

Influence of Yoruba Culture in Christian Religious Worship

By

Odejobi Cecilia Omobola

Institute of Education, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Religion is the strongest element in African culture and exerts great influence upon the conduct of the African people. Religion is closely bound up with the traditional way of Yorùbá life; therefore, religion has shaped the lives of Yorùbá people, at the same time life has shaped their religion. There is hardly any world religion that emerges out of its culture; religion is part of the culture of any group of people. Christianity is not an exception. Religion is definitely embedded in African culture. Whenever two or three cultures meet, there is potential conflict but if it is practised within the culture of the people, it lasts long and develops very rapidly. This paper therefore focused on the influence of Yorùbá culture in Christian religious worship. The paper gave a brief account of religion and worship in Yorùbá land. It examined the history of Christianity in Nigeria. It also discussed the emergent of Yorùbá culture in Christian religious worship. Finally the paper highlighted the element of Yorùbá culture in Christian worship.

Keywords: *Religion, Christian worship, African culture, Christianity, Yoruba culture*

1. Introduction

The Yorùbá traditional society is a corporate and religious society. Ogunbile (1998) identifies two major forms of identity in Nigeria-religious identity and ethnic identity. To become a member of a community one must participate in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community (Mbiti 1970). Participation in the ceremonies of local traditional deities acknowledged in such a community becomes a strong means of identity formation and produces a collective spiritual consciousness (Ogunbile 1998: 129) especially in Yorùbá land. Religion therefore is the strongest element in traditional African culture which exerts great influence upon the conduct of the African people. Religion is closely bound up with the traditional way of African life; hence religion shaped the lives of Africans, at the same time life shaped religion as well.

(Onuzulike, n. d.). To detach oneself from the religion of one's community is to be severed from one's root and kinships (Oderinde, n. d.). Religious activities play a very prominent role and a participant in a festival identifies himself with the sacred time through ritualistic-re-enactment of the events that inform man about his identity (Famuyiwa 1992:83). To some, it is their candle light, it gives them insight, wisdom, knowledge and faith is increased through the study of the scripture, books and prayers. Religion is the focal point of Yorùbá culture as pointed out by Idowu (1970) that the keynote of their life is their religion. In all things they are religious; hence, religion forms the foundation and the all governing principle of life for them.

Religion is a human creation and as such can vary as widely as human imagination allows. No single definition can be ascribed to the word religion due to its diversity. Many people considered religion as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practice and worship that centre on one supreme God or the deityvalue that provide groups of men with solution to the question of ultimate meaning (Bhatt, 2012). To many others, religion involves a number of gods, or deities (The World Book Encyclopedia, 1990). In some religions, no particular God or gods are worshipped. Religion is also considered to be "collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. Religion is not only a necessary but a very significant part of our lives. Most people would find it very difficult to live without religion or spirituality. Whatever the diversity it entails, most

adherents of some forms of religion believe that the world is created by a divine power and has influence on their lives. In other words, most religions shared wholly or partially some characteristics which include: (1) belief in God or deity, (2) a doctrine of salvation, (3) a code of conduct or ethics, (4) the usage of sacred stories (5) rituals or religious acts and ceremonies (The World Book Encyclopedia, 1990).

We cannot segregate the word religion from culture since religion is defined as a collection of cultural system. Hence, Amponsah (2010:597) defined culture as a collective name for all behaviour patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; it is a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as language, tool making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion, but also the material instruments or artefacts in which cultural achievements are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects, etc.

Culture is the totality of a people's way of life which differs from one people or country to another. Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts, (Zimmermann, 2012). All are interwoven to form their very life. It is therefore very difficult to draw a clear-cut line of demarcation between where their ethical life ends and where their religious life begins. Culture shapes the way we see the world. It therefore has the capacity to bring about the change of attitudes needed to ensure peace and sustainable development which, we know, form the only possible way forward for life on planet Earth, (UNESCO, 1999).

The Yorùbá passed on their culture from one generation to the other in a well-disciplined manner, and expressed in the form of myths, history, stories, riddles, proverbs, arts and craft. This cultural heritage of the Yorùbá, as of all Nigerians and indeed of all Africans, includes the belief in the existence of one Supreme Being, (Atansuyi, n. d.; Abimbola 2005). In short, culture is the sum total of the beliefs and actions of everyone in a given society.

