (adultery) by Shari'ah courts in Northern Nigeria in the early years of the twenty-first century, I contend in this chapter that economic adjustment and religious puritanism have different effects on men and women. It also reflects how these phenomena intersect with patriarchy within society. More importantly, the chapter emphasizes how women responded to their circumscribed economic and social mobility through their seclusion, lack of education, lack of skills, and early marriage.

However, in recognition of the fact that gender varies between cultures, this chapter explores how Northern and Southern Nigerian Muslims' interpretations of Islamic practices affect Muslim women at different levels of society, and how this relates to the widespread debate over the fate of the two Northern Nigerian women—Safiya Hussein Tungar-Tudu and Amina Lawal—who were tried and convicted by Islamic courts in the north for having engaged in *zina*.

Two Women Accused of *Zina*

Safiya Hussein, a 35 year-old mother-of-five—the first woman to be sentenced to death by stoning—is the fifth of twelve children, born to an illiterate herbal doctor

father in the remote poverty-stricken village of Tungar Tudu, in Chimola district of the Gwadabawa Local Government Area of Sokoto State (Kalu 2003: 394; see also Lamido 2003). Safiya was married off at the age of 12, when she began the harsh and difficult life of a typical Northern Nigerian wife. Her marriage, and two subsequent marriages, did not last, as is often the case in the region's particular culture of Islam. Divorced by her third husband in 1998, she began receiving the attention of another man whom she alleged raped her (Lamido 2003).

Safiya's Shari'ah troubles began on December 23, 2000, when she was reported to the *Hizbah* group—local Shari'ah implementation committee—by her younger brother, a fisherman and member of a 'fanatical, pro-orthodox *izalatu* (Izalatul-Bid' ah Wa Iqamat al' Sunnah group)—a movement that opposes innovation and strives to guard against loss of religious faith (Kalu 2003: 394). Safiya was taken to the police station at Gwadabawa, where she was detained and charged, first to the lower Shari'ah court and then transferred to Gwadabawa upper Shari'ah court, presided over by Mohammadu Bello Sunyinnawal (Kalu 2003: 394). She was granted bail and the hearing of her case began in earnest on July 3, 2001. It is worth noting that Safiya conceived her baby a month before the implementation of Shari'ah in Sokoto State in June 2000 (Lamido 2003). She was, however, condemned to death by stoning on October 9, 2001 in the Gwadabawa upper Shari'ah court (Amnesty International USA 2003: 1). The execution of her sentence was deferred because she was pregnant. However, the man—Yakubu—whom she accused of getting her pregnant was released because there were no eye-witnesses (Kalu 2003: 395). Safiya did not need a witness. Her witness was written all over her; she was pregnant. And in the Maliki School of jurisprudence pregnancy is *prima facie* evidence of *zina.* She was to be stoned after weaning her baby (Kalu 2003: 396). In response to her death sentence, Safiya is quoted to have said in the Hausa language: "I felt like dying that day [of the sentence] because of the injustice. I never thought there would be such a penalty. It is because I am poor, my family is poor, and I am a woman" (Lamido 2002).

What ensued was a battle for Safiya's life. There were protests from all over the world to save Safiya's life, to ensure that her daughter—Adamah—was not denied the joy of having her mother's love and care and. Twenty human and women's rights groups came together under the umbrella Safiya Must Not Die Campaign (SMNDC) to make sure the verdict was not carried out (Kalu 2003: 398). The Grand *khadi* and the other judges of the Shari'ah court of appeal held a contrary view to that of the campaigners, saying:

> It is not allowed for a person to beg for another who has been brought before a court for the offence of theft or *zina* punishment. It is compulsory to punish them with *Hadd* punishment if they are found guilty. Even if they swear not to do it again; and they change into good people. Because the issue of the *Hadd*, if

> it is before an Imam and the suspect is found guilty, this is Allah's right; it is not proper for a person to save another from *Hadd* punishment.[1]

