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**TRULY, THE SACRED STILL DWELLS:
MAKING SENSE OF EXISTENCE IN
THE AFRICAN WORLD**

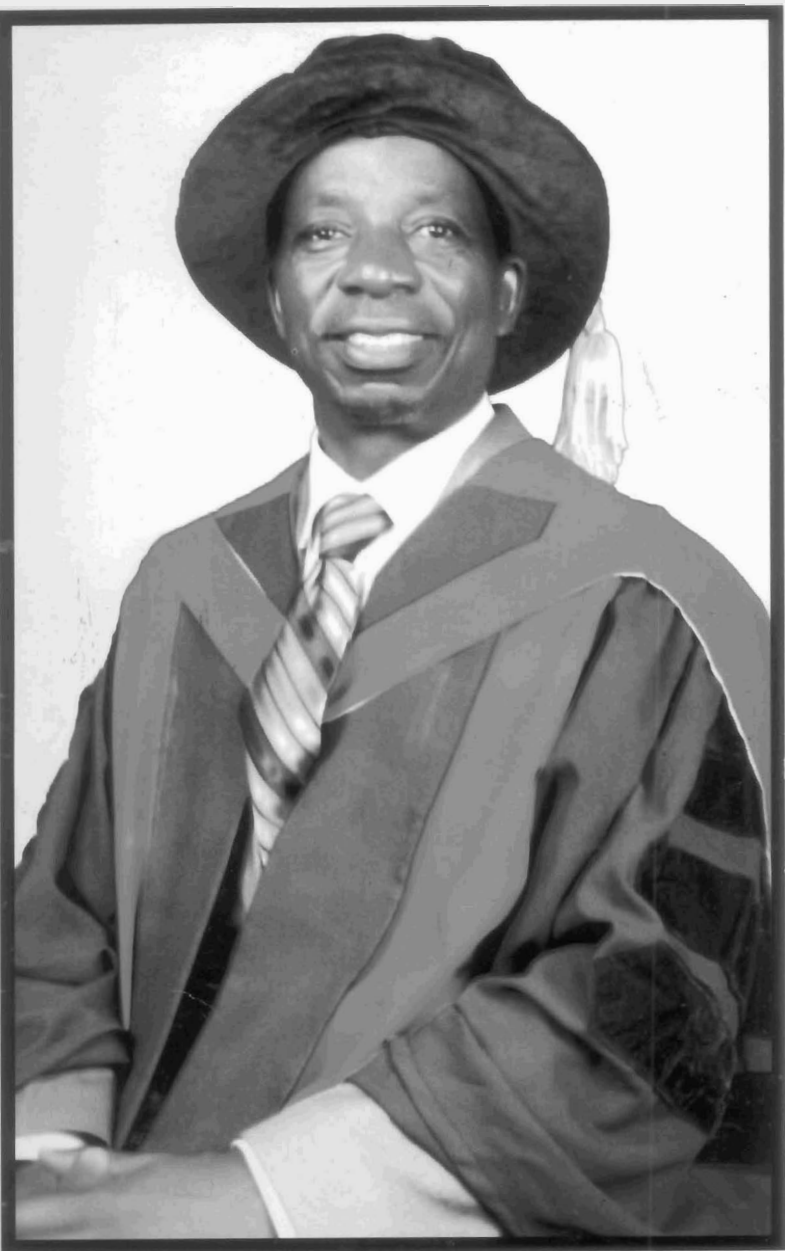
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TRULY, THE SACRED STILL DWELLS: MAKING SENSE OF EXISTENCE IN THE AFRICAN WORLD

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Truly, the Sacred Still Dwells: Making Sense of Existence in the African World

Prolegomenon/Preliminary Remarks

The Inaugural Lecture is noted for providing rare opportunities to Professors so as to increase both their research and academic visibility. They are able to publicly declare and expound their past, present and future research endeavours.

Mr Vice Chancellor Sir, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I feel so honoured and humbled to be presenting today, the second Inaugural Lecture in the Department of Religious Studies of this great University, since its establishment in September, 1962. The first and only inaugural lecturer before me was Prof Matthews Ojo. All glory to the Lord! Religious Studies was one of the foundation disciplines in the Faculty of Arts and was initially run alongside Philosophy until the 1975/76 Academic Session when they became separate Departments. Since its inception, it has continued to offer the B.A. Religious Studies (Single Honours) and Religious Studies (Combined) with History, English or Philosophy Programme. The Department also has the Master of Arts (M.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Programmes.