Yorùbá Religious Worship

The religion in south-western Nigeria is known as traditional religion. It comprises the traditional religious, spiritual concepts and practices of the Yorùbá people. Yorùbá religion is formed of diverse traditions and has no single founder. Worship forms the nucleus of life in Yorùbá religion. By worship, we do not mean the limited area of rituals and liturgies alone, but also the totality of the people's relation to the supernatural order of the deities. It is a total response to Olódùmarè, (Awolalu, 1981) not just in words but in action as well. These words and deeds normally take the form of ceremonies and rites, which may include silent meditation, praying, prostration, invoking and hailing the spirits of the objects of worship, dancing, clapping, making offerings and sacrifices, sounding the bell or gong, drumming and singing, as determined by the situation. This may be private, by an individual in any convenient place; or it may be collective or corporate. The important thing is that it must be done in reverence and in an appropriate conduct and mood, to achieve the desired result, (Awolalu, 1981). In addition, the Yorùbá take worship into their day to day life. Virtually all their daily activities are done with the consciousness of the ever – watching eyes of the invisible presence of the ancestors, spirits, divinities, and of course Olódùmarè. With this in mind, they conduct their deeds and affairs with one another and the environment in mutual respect and selflessness (Ogunade, 2010).

Yorùbá religion, simply mean the indigenous faith of the Yorùbá passed down from the genesis of their generation through oral traditions, art, crafts, liturgies, pithy sayings, proverbs, folklores, stories, songs and wise sayings to this contemporary age, (Ogunade, 2010). Yorùbá practiced this traditional religion, before the introduction of Christianity and each community worshipped individual deity (or deities) in accordance to its devotional needs, for instance: in Ile-Ife –Olójó; Ìbàdàn- Òkè; Òyó- Şàngó; Ìjẹ̀bú-Agẹ̀mọ; Èjigbò- Ògiyán;Ìwó- Pópó.

Influence of Yoruba Culture in Christian Religious Worship

There are five fundamental beliefs or basic themes which Idowu has described as the structure of African religion (Idowu, 1973). These include belief in God; belief in divinities; belief in spirits; belief in ancestors; belief in mysterious powers (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979). *Olòrun* or *Olódùmarè* is the supreme deity in whom they believe and worship. He is supreme over all on earth and in heaven, acknowledged by all the divinities as the Head to whom all authority belongs and all allegiance is due and His status of supremacy is absolute. Things happen when He approves, things do not come to pass if He disapproves. In worship, the Yorùbá holds Him ultimately First and Last; in man's daily life, He has the ultimate pre-eminence (Idowu, 1962).

Next on the Yorùbá cosmos were the divinities created by *Olódùmarè* and given specific assignments. They were the intermediaries between the *Olódùmarè* and human beings. In Yorùbá religion, the divinities are called *Òriṣà*. It is generally believed that the divinities have the attributes or characteristics of the Supreme Being; they were brought forth by *Olódùmarè* to serve as ministers and functionaries in the theocratic government of the universe (Idowu, 1962). It is on record that there are more than 401 deities or divinities in Yorùbá land. Some of these deities are *Òrúnmìlà*-the custodian of knowledge-represented by *Ifa* (while *Babalawos* are the human intermediaries who reveal the *Òrúnmìlà* message to humans). *Obàtálá* or *Òriṣàálá*, is the moulder of human bodies; *Ògún*, is the god of war and iron, very popular and deified in all Yorùbá towns and villages. *Yemoja*, the goddess of water is worshipped by Yorùbá who live on the coast.

Others are divinized heroes who were given cosmic attributes. They are human-turned-deity such as: *Ṣàngó*, *Ọṣun*, *Oya*. These individuals, according to history, became deified because of uncommon role they played when they were alive; power they wielded and sacrifice made on behalf of their people. *Ṣàngó*, the human-turned-god is the god of thunder. Yorùbá have several of these deified individuals at town, community and even at regional level.