Amina Lawal was the second woman to be sentenced to death by stoning for having a child—Wassila—out of marriage. At the beginning of the court cases, Amina Lawal was a 30-year-old woman, who could neither read nor write. At this time, she lived with her father, his two wives and numerous children in Kurami, Katsina State. Amina was sentenced to stoning by a Shari'ah court in Bakori, Katsina State on March 22, 2002. She was to be buried up to her neck and then have average-sized stones thrown at her head until she was dead (Koinange 2004). Like Safiya, she was a poor woman who was seduced and abandoned by her lover. She insisted she was not guilty and that the man—Yahaya Muhammad—who impregnated her had promised to marry her. The man however, denied paternity and was supported by witnesses who testified he did not have a sexual relationship with Amina. The accused man was also freed, as in Safiya's case. It is important to state that both women were not stoned and have regained their freedom. Safiya was freed in March 2002 and Amina in September 2003. Safiya won her appeal by claiming that she had sex out of wedlock before the commencement of Shari'ah in Sokoto State. Safiya had to change her stand on how she became pregnant as the court case progressed. All avenues were explored in order to save her life. At the initial stage she had accused her neighbor—Yakubu—of rape. She had this to say of what took place between her and Yakubu:

> He met me in the bush, the whole thing turned to madness. He subdued me with his power and assaulted me. There was also a time I went to a nearby village. He subdued me again and had carnal knowledge of me. It happened three times. There is no King like Allah. I told him this thing you've done to me, I leave you in the hands of Allah, because I did not willingly give myself to you … For months, I did not tell anyone for shame. (quoted in Uguru 2003: 11)

However, a deeper analysis of the crime would reveal that *zina* in their case was committed for economic reasons:

> Two years after her (Safiya) divorce from Yusuf S. of Birni Kware, she developed a casual romantic relationship with a farmer and fisherman, Yakubu Abubakar. From all indications, the enticement included occasional gifts of small amounts of money and a promise of marriage. She was not keen on marriage offer but needed the occasional gifts because she lived in abject poverty, had the custody of four children, and lived with her aged parents and a brother who is a fisherman. (Kalu 2003: 394)

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[1] Certified True Copy, *Transcript of Sharia Court of Appeal Sokoto State*, 25 March 2002, p. 44—cited by Kalu (2003: 401).

Economic Crisis and Patriarchy

The experiences of a number of women in Northern Nigeria in the 1990s and 2000s provides a roadmap for understanding how economic crises affect men and women differently. There are particular ways in which capitalism intersects with patriarchy within each society and is therefore conditioned by both historical and contemporary forces (Gordon 1996: 5). The two women mentioned earlier were found guilty and sentenced to death by stoning; the *hadd* (punishment) for this offence. But the men who impregnated them faced no consequences for their crimes. In the absence of four reliable witnesses, who were expected to have seen the actual sexual intercourse, the Nigerian Shari'ah Courts discharged the accused men.

Islam in Northern Nigeria affects women's freedom, and therefore access to education, socio-economic advancement, and participation in politics, more profoundly than in the south (Yusuf 1991: 91). Despite these socio-cultural differences, women throughout Nigeria have much in common in their conditions of life and the problems they face (Yusuf 1991: 91). It is against this backdrop that the comparison between these two groups of Muslims within the same polity is adopted because it is from their "similarities and differences that we can learn" (Stanley 2002: 32).

Many dimensions to the Shari'ah case have been addressed by scholars as well as by the international and local media. Some of the issues raised include the gender-bias evident in the judgments, the social class of the judged, and the inappropriateness of the Shari'ah. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, a prolific writer on Shari'ah, maintains that there is substantial disagreement among Muslim scholars concerning the treatment of women in Islamic jurisprudence. He asserts that

> even a cursory student of Islamic history knows that all the trappings of gender inequality present in Muslim Society have socio-economic as opposed to religious roots. The excessive restriction of women and other manifestations of male domination are no more an integral part of Islam as a religion than, say, the sanctification of the Arabic language and the tendency towards institutionalized racism which appear in some literatures of those days. Muslim men, like men everywhere, are the last to accept that gender inequality is a social contraption rather than a religious imperative. This is natural not only because men are the ultimate beneficiaries of this inequality but also only those who are victims of injustice tend to see it and appreciate the absurdity of attributing it to God. (Lamido 2003; See also Kalu 2003: 395 and Coles and Mack 1991: 5)

