

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BLOOD SYMBOLISM IN THE INDIGENOUS  
RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY AMONG MOBA PEOPLE OF EKITI STATE**

**BY**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	- African Independent Church
AIR	- African Indigenous Religion
AJBS	- African Journal for Biblical Studies
AJT	- Asia Journal of Theology
ARCR	- African Religion and Cultural Renewal
ATR	- East African Journal
BAIR	- Bibliography on Africa Traditional Religion
CAC	- Christ Apostolic Church
CCC	- Celestial Church of Christ
CMS	- Church Missionary Society
C&S	- Cherubim and Seraphim Church
DLBC	- Deeper Life Bible Church
EAJ	- East African Journal
HRH	- His Royal Highness

IJH	- Ife Journal of History
IJHS	- Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies
I RMP	- Indigenous Religion of Moba people
JACT	- The Journal of African Christian Thought
JHSN	- Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria
JIT	- Journal of Inculturation Theology
JPAS	- Journal of Pan African Studies
JRA	- Journal of Religion in Africa
JTSA	- Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
LGA	- Local Government Area
LRGM	-Latter Rain Gospel Ministry
MFM	- Mountain of Fire and Miracles
NASR	- Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions
N.C.C.	- New Covenant Church
NJH	- Nigerian Journal of the Humanities
NJT	- The Nigerian Journal of Theology
NT	- New Testament

- ODU - A Journal of West African Studies
- ORITA - Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies
- OT - Old Testament
- RCCG - The Redeemed Christian Church of God
- S.D. A - Seventh Day Adventist
- YTR - Yoruba Traditional religion

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the phenomenon of blood symbolism in the Indigenous Religion and Christianity among Moba people of Ekiti State. It discussed the rationale for human sacrifice in the Traditional Religion of Moba people and Christianity. It also identified the role of blood in various festivals and covenant making, and its impact on the lives of Moba people. The research work provided insights and assessed the practice of blood symbolism on adherents of Traditional Religion and Christianity.

The work employed comparative method of studying religion. Also a phenomenological approach was adopted to eliminate biases, and as much as possible, to present blood symbolism as seen and understood by the adherents of Indigenous Religion and Christianity. Primary data was collected through oral and structured interviews. Forty purposively selected resource people were interviewed. From the Indigenous Religion ten traditional rulers, twelve priests, and priestesses, and eight devotees of major deities in Mobaland were interviewed. From Christianity, ten pastors were interviewed cutting across selected mainline, Protestant, Pentecostal, and African Independent Churches. These churches included Anglican Communion, Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Latter Rain Gospel Ministry, Christ Apostolic Church, and Cherubim and Seraphim Church, all in the Mobaland. In addition, two hundred and fifty structured interview guides were administered to adherents of Indigenous Religion and Christianity within Moba community. This number was randomly selected to include both old and young people and also male and female. Secondary sources were also consulted.



The study found out that blood played a vital role in the sacrificial rites of the Indigenous Religion and Christianity among Moba people. Also the research revealed that blood symbolized life, hope, and oneness in the above mentioned religions. It was discovered that the basic reason for sacrifice in both religions was to appease God as well as promote peaceful co-existence within the family and community. It was further ascertained that the harmonious interaction between the adherents of Christianity and Traditional Religion in Mobaland was due to the fact that those who brought Christianity to Mobaland were indigenous missionaries who appreciated and understood the cultural values and religious heritage of the Moba people. The study concluded that Moba people could be authentically Christians and at the same time authentically Moba, retaining their socio-cultural and religious identities as a Traditional Yoruba and Christian community.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The study of African traditional religion has come a long way. Many scholars have done great works in this area, especially on the history and traditional religion of the Yoruba. In the continent of Africa, particularly in Sub-Sahara Africa, the Yoruba are among the indigenous African communities that are most researched.