Irúnmalẹ̀ are spirit creature according to Yoruba belief. They do not have specific assignment like the *Òriṣàs*, but perform jobs given to them by *Olódùmarè*. The spirits come under various names such as *Ajija* or *Ààjà* (spirit of whirlwind with knowledge of the use of herbs), *Àròni* (a spirit with one leg that teaches the use of herbs), *Egbére* (a smallish elf that carries a small mat and weeps all the time), *orò* (spirits of trees), *ebòra*, *iwin* (a fairy believed to live in the ground, rock, forest or hill). But among the Yoruba, they have real existence and they can be good or bad, beneficent or malevolent. Consequently, they are propitiated out of fear. They neither have priests nor festivals like the divinities and they assume no universal worship. They served as intermediary between the heaven and earth, they come after the *Òriṣàs*. They lived in evil forests, mountains, and other far-away places.

Yorùbá people believed in ancestors. These are dead family members who turned to deities and worshipped by the family members. At community level some individuals were elevated to this status and became deified. The ancestors take an active interest in members of their descent groups, and can give them advice through dreams and trances. Anyone can pray and make offerings to a dead parent for spiritual protection, or makes an annual offering on behalf of the descent-group members, usually on the grave of its founder. In order cultures, some family members became revered when they died a good death at old age with several children and grandchildren. Besides, there is *Egungun* worship, which represents the "collective spirit" of ancestors. Ancestral worship is common among Yoruba, and it is a major belief in the traditional religion. The word, *Egungun* has become a representation of dead individual/ancestor (Olajobu and Ojo, 1977).

Related to beliefs in *Òriṣà* and ancestors is the belief in reincarnation. Reincarnation is the belief that the dead family members come back to life, as a new child into family where they previously lived. Many Yoruba are identified through resemblance, dreams or divination as being reincarnations of particular ancestors, and are given names such as *Babatunde* ('father returns') or *Yetunde* ('mother returns'). These ancestors are invoked to help their descendants.

Christianity in Nigeria

Christianity is the most popular and most advertised religion in Nigeria and especially in Yoruba land. It was introduced in the middle of the nineteenth century by devote missionaries from Britain whose mission was though commerce they came preaching the message of Christ, ministering to the people and also healing the sick, this was what actually pulled the crowd to them in the first place. They started from the eastern part of the country which is populated by the Igbos. They infiltrated the village councils and chiefs, who gave them lands to build local churches. Before the 80s the Christian religion had spread to the southern part of the country, to the Yorubas and the middle belt (Benin).

Yoruba Christians fall into three main groups. Firstly, there are the members of the mission churches. The four oldest and largest denominations are the Anglicans, represented by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Methodists, the American Southern Baptists and the Catholics. Some smaller missions, mainly American, arrived more recently. The Jehovah's Witnesses were the most successful of these. The Catholics are less numerous in the west of Nigeria than they are in the east. Of the protestant missions, the Anglicans and Methodists are strongest in the south and east of Yoruba land, while the Baptists are strongest to the north and west (Grimley and Robinson, 1966).

In Christianity, worship is often thought of as the music portion of a church service with people singing songs to God, heads back, eyes closed, and hands raised up in the air as they sing. Christian worship happens when we sing to God, whether in church or alone, in our cars or in the shower. If our desire is to please the heart of God, it is worship, no matter where the location or how many are involved. Christian worship begins with discovering and admitting what we have been worshipping in our lives. All of us worship something, whether we know it or not. We may not physically bow down to it, or offer it songs of praise and adoration, but whatever we devote most of our time and attention to is often what we worship.

In Yoruba traditional religion, every act of worship has distinct element, which are liturgy, sacrifice, cultic functionaries and sacred places. Liturgy is an important element of worship in Yoruba Religion. It means the prescribed form of public worship among the people. The Yoruba people approach their task with awe and seriousness, always conscious of the fact that any omission in the normal order of service or any wrong word uttered or song not properly rendered during the service could incur the displeasure of the deity and jeopardize the efficacy of worship. Every act of worship in Yoruba land has an ultimate reference to the Supreme Being who must sanction it (Akinfenwa, n.d.).

Emergent of Yoruba Culture in Christian Religious Worship

One of the most striking features of Yoruba religion is its tolerance of pluralism (Eades, 1980) but the first missionaries failed to realize objectively and scientifically the African social structure and their concept of God. However, in the 1880s they abandoned the policy of developing a self-governing native pastorate, and British control was gradually consolidated (Ajayi, 1965; Ayandele, 1966). The missionaries believed that the inspiration or charismatic gifts among Africans were of evil spirit. African religion was even perceived as expressions of 'heathen unbelief and evil superstition' and the world outside the church came to be seen as the 'kingdom of darkness' (Gort 2008:748). They believed that Africans, that is the black race, were not fertile enough to produce their own ideas. The Christian mission therefore imposed European culture, most especially in dress and language, on the Yorùbá visà- vis other Nigerian peoples (Oyeniyi 2012).