Northern Women and the Crisis of Adjustment

Nigeria is an oil-rich country that has not provided for its people. It is a country that has failed to provide the basic needs of life—food, good roads, shelter, access to quality education, electricity, job opportunities, and security of life and

property. Over the years people have responded in different ways to these socio-economic problems, which became more pronounced with the adoption of the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Program in 1986. Parents have failed in their responsibilities toward their children; they no longer feed, clothe, or send their children to school—they have adopted different modes of feeding the family. In this kind of situation what should a girl who has been forced into marriage as a teenager do for a living? Particularly when she has been secluded and in a society where even graduates are unemployed? Marriage is the basic, assumed, and almost inevitable *rite de passage* into adulthood for women. It is also the desired and actual situation of most Hausa women much of the time, particularly in their younger years (Puttin 2002: 17–18). The career strategies which women pursued were marriage and remarriage; courtesanship (*karuwanci*) and non-marriage (*jawarci*)—were also seen as active career options (Puttin 2002: 14).

Children also began to fend for themselves from the age of 5 by hawking wares for their parents—mostly amongst girls, and the boys became bus conductors. Older girls of about 12 engaged in prostitution and the young men in armed robbery. Married women are not excluded from this booming trade in prostitution. Suffice it to say that the higher the level of educational attainment of these young men and women, the higher their level of sophistication in these trades.

In particular, it can be argued that the seclusion of these two women (Safiya and Amina) and their lack of education have restricted their aspirations and means of sustenance to a "career" in marriage. This is particularly so, because "educational opportunities are central to women's situations in Nigeria" (Yusuf 1991: 91). Seclusion implies the restriction of women to their homes. This restriction is used to protect women from their sexuality or, rather, to protect the men from women's sexuality. It is considered that women's sexual power is an ultimate danger to men (Eisler 1995: 273). Protecting men from the sexual powers of women has limited the lives of women to the private sphere, thus preventing them from overcoming their socio-economic problems without the help of men. These gender identities were internalized in the Muslim North during primary socialization and reinforced through social control mechanisms. The socio-economic disadvantaged position in which the Muslim society of Northern Nigeria pushed women and the Nigerian economic crises might perhaps have placed these women in the predicament in which they found themselves. This is not to say they did not violate Qur'anic injunctions which enjoin them not to commit adultery, but from the look of things, the governments of the twelve Shari'ah states have been insensitive to the plight of these Nigerians. Instead of looking for ways of alleviating poverty and saving their people from the socio-economic quagmire in which they have found themselves, albeit at the instance of selfish corrupt leaders that have ruled the country—the governors have complicated the lives of the people—particularly the poor.

In Northern Nigeria Shari'ah law was believed to be the answer to Nigeria's problems. Ahmed Sanni Yerima, the governor of Zamfara State and the first governor to launch Shari'ah in the North had, in the campaign prior to his election, promised to institute Shari'ah in order to reform morals in society. This

had significant influence on the people's outlook. But there is a larger historical-economic reality captured by Ogbu Kalu:

> This [introduction of Shari'ah] struck a chord among the masses who felt that their poor conditions were a result of the ethics of the rich, who had abandoned the dictates of Islam, ignored Shari'ah and garnered wealth without due concern for the poor.…The Chief of the Federal Government Information Unit in Gusau admitted that many families watched helplessly as their children dropped out of school and squandered their youthful lives in debauched lifestyles and armed robbery gangs. Life in the state was insecure and many saw the judgment of God whose laws as embodied in the Shari'ah had been abandoned. A restoration of the Islamic imperatives of Islam would cure the moral ills of society. (Kalu 2003: 389–90)

However, Muhammad Asad (quoted in Lamido 2002: 4) argues that every Muslim must be assured of an equal standard of living proportionate to the resources at the disposal of the community in Islamic states where Shari'ah can be established:

> The Islamic state must be so constituted that every individual, man and woman, may enjoy that minimum material well-being … for there can be no real happiness and security and strength in a society that permits some of its members to suffer undeserved want while others have more than they need. Where the state does not fulfill its duties with regard to every one of its members, it has no right to invoke the full sanction of criminal law (*hadd*) against the individual transgressor, but must confine itself to milder forms of administrative punishment.