Great scholars such as Geoffrey Parrinder - *Religion in an African City* (1974); Awolalu, J.O. and Dopamu, P. A., *West African Traditional Religion* (1979); Awolalu, J.O. *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites* (1981); Biobaku, S.O. *The Origin of the Yorubas* (1955); *Source of Yoruba History* (ed.) (1987); Johnson S.A. *The History of the Yoruba from the Earliest Time to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (1921); Smith, E.W. *African Idea of God* (1950); Gleason Judith, *Orisha: The Gods of Yorubaland* (1987); Hallgren Roland, *The Good Things in Life: A Study of the Traditional Religions Culture of the Yoruba People* (1988); Fadipe, N.A., *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (1970); Idowu, E.B., *Olodumare: God in the Yoruba Beliefs* (1976); *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (1976); Olupona J.K. *African Traditional Religions in Contemporary Society* (1991); Olupona, J.K. and Toyin Falola, *Religion and*

*Society in Nigeria: Historical and Sociological Perspective (1991)*, to mention just a few, have contributed greatly to the scholarly work on the subject.

The pioneering efforts of the above mentioned scholars are highly commendable. However, their approach to the study of the history and religions of the Yoruba covers an extremely wide scope. The fact is, Yoruba as a group of people comprises many sub-tribal sections and ethnic groups. Each of these communities has its own unique socio-cultural and religious identity. The current trend in scholarship is an attempt by scholars to apply a micro-context approach, which is, narrowing down their works to a particular community for effective and comprehensive study.

Using this method, heroic contributions have been made by scholars like, David Ogungbile, *Myth - Ritual and Identity in the Religious Imagination of the Osogbo People of Western Nigeria (2003)*. The emphasis of his work is on the Osogbo community within the Yoruba nation. Earlier in 1957, Biobaku S.O. wrote on the *Egba and their Neighbours 1842-1872*, focusing on the Egba Community. While Wale Oke came up with a presentation on Shao People “*Shao: My People, their Tradition, Custom and Culture*” (1996); Dapo Adelugba wrote on the ancient city “*Ibadan Mesiogo: A Celebration of a City, its History and People*” (2001). Prior to this Adelugba, Gordon T. and Lancaster M. did a good documentation on “*Orisha Houses in Ibadan*” (1961). Also, Jedege G.G. researched on “*The Impact of Traditional Values on Christianity in Eastern Ekitiland*” (1994). Olayiwola D.O. researched on the “*Hermeneutical Phenomenological Study of the Aladura Spirituality in Ijesha Social History*”. The prominent scholar, Olupona J.K., did a micro- context presentation on the people of Ondo in his work captioned “*Kingship, Religion, and Ritual in Nigeria Community: a Phenomenological Study of Ondo Yoruba Festivals*” (1991). Following the trend, this research work concentrates on

comparative analytical investigations on the concept of Blood Symbolism in Indigenous Religion and Christianity among the Moba People in Ekiti.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

**Man's attempt to appease his God and live in harmony with his fellow man has often driven him to offer sacrifices. Thus, sacrifice has been a common practice and still plays a central role among various peoples and adherents of the three major religious groups: Traditional, Christian, and Islam. Although various items are required for these sacrifices, blood seems to be the most important.**

**Indeed, devotees of these religious groups practise human sacrifice, which entails the shedding of blood. Yet, there is the tendency among practitioners of one faith to dismiss the other religions as primitive and agnostic. This prejudice, however, is not the concern of this research. The crucial questions this study seeks to address among others are: Why is blood important in sacrificial rites? Is there any other substitute for blood? Why was the offering of human sacrifice practised? Are the perceived functional substitutions accurately meeting the requirement of the Supernatural Beings?**

## 1.3 Objective of the Study

**Blood plays a vital role in the sacrificial rite of any religion, especially in Traditional Religion and Christianity. In a strict sense, this thesis sets out to achieve two main goals: to investigate the significance of blood sacrifice in the worship system of two religions of the Moba people - Traditional and Christian religions, and to carry out a historic and comparative analysis of blood symbolism in the**

**sacrificial rites of these religions with a view to understanding its implication in the socio-**

**cultural life of the Moba people.**

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