Africans continued to witness the inhuman treatment meted out to their educated clergy members upon whose shoulders evangelizing work rested hence, they had no better option than to seek for redress when it became convincingly apparent that Yoruba traditions and culture were being threatened by Christianity. Prominent among the complaints was the discrimination against Africans from the clergy class, as whites were unduly favoured; to crown it all was the witch-hunting, vilification, and inhuman treatment that African clergy members suffered at the hands of less educated and insecure English missionaries in the

fledgling colony of Lagos. The desire of the mission to maintain its unchallenged and firm control over the Africans especially the Yoruba people led the Parent body in England to recruit white clergy men at the expense of the qualified and the competent Africans. As years rolled by, the matter got worse, because the Church's parent body in England did not address the concerns of Africans, as the Body was always satisfied with reports sent by its White representatives. Thus, there arose protests in defense of their faith and cultural resurgence of the people's beliefs and life styles. From 1890s onward, series of protest rocked Lagos, Abeokuta, and some Yoruba towns, in which several Churches were destroyed, and missionaries expelled from Yoruba land.

Yoruba has one of the richest, enduring and perhaps the most sophisticated ways of life on the continent of Africa. Yoruba people have similar culture which is evident in their beliefs, values, customs, practices and social behaviours; and this is manifested in their arts, music, political institution, local economy, family structure, burial, cuisine, numerals, literature and other related activities which defines Yoruba ways of life. (Yoruba culture <http://yorupedia.com/subjects/yoruba-culture/>). By all standards, they give a special character and local colour to their beliefs, religious observances and practices, language, psychological reactions and more generally to their behaviours.

Many missionaries considered African cultures and religions to be *primitive* and *pagan*. Consequently, these missionaries tried to force African Christians to reject most of their cultural and religious beliefs and practices. Faced with continued missionary opposition to adapting Christianity to African culture, some Christian leaders decided to leave mission churches and form their own independent churches that incorporated aspects of African cultural practice that they felt were not inconsistent with Christianity (NigerianMuse, 2012). This discontent at European paternalism was one of the factors that led to the foundation of the African churches and by the late nineteenth century some African Christians decided to break away from missionary churches and form their own churches.

The birth and rise of Pentecostal Indigenous Churches called Aladura (Praying ones) presents an interesting episode of protest and adaptation. The Churches were started by charismatic leaders of Yoruba descent such as Moses Orimolade, Emmanuel Akinsowon, Joseph Babalola and Bilewu Oshoffa who were aflame with desire to practicalize the saving and healing powers of God over people particularly in the superstition, poverty and disease – ridden societies as found in Yoruba land. Some of these Churches which started since the 1920s included 'Cherubim & Seraphim Church', 'Christ Apostolic Church', 'Church of the Lord' and 'Celestial Church of Christ'. These churches are largely Yoruba in character and population.

According to Ogunade (2010), the first half of the 20th century was particularly beneficial to Yoruba – land as far as indigenous religious movements were concerned. It was the period when indigenous (Yoruba) Christian churches broke away from the so-called 'imperialist' mission churches. For example the African Church (incorporated), when it began, reformed the elements of colonialism in the Church practices and doctrines replacing them with Yoruba substitutes; for example, praying for the Obas and Chiefs in their prayer book instead of praying for the Queen of England. It was evident that this group of people came out simultaneously in a way conducive to the Nigerians, taking into consideration the culture, customs and manners of the land in which they lived and relating to their God particularly to the life of their people.

Element of Yoruba Culture in Christian Worship

It is worthy of note that after some Yoruba Christians broke away from the so-called 'imperialist' mission churches, because they believed that if Christian worship is to mean anything to the majority of African Christians, it must not be presented in foreign culture (Nketia, 2011). They therefore began the reformation exercise of expressing God within the African concepts, which to Africans is distorted by the historical tragedy of European exploits over Africans, without reclining into syncretism and apostasy. Hence, the elements of colonialism in the Church practices and doctrines were removed and replaced

with Yoruba substitutes. Some of the important traditional Yoruba customs which resulted from their religious beliefs and which were an embodiment of their patterns of culture such as dressing, music and dancing, drumming and so on began to manifest in the Christian worship especially within the African indigenous churches earlier mentioned.