In other words, the ideal Islamic state should be that state where everyone can have access to the basic necessities of life. It is appropriate to note, however, that conditions in the 12 Northern states that adopted the Shari'ah fell short of Islamic recommendations. From this viewpoint, it could be argued that these Northern states did not launch the necessary socio-economic conditions that could alleviate the problems of the citizenry before instituting Shari'ah law. The situation was rather compounded. To this end, Lamido opined that the *raison d'être* for Shari'ah law was multidimensional and not strictly for religious motives (Lamido 2002: 12).

The Islamic law, Shari'ah, is the merging of Qur'anic precepts with local practices and, as such, is not divine law (Lamido 2002: 12). However, the Qur'an contains a substantial number of verses with a bearing on law, most of which are not directly connected to the Shari'ah law. Those with legal bearing are mostly in the areas of family regulation, such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance (Adekoya 1998: 11, 13). They are based on human and mostly male interpretations of divine revelations (Imam 2003: 1). The schools of Islamic Jurisprudence are four in number: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, and Hanbali (Imam 2003: 1). Although the differences between these schools are minor, they have been significant regarding

gender issues (Bodman 1998: 10). The Maliki School is in operation in both civil and criminal spheres in Nigeria (Yakubu 2003: 2). In Ayesha Imam's opinion,

> neither women nor men require marriage guardians in *Hanafi* law—a huge difference from the *Maliki* School where fathers have the right to determine the husband of never-married daughters. In *Maliki* law women have a right to divorce on demand, which will be upheld by courts in Nigeria, regardless of the husband's consent—this is not so in other schools of Muslim laws. It is only in the dominant view of the *Maliki* School that pregnancy outside marriage is accepted as evidence of *Zina* (unlawful sexual intercourse). While a majority of Muslim jurists accept contraceptive use and abortion up to 40 days, a minority does not. …These and other diversities are certainly not minor but have profound implications for women's lives and choices (Imam 2003).

The practice of Shari'ah law dates back to the Islamization of the complex Hausa states that emerged after the sixteenth century. Since that time there have been three major developments in the implementation of Shari'ah law. They are: the Sokoto Caliphate (c.1807), indirect rule by the British (1903), and during the 1979 constitutional debate. The establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate by Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio marked the formal introduction of a "new social order based on Islamic principles, with justice, fair taxation and moral purity." This period marked the beginning of seclusion in Northern Muslim societies (Imam 1991). Gbadamosi and Ajayi (1980: 347) corroborated this: "with establishment of the Sokoto caliphate, the position of Islam was consolidated in Northern Nigeria. Islam became the official religion of the State, supplying the laws and dominating the intellectual and cultural life of the people." Under the system of indirect rule, the British government allowed the continuation of pre-existing political and legal systems but prohibited laws it regarded as repugnant, such as amputation and stoning. It replaced them with fines and jail terms for theft and hanging for capital crimes (Yakubu 2003: 2). The British authorities considered the Shari'ah courts as a variant of the customary laws recognized in the other parts of the country (Imam 1991: 5).

At Independence on October 1, 1960 the Nigerian nation had been polarized; the Northern Nigerian politicians were favored by the British, but those in the South had an edge over the North due to its natural resources and Western education (Cooper 1998: 33). There were struggles over the control of bureaucracy and the economy (Laitin 1982: 413). For the better part of independent Nigeria, the Northern people of Nigeria have ruled the country and have always demanded full implementation of Shari'ah—the inclusion of capital punishment and the establishment of the Federal Shari'ah Court of Appeal. This was based on the belief that the Shari'ah is such an essential part of Islam that to deny a Muslim access to it is to infringe on his right to freedom of worship (Malik 2000: 158). Adamu Ciroma corroborates this: "I as a Muslim will not feel that I am practicing my religion completely without subjecting myself to the provisions of the Sharia … If we agreed to the freedom of religion, there is no need truncating my freedom" (Laitin 1982: 413).