Dressing

According to Oyenyi (2012), the use of Christian/European dressing, was introduced to Yorùbá land by returned ex-saves and, later, as uniforms in the colonial native administration service and also in the church. Missionaries imposed European dressing on Yorùbá converts, arguing that any convert who still wore his or her native dressing, is not a genuine Christian. Converts were even mandated to wear shirt and trousers as marks of Christianity and civilization. Therefore, in their agitations for independence, Yorùbá elite, especially those in Lagos, Abeokuta, and Ibadan, began to agitate for a cultural renaissance in their dressing because Yorùbá dressing possesses the innate quality of establishing, expressing, and reinforcing power both at the individual and group level (Oyènyí, 2012). They therefore began to wear Yorùbá dresses in public and private ceremonies. The converts were not denied membership in their various churches, but they were regarded as ‘counterfeit’ Christians for not wearing European dress (Gbàdàmósí & Adé Àjáyí, 1980). In most African churches today worshippers are seen in colourful Yoruba dresses such as flowing Agbádá, and búbá and şòkòtò for men, while women appear in iró, búbá and gèlè to match.



Pastor Qbadare www.youtube.com

Pastors in the African churches wear foreign dresses but they and their wives were not left out in the indigenization process. Example of pastors that have been seen wearing traditional clothing in church are Pastor Enoch Adébóyè, Bishop David Oyèdépò, Qbadare and Abíára.



Anglican priest
egyptgreecerome.wordpress.com

In mission churches, Reverend and Fathers are not allowed to wear Yoruba dresses though their communicants are free to wear any dress they deem fit.

Music, Drum and Dance

The Yoruba are singing people. Their songs are permeated with their beliefs and employed songs in every sphere of their lives, in worship, in naming ceremonies, in wedding, in funeral, in wrestling, in cultivating the farm, in working, in going to war, in praising the rulers, in rocking babies to sleep and in many other activities. Such songs are usually attended by drumming and dancing (Awólálú and Dòpámú, 2005:31-32). In short, music, drum and dance go hand-in-hand in Yoruba culture. However, the introduction of Christianity into Yoruba land marked the beginning of Gospel music which was mostly translations of Western Christian hymns. The main weakness of the early Christian hymns is that they did not accommodate the tonal character of the Yoruba language (Òjó, 1998:2). Apart from this, the use of Yoruba traditional music was not permitted in and outside the church because they (the missionaries) regarded everything in Yoruba culture as pagan and devilish, and therefore unsuitable for the church.

The consequences of this denial is that Yoruba Christians were unable to express the deepest level of their being in worship as they did in traditional worship. By the late nineteenth century, there was a change in the mode of worship especially in the African churches where worshippers are allowed to sing their traditional song during worship, beat drums and dance. As a result of this, people are rushing to attend services in African churches thereby having more converts than the mission churches. It is worthy of note that today church services have changed over the years even in mission churches to reflect more of the African culture which now include African music, drum and dance. For example, the indigenous churches were quick to adopt traditional music during Christian worship. The effect of this innovation is that the worship of these churches became livelier and prepared the people to gain access into supra sensible realms. Hence, drums, music and dance make the services more 'alive', exciting and even more 'spiritual' (Hammons, 2003).

As it is in Yoruba traditional religion where devotees experience the divine through specific dances and songs (Mercado, 2009) also in our church services today, music, drum and dance are avenue to experience the divine and also to worship God. People even pick a church because of the style of its worship in music, drum and dance. Ceremonial possession is brought about by rhythmic stimulation (drumming and singing), energetic concentrated dancing, and controlled emotional and mental concentration (Floyd, 1995:20).

In short, music, drum and dance help the devotees and adherents of the different divinities and Christians into states of altered consciousness, where inspiration is encountered. These spiritual phenomena were enhanced by the use of indigenous elements that had been brought into the church local instruments like Gangan, Agogo, Àkùbà, Şèkèrè, Omele-akọ, Omele-abo, Àgídìgbo among others are extensively used (Oye, 1998:40).

Spraying of money in Churches during ceremonies (e.g. funeral, marriage, etc.)

The Nigerian people especially the Yoruba are flamboyant in their culture and often times extravagant. Yoruba culture is full of ceremonies with some tagged as rite of passage. Rites of Passages among the Yoruba people are ceremoniously marked with the participation of the extended family as well as the larger community. These rites of passages include wedding, naming, burial, chieftaincy titles and house warming to mention a few. Our concern is not to go into detailed discussion on these ceremonies but the act of money spraying involved. The Yoruba people spray dancers or special individuals with money during celebrations by placing each note on the head of the celebrant. In fact, people drop money, mostly small bills, on people's faces and all over their body while dancing.



In our churches today especially the African Churches, the culture of spraying is evident especially during wedding, burial harvest and other thanksgiving ceremonies. Apart from celebrants, the choristers are also sprayed for rendering a sonorous song. This is done in order to rejoice with the celebrant and also to appreciate God in the life of the choristers.

Burial

The Yoruba believed that death is not the end of life but a transition from one form of existence to another. Therefore the dead body is buried naturally. Natural burial is the interment of the body of a dead person in the soil in a manner that does not inhibit decomposition but allows the body to recycle naturally (Gill, n.d.). The body may be buried in a coffin, casket, or shroud that would allow the body to have contact with soil. Natural burials can take place both on private land and in any public cemetery.

This practice was different from that of the missionaries who brought Christianity to Yoruba land. Their own way of taking care of their dead bodies was to cremate or burn them. The dead body is placed on a funeral pyre covered with leaves and fronted with cypresses. Then the pyre would be set ablaze. Perfumes and other objects that might be of use to the dead in the afterlife were thrown at the fire. When the pyre burned down, wine was used to douse the embers, so that the ashes could be gathered and placed in funerary urns (Gill, n.d.).

The Yoruba believed that there is still life after death hence, they refused to support the idea of cremating their dead bodies. In both mission and African churches, dead bodies are given befitting burials.

Rendering of 'Ewi' during Harvest, Thanksgiving, Naming Ceremonies

Ewi is a tradition of singing proverbial praises. Ewi poets perform at special occasions, such as naming ceremonies, marriages and funerals to honour individual or family achievements. Yoruba Ewi poets are greatly admired for the richness of their words, the artistry of their use of idioms and proverbs, and their deep knowledge of the Yoruba language. At a naming ceremony in the Yoruba tradition, Ewi Poetry celebrates the joyful and peaceful arrival of the child to the family. Ewi embraces the new child in its new family. Moreover, African church Christian traditions and practices during harvest, thanksgiving, naming ceremonies blend with the traditional beliefs of Yoruba people in the rendering of 'Ewi'. These practices are extant irrespective of the advent of Christianity. So when Christianity came, the adherents of such practices who are now Christians continued with these practices.

Chieftaincy Titles (e.g. Baba Ijo, Iya Ijo, Balogun Ijo etc.)

Another seed of African culture that has fully germinated in churches today is the tradition of given chieftaincy titles. According to Lateju and Oladeji (2012), functions of the chieftaincy in Yoruba society include addressing any issue in the administration of justice in relation to the office, seeing to the welfare of the communities, monitoring socio-economic and promoting religious tenet. Since the Yoruba people have rejected the intimidation of the Missionaries in relation to their customs both the mission and

Influence of Yoruba Culture in Christian Religious Worship

African churches took the issue of title taking seriously. Hence, the significance of culture with Christianity is identified. This significance is also noted in the attitude and approach developed from the cultural life of the people which helps them to function within the scope of respect and regard. Chieftaincy title is therefore seen as a cultural stance that can assist the standard of faith members (Ayandele, 1966). The Christians therefore couched their method of installing titles on members of their members to prevent those who are conscious of title from derailing from their faith and to allow them full concentration in the faith they are converted to. Such titles are: Baba Ijo, Otun Ijo, Balogun Ijo, Iyalode Ijo, Babalaje Ijo Baba Ewe, Iya Ewe and other rewarding titles became awardable and prominent among the church members in Christendom.