Prior to the return of governance to civilian rule in 1979, Northern politicians campaigned for the incorporation and recognition of Shari'ah in the constitution. It is, however, appropriate to recognize that the years of military rule represented years of the underdevelopment of Shari'ah. Since the military ruled through decrees, the quest for the Shari'ah was dropped until democracy was put in place. According to Cooper (1998: 34):

> Particularly under military rule, it was impossible for civilians to express frustrations with these inequities that had begun in the different treatment of regions under colonial rule. Thus political discontent has often been couched in religious rather than overtly political terms … . The embattlement Northern Nigeria experiences has been translated into a regional nationalism couched in terms of Islamic identity … . The South, where Nigerians have longer access to Western schooling and in some cases extended exposure to Christianity, is described by Northern nationalists as the debased realm of Western cultural imperialism and the source of corrupt Western practices and values.

Thus, with the transition from a military government to civilian rule, there were heated debates on the Shari'ah question at the Constitutional Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly from 1976 to 1979. Many Muslims from the North held the view that "Christianity had influenced the thinking, mentality and belief of our constitution makers at present and in the past, and concluded that any guarantee of religious freedom to a Muslim will never have any degree of authenticity unless he is governed by the Shari'ah law" (Laitin 1982: 413). With the return to civilian rule in 1979 under Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the constitutional debate continued. It focused on whether to improve or upgrade the status of the Shari'ah courts by establishing the Federal Shari'ah Court of Appeal and its variant—the customary courts—by having a Federal Customary Court of Appeal. The Constitutional Drafting Committee agreed to leave the issue to the prerogative of individual States, without setting up a separate national Shari'ah Court of Appeal but with Shari'ah scholars sitting as judges in the Supreme Court. These arguments were so convoluted that the introduction of the Federal Shari'ah Court of Appeal was considered to be "potentially damaging" to the preservation of Nigerian unity (Laitin 1982: 430). The status of the Shari'ah court in the 1979 Constitution (Part II Section 6, Subsection 5e) .is that it is—a Shari'ah Court of Appeal of a State—still a variant of the customary court.

As is obvious in the Nigerian constitution, Shari'ah has always been the judicial system of the Northern peoples of Nigeria. Over the years, there have also been a number of debates on the inclusion of this new phase of the Shari'ah in the constitution and the enrolment of the Nigerian nation into the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). Could this new phase of the Shari'ah as practiced by the other members of the OIC be geared towards the realization of this dream or was it just sabotage? This is a problem for other researchers who are willing to explore its possibilities.

The change in the balance of power resulting from the Presidential election in 1999 opened the door for Islamic fundamentalists to adopt a new approach to implementing the criminal domain (the penal code) of the Shari'ah law in the twelve Northern Nigerian States. Hitherto, the scope of Shari'ah law was limited to Islamic personal laws, relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance, will, and the custody of children. The high rate of moral decadence, increased crime rate, and anti-social behaviour prevalent in Nigerian society have been given as reasons for enlarging the application of Shari'ah law. Unfortunately, the implementation has been lopsided:

> Shari'ah law is very good, but the only thing is that so far, only the poor seem to be its victims. Amina Lawal and Safiya belong to the lower class, the poor. Are you telling me that rich and influential women are not committing adultery every day? So that is the area we need to look at. We should not unwittingly prove that there are two sets of laws-one for the rich, another for the poor. If we are practicing Shari'ah, let it apply to everybody. (interview with Mallama Aminu Ahmed, March 25, 2004)

The major features of the new Shari'ah, together with the old features, now include capital punishment for crimes like murder, theft, adultery, rape, alcohol, prostitution and corruption, enforcement of *zakkat* (alms giving), and the welfare of widows and orphans. Those involved in the implementation of the Shari'ah are: *ulama* (scholars) (a council of government appointed *ulamas* from amongst the independent *ulamas*); *hizbah* (independent and government-appointed Shari'ah law enforcement agencies, present at the local and State level); the judicial system (the *khadis*—Shari'ah court judges and other court judges); the Federal police; and political leaders (State governors and others).

From the list of issues addressed by the new Shari'ah law, it is evident that the governors of the twelve Shari'ah States are determined to address the problems of their various societies and Nigerian society as a whole. The States that have adopted Shari'ah are Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Kano, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Kaduna, Gombe, and Niger. As earlier stated, the Nigerian socio-economic crisis was amplified by the subscription of the Nigerian government to the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP):

> An ostensibly "Nigerian" Structural Adjustment Program was initiated in the mid-80s, and the consequences of this policy also affected men and women differently, through changed access to the availability of specific forms and categories of work; through the reduction of government services; and through the stresses which devaluation, loss of jobs, loss of purchasing power and threats to not only livelihood but also what life necessarily entail. (Puttin 2002: 2)

It is in these situations of helplessness and hopelessness that the cases of Safiya Hussein and Amina Lawal should be understood. It should also be borne in mind

that it is these situations that make Asad and Lamido hold the view that Shari'ah is inappropriate at this time in Nigeria (Lamido 2002: 4).

Perspectives from the South-West

The position of Muslim women in the Southern part of Nigeria, their reactions to the *zina* cases of these Muslim women, and the coping strategies they have adopted towards alleviating their socio-economic problems as Muslim women was also a major contribution to the debate. Muslim women in the south-western part of Nigeria—populated by the Yoruba-speaking people and which is home to a majority of the Muslims in the South—have been able to negotiate their way in their private, public, and religious lives—using the Holy Qur'an as their reference point. It is relevant to mention the basic characteristics of these women. Historically, they have been known to have a high measure of economic independence:

> One survey showed that three-quarters of such women provide their own food and clothing; one-half clothed themselves and provided a part of their food; only 5 percent were totally dependent upon their husbands. In the south, men expected from their wives the usual domestic or sexual services; yet the women, especially if they have few or no children, seek to promote their own careers and as traders must often be absent from their homes for long periods. (Lloyd 1968: 68)

This has not changed significantly. In a recent study of Yoruba women, McIntosh (2010: 109) stated that "Yoruba women were necessary participants within the systems of commerce, production, and service provision that operated in their region. Those roles were entirely consistent with their own culture's gender definitions, so long as they did not impinge upon women's responsibilities at home."

Yoruba women have excelled in their various chosen careers without being radically inclined to gender equality as Islamic Feminism would have wanted them to. They have not subscribed to gender equality because they have not been restricted in attaining whatever level they aimed at in their chosen careers. Many of them are traders, market women, and small-scale entrepreneurs. Like the Muslim women in the North, they are veiled and are usually seen in public wearing their *hijab* (veil)—the prescribed dressing for women. The *hijab* is about the only seclusion they experience. The word "seclusion" might not be right for them because the *hijab* has not restricted their mobility—it has enabled their visibility in public spaces. Their dress follows the dictates of the Holy Qur'an. According to the Holy Qur'an (Sura 24:31):

> Say to the believing women to turn their eyes away (from temptation) and to preserve their chastity; to cover their adornments except such as are normally displayed; to draw their veils over their bosoms and not to reveal their finery except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband's fathers, their sons, their

> step-sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women-servants, the women they possess, male attendants lacking in natural vigour, and children who have no knowledge of sex. And let them not stamp their feet in walking so as to reveal their hidden trinkets.

The majority of Muslim women in the South are not secluded unless they are the wives of religious teachers popularly called *alfas* (*Mualim*) amongst the Yoruba people. However, the wives of the *alfas* are also seen in public but in their *niqab*—this is, clothing that covers their bodies from head to calf—and they also wear socks on their feet. They are popularly called *eleha*—this is a Yoruba word which literally means the woman that has been hidden or secluded—these women are seen in public, they do not work. It should be stated here that though the Muslim women interviewed had heard about the two cases of *zina* addressed in this chapter, they were not particularly interested in the court proceedings. All they wanted was for the women to be released if the men were released. They however, could not air their opinions for fear of rebuke. In Alhaja Bilikisu Raji's words:

> I am not aware of the proceedings of the case and how the Ulamas arrived at the conclusion that the women are guilty. I am not in support of the introduction of Sharia Law in any part of the country. This is not because the law is not good. It is because of the fact that it was a politically motivated one. Nigeria as a country cannot practice the law like several countries in the Middle East, which have been used to it for several centuries. Also, the nature of the administration of justice can easily be twisted by any category of learned Islamic Scholar because of the need to achieve some set of chauvinistic purposes. The Amina case is a disgrace to the position of Nigeria in the comity of states. (Interview with Alhaja Bilikisu Raji: February 24, 2004, Ibadan)

She further stated:

> I am not happy with the judgment because of the fact that Sharia Law and its administration in the Northern part of the country was an aberration. I am not very versed in the provisions of the Sharia Law. This is based on the fact that is not practiced in this part of the country. Generally, several Islamic organizations, which I know, were not happy about the judgment at all. The only impediment is that one will look very crazy by trying to publicly denounce the judgment of the Ulamas in the North. Religion is a very volatile thing. One's argument can easily be misinterpreted or misunderstood. That is why several Muslim women or women organizations during that period were not obliged to make public their disposition to the issue. A lot of us are not well versed in the teachings of the Qur'an. It will be very crazy for us to therefore argue for or against the provision of the Sharia Law. (Interview with Alhaja Bilikisu Raji: February 24, 2004, Ibadan)

Apart from fear of rebuke by religious leaders, the little knowledge of the provisions of the Shari'ah law held by many Southern Nigerian women was responsible for their silence on the issue which affected their counterparts in the North. This might appear selfish, but religion is a volatile subject in Nigeria and taking sides could possibly lead to bloodshed. At the same time, since these women in the South do not believe it can happen to them—more so since Shari'ah is not as pronounced as it is in the North and they do not feel alienated by their men—they are not particularly concerned.

Most Muslim women in the South I spoke to indicated that the experiences women have in the North have nothing to do with Islam but are related to Hausa culture. This view was corroborated by Alhaja Amoke Kadiri (interviewed March 29, 2004):

> Here in Yorubaland, we do not practice Shari'ah. Islamic women are enjoined to follow all the commands of Allah in their relations to either their husband or their father. …There is nothing wrong with Shari'ah Legal System. The administration of justice is the problem. The fact that Nigerian Shari'ah was politically motivated gives room for suspecting the verdicts of the Ulamas in the Amina's case. Several Muslim women in the South could not make any public condemnation on the Amina's case because of what some advocates of Shari'ah are capable of saying or doing**.** Currently, we are interested in making sure that our daughters are well educated because it is only through proper education and teaching of the words of God that people can be able to differentiate between what is right and wrong. The provisions of the Holy book and the ways they are used are based on several factors, which include cultural background. Muslim women organizations joined hands with several other women organizations which are non-religious to agitate for some important problems, which affects the status of women.

Alhaja Amoke Kadiri's opinion is what Gbadamosi and Ajayi (1980: 359) have called the "indigenization of Islam.", A Hausa woman I interviewed (Hajia Aisha Rabiu, March 13, 2004), who lives in Ibadan (a city in south-western Nigeria) was simply happy that Safiya and Amina were not killed. She said:

> As a woman, I rejoiced with Amina Lawal and Safiya. I would not have been happy if they were stoned to death. Those who advocated stoning were only interpreting the Quran to suit themselves. Shari'ah is part of Islam, and it is meant to bring us closer to Allah. But politicians have hijacked it to suit their own purpose. If politics can be divorced from Shari'ah it will be better. Shari'ah is good. But women should not be the only victims when it comes to adultery. Both men and women, we are all subject to the laws of Allah. As to Amina Lawal and Safiya, I rejoice with them because they would just have been sacrificial lambs.

Conclusion

Safiya and Amina were two poor women who always had men looking after their basic needs. They were divorced and were also jobless mothers who had children to feed. They had been married very early in life with little or no skills or education, and as such had never known any other "career" but marriage. The situation of many Muslim women in the South is different in this sense because, although they also live in patriarchal societies, they do not depend entirely on the menfolk for sustainability, like Safiya and Amina. Though *zina* is a moral crime punishable by death in Islamic law, the situation of Safiya and Amina appeared more of a reaction to economic ills and bondage, rather than an act of pure immorality.

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Index