Tiles	Status	Function
Baba ijo	Father of the church	To promote the interest of the Church
Iya ijo	Mother of the church	To promote the interest of the Church
Otun baba ijo	The right hand man of the father of the church	To assist in promoting the interest of the church
Otun Iya ijo	The right hand woman of the mother of the church	To assist in promoting the interest of the church
Balogun ijo	The warlord of the church	To resolve conflicts and promote peace
Babalaje ijo	The father of prosperity of the Church	To assist the church in financial matters
Iyalode ijo	The outstanding mother of the Church	To promote the interest of the Church
Baba Ewe	Father of children	To promote the wellbeing of the children in the church
Iya Ewe	Mother of children	To promote the wellbeing of the children in the church

Clash of Culture in the Church (in terms of Polygamist taking Holy Communion)

Yoruba culture is mostly patrilineal and patrilocal with the wife(s) regarded as permanent member of the family she is married into. Unlike some other neighbouring cultures, a married Yoruba woman remains with her family of adoption by marriage even after death. Yoruba people did not practice polygamy in the sense it is understood today. A man had more than one wife usually because of his office, for instance, the king. At other times, rich and successful farmers take on more than one wife for reasons of man power to keep up the work load on the farms. At other times, brothers take on their deceased brother's widow, because she remains a member of the family. Meanwhile, to have children by the widow is optional and often times decided by the entire family.

Since the advent of the missionary churches to Nigeria, the practice of polygamy has been de-emphasized. Monogamy is taught as the acceptable form of marriage in the church while polygamists are seen as being adulterous and cannot be true Christians. For this reason, some churches deny their members who practice polygamy the right of participating in two essential ordinances of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion (Ejenobo, n. d.). However, it was pointed out by other non-western church leaders that polygamy was accepted by God in the Old Testament (Gen. 16:1, 3; 25:1); (Gen. 29:23, 28; 30:4, 9) and so there is nothing wrong with today's Christians having more than one wife (Gaskiyane, 2000).

It is apparent from the above that there is a clash of culture in the church in Yoruba land as to the degree of polygamy that should be allowed when it comes to receiving the Holy Communion. While the CAC and TAC believe that polygamist cannot receive Holy Communion, except the first wife who is qualified

to receive the communion. Anglicans believe that the husband and the first wife only should take the Holy Communion. In the Catholic church, there is no restriction on polygamists. They are all free to partake in Holy Communion. Pentecostal churches insist that the man should divorce his entire wives and get married to just one before he is allowed to take the Holy Communion.

2. Conclusion

It is obvious in modern times that the Yoruba are making frantic efforts to salvage and protect their cultural values and particularly their religious worship from threats of other religions as well as from modern challenges. The gospel can be expressed using African idioms and practices, without reclining into syncretism and apostasy. God can be expressed within African concepts other than erstwhile foreign perception, which to Africans is distorted by the historical tragedy of European exploits over Africans. Thus, the African churches are using an African interest in reaching the Africans. Church services have changed over the years to reflect more of the local culture, such as African music, dance, dressing etc. which is an indication of the influence of Yoruba culture on Christian religious worship.

References

- Abimbola, K. (2005). *Yoruba culture: A philosophical account*. Iroko Academic Publishers, 2005. ISBN 1-905388-00-4
- Adamo, D.T., 2011, 'Christianity and the African traditional religion(s): The postcolonial round of engagement', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32(1), Art. #285, 10 pages. doi:10.4102/ve.v32i1.285 <http://www.ve.org.za/index.php/VE/article/view/285/808#1>
- Akinfenwa, O. B. (n.d.). Music and dance as elements of worship in Yoruba religion <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/publications/akinfenwa/music%20and%20dance.doc>
- All about God .com. (2002-2013).Christian worship - more than music.
- Amponsah, S. (2010). "Beyond the boundaries: ToyinFalola on African cultures" in Niyi Afolabi, (Ed). *ToyinFalola: The Man, the mask, the muse*.North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press.
- Awolalu, J. O. (1981). *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. London: Longman, pp.10-16.
- Awolalu, J.O & P.A. Dopamu, (1979) *West African traditional religion*. Ibadan, Onibonjo Press and Book Industries [NIG] Ltd, pp. 34, 240.
- Ayandele E.A. (1966). *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842" A Political and Social Analysis*, London, Longman
- Atansuyi, H. O. (nd.).Gospel and culture from the perspective of African instituted churches. <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj3/aic.html>. Retrieved on 14-07-2013
- Bhatt,A. (2012). What is the importance of religion? <http://www.preservearticles.com/201101183516/importance-of-religion.html>
- Eades, J.S. (1980). *The Yoruba today*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from: <http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/YorubaT/yt6.html>
- Ejenobo, D. T. (n. d.). A critique of the attitude of Nigerian churches to the practice of polygamy in Nigeria. Retrieved from http://www.academicexcellencesociety.com/a_critique_of_the_attitude_of_nigerian_churches.html
- Famuyiwa, J. (1992). The Role of Traditional Festivals and modern Festivals of Arts and Culture in the promotion of Cultural education in Nigeria *Nigerian Heritage: Journal of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments*, Vol. 1.

- Gbadamosi T.G.O. and Ade Ajayi J. F.(1980). Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan. 358.
- Gaskiyane, I. (2000). Polygamy - A cultural and biblical perspective. Retrived from <http://www.polygamy.com/index.php/resources-and-education/biblical-christianity/polygamy-a-cultural-and-biblical-perspective/>
- Gill. N.S. , <http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/deathafterlife/a/RomanBurial.htm>
- Grimley, J.B. & E.E. Robinson (1966). *Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.
- Hammons, L. D. (2003). Are drums compatible with worship? <http://www.crucialchoices.com/Site2Table/EnglishSite/BelieverPages/DrumsTbl.htm>
- Hoffman Matthew C. (2002) Music at mass: What the church teaches about liturgical music. March 24. <http://matthewhoffman.net/music/>
- Idowu,E. B. (1962).*Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief*. London, Longman.
- Idowu, E. B (1973). *African traditional religion: A definition*. London, SCM Press Ltd.
- Lateju ,F.T. & Oladosu, O. (2012). Chieftaincy titles in Yorubaland and their implication for growth and tolerance among Christians and Muslims [http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/\(11\)lateju.oladosuOct12.pdf](http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/(11)lateju.oladosuOct12.pdf)
- Mbiti, J.S. (1970). *African religions and philosophy London: Heinemann*
- Mercado J. (2009). The African Yoruba religion and its influence on the new world <http://judithmercadoshortstories.blogspot.com/2009/10/african-yoruba-religion-and-its.html>
- NigerianMuse (2012). The influence of Christianity on African/Nigerian/Yoruba civilization. Christianity Project <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/20120502015605zg/nm-projects/christianity-projects/the-influence-of-christianity-on-african-nigerian-yoruba-civilization/>
- Nketia, J. H. (2011), The contribution of African culture to Christian worship. *International Review of Mission*, 47: 265–278. doi: 10.1111/j.1758-6631.1958.tb02850.x
- Oderinde, O. A. (2011.). The lore of religious festivals among the Yoruba and its social relevance. *LUMINA*, Vol. 22, No.2, ISSN 2094-1188 1 [http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/\(18\)oderindeOct11.pdf](http://lumina.hnu.edu.ph/articles/(18)oderindeOct11.pdf)
- Ogunade, R. (2010). Yoruba religious worship in modern context. In *IFE: the Institute of Cultural Studies-Special edition*, Obafemi Awolowo University: Institute of Cultural Studies,(Letter of Acceptance dated 25/2/2010).
- Ogungbile, D. (1998). Islam and cultural identity in Nigeria :The Osogbo-Yoruba. *Orita. Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. Xxx/1-2,June & December 1998.
- Omojola,B. (2010). Rhythms of the gods: music and spirituality in Yorùbá culture *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.3, no.5,
- Onuzulike, U. (nd.). African crossroads: conflicts between African traditional religion and Christianity. *International Journal of the Humanities*, Volume 6, Issue 2, pp.163-170. <http://ijh.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.26/prod.1327>
- Osef ben-Jachannan, *African origins of the major western religions*. N.Y.C. New York 10037, suite 204 p.8
- Oyeniya, B. A. (2012). Dress and identity in Yorubaland, 1880-1980 Date: 2012. <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/20143/06.pdf?sequence=10>

The world book encyclopedia, (1990), 16:196-197

UNESCO, (1999). *World culture report*, UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

Yoruba culture <http://yorupedia.com/subjects/yoruba-culture/>

Zimmermann, K. A. (2012). What is culture? A definition of culture live science <http://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>