The topic of today's lecture "*Truly, the Sacred Still Dwells: Making Sense of Existence in the African World*" is a product of my socio-cultural travail, psychic imagination, life experiences, as well as tutelage from formal and informal education. I began as a young boy, born in a small village of Ada, in Boripe Local Government Area of Osun State; but raised in Ilesa, the political headquarters of Ijesaland (Igbayewa Compound) and settled as a spiritual voyager oriented in the indigenous religious tradition and five brands of Christian experience. The divine underpinnings which laid the foundation for the comparative and sociological endeavours which I now profess, are very integral to my academic life. I was born into a typical indigenous compound where the practice of *orisa* Ogun and Egungun was strong, although my parents were ardent members of the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) movement. After the death of my father, my uncle, Joseph Ogungbenle, an ardent member of the Apostolic Faith Church, took care of me. All of these relationships had their tides and turns in my eventual academic orientation.

My Conceptual and Theoretical Assumptions on the Lecture Title

Mr. Vice Chancellor, Sir, Distinguished Audience, two traditions that have fashioned and continue to fashion my intellectual life and career: the Ife and the Harvard traditions, are noteworthy, here. Within these contexts, religion is expounded as a meaning-making and meaning-framing phenomenon that is heavily relied upon by humans to make sense of their life-worlds. Let me at this point clarify my conceptual and theoretical assumptions as well as the empirical bases of the variables in the title of this inaugural lecture. This will undoubtedly afford a smooth sail into 'Making Sense of Existence in the African World' and understanding that 'the sacred still dwells'. Here, religion is deliberately used vaguely in consonance with my life and living experience as a practitioner, scholar and teacher.

I have discovered in my research endeavours, that religion as an institutional category is a dangerous label which inspires sharp identity and social exclusion. While recognizing the centrality of the sacred texts of the major religions of the books, that is, Christianity and Islam, the expressions of those religions and human spiritual experience go beyond the written texts. Thus, rather than rest on the assumption that a religion as 'received' and 'handed over' is wholly, whole, unique, unaltered and singularly orthodox, it is important to note and understand that there arise varied and varieties of traditions emerging from a perceived 'single monolithic religion.' Hence, it will be a parochial assumption to claim that Christianity or Islam comprises only one tradition. Each of them presents a variety of traditions as demonstrated in my "Religious Experience and Women Leadership in Nigerian Islam" (2004) and *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity* (2010).

Thus, I continue to investigate religious traditions from praxis while not throwing out the sacred texts; since sacred texts provide the mythic narrative or historical basis of such traditions. Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1998) in *Patterns of Faith Around the World* suggests that scholars of religions need to engage in the study of religious people since their practices, including interactions, moral claims and lives, give us the sense they are making of their religious traditions as coded in texts. Mahatma Gandhi, in his work, *All Religions are true*, states that:

the fundamental unity and equality of
religions, the brotherhood of man, and
the true nature and purpose of religion,

all the great religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, etc. – are true more or less. ‘More or less’ because religion, as conceived by man, can never be perfect even as man, being man, can never be perfect, perfection being the exclusive attribute of God alone. ... All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error (Gandhi 1962: v).

These scholars corroborate the stance that studying the religious lives of humans (Africans inclusive) will culminate into “Making Sense of Existence in the African World”. My use of ‘African’ in the lecture title does not suggest a coverage of continental space, or assume a single conceptual pattern of a community or group of people since Africa itself was a creation of social and political circumstances and imagination (Valentine Mudimbe). Rather, the use of ‘African’ provides the basis for certain universal elements and fundamentals of the African indigenous worldview which will also include the diasporic elements of peoples who were dispersed especially during the transatlantic slave trade and others who claim Africa as their root or origin (Thornton 1998; Adetugbo 2001; Fernandez Olmos & Paravisini-Gebert 2003; Stewart 2005; Paul Johnson 2007; Sansone & Barry 2008). The two parts of Thornton’s *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* detail the historical formation and transformations of African culture in the Atlantic World. Johnson identifies the spiritual formation and ritual factor in the definition of homeland within the hostland. Adetugbo notes that these dispersed people established African communities in many parts of the western world, and that “today, we find African communities in Europe, America, and the Caribbean and even in Latin America” (Adetugbo CBAAC, 3). Describing their worldview, Adetugbo observes that “when the Africans were dispersed to the New World, they probably knew next to nothing about any other religion than their own African Ancestral World (Adetugbo, p. 10). Drawing from those communities of the African diaspora, he identifies several elements which were undoubtedly carry-overs from Africa, particularly Yoruba, Olupona and Rey in their work titled *Orisa Devotion as World Religion*, remark that:

The African spirit proved remarkably resilient in the face of the transatlantic

slave trade, inspiring the perseverance of African religion wherever its adherents settled in the New World. ... Thousands of African Americans have turned to the religion of their ancestors, as have many other spiritual seekers who are not themselves of African descent. (Olupona and Rey 2008: cover page)

Besides Olupona and Rey's *Orisa Devotion*, four essays in Ògúnbilé's *African Indigenous Religious Traditions in Local and Global Contexts* (Ògúnbilé, 2015a) and seven essays in Olupona and Abiodun's *Ifa Divination, Knowledge, Power and Performance* (2016) are devoted to diasporic and Afro-Atlantic contexts of the African worldview which define and reinforce our use of 'African' in this lecture. In this lecture, I will be dwelling on the African people as they constitute my research engagement, their worldview, especially some definitive concepts and productions about their arts and heritage, popularised within the global identity which define their basic and fundamental elements.

The term 'sacred' "is the manifestation of the 'wholly order'; something entirely different from the profane" (Eliade 1959:11). Such ordinary elements include space or place, time and symbol. For example, a space or time is profane when it carries no sacral quality or uniqueness and it is not attached to any spiritual essence/sense. The theoretical basis of the sacred as it informs 'sense-making of existence in the African world' will be dealt with shortly. I use the term 'sacred' as a new way of talking about religion, a break from the institutional model.

My Specialisation in Comparative Religion and Sociological Study of Religion

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, my penchant for Comparative and Sociological Study of Religions was birthed by my invaluable interactions with one of my lecturers at the undergraduate level in 1984, Prof Jacob Kehinde Olupona who also was my M.A. supervisor in 1989 Olupona's teaching of frameworks for analysing and interpreting religious concepts, phenomena and ideas was so fascinating that I chose to specialise in this field. While on my M.A. programme, Benjamin Ray of the University of Virginia came on a research visit to our Department. Ray was researching African Religions and he engaged me as an interpreter to

Babalawo Fatoogun (now late). The engagement also had significant impact on my Master's dissertation, entitled "A Comparative Study of Revelation in Aladura Christianity and Divination in Yoruba Religious Traditions in Ile-Ife, Nigeria" (Ògúngbílé 1992) and on my career. In 1993, the then Acting Head, now Professor Andrew Olusegun Igenozu invited me to apply for the position of Assistant Lecturer in the Department, expressing confidence that I would be a great asset to the Department. As an Assistant Lecturer and Doctoral student of Comparative Religion, it was difficult for the Department to get a specialist in my field of study to supervise my work since Prof Olupona had already migrated to the United States.

My keen interest was deeply in theories and theorising religious traditions and phenomena. While on this seemingly unproductive journey in Nigeria, Olupona secured admission for me to pursue the degree of Master in Theological Studies (MTS) in World Religions at Harvard University even though I had spent about six years on the doctoral programme in Ife. This however offered me great opportunities for theoretical grounding as well as opening up a new field of research in comparative religion: Diaspora studies. At Harvard, I focused on theory-related courses including social theory, anthropology, sociology and psychology offered at the Harvard Divinity School and Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Having completed my MTS at Harvard and on the advice of Professor Jacob Olupona, I returned to the Department of Religious Studies here at Obafemi Awolowo University to complete my doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Prof S.G.A. Onibere. My PhD thesis is "Myth, Ritual and Identity in the Religious Traditions of the Osogbo People of Western Nigeria" (Ògúngbílé 2003a). The thesis was presented for National Universities Commission (NUC) thesis award in 2003 as one of the best five in the entire university.

My training in Comparative Religion (from now on CR) has taken me through different dimensions of the study of religion. Perhaps, the most engaging aspect is the theory and methods in the study of religion even though my major focus is Comparative Religion with my second leg in the Sociology of Religion. For the sake of my disciplinary sensibility and sentiment, I need to explain a few issues on Comparative Religion as an attempt to correct an error which has continued to be perpetuated by some academics in their execution of competence and skills, as well as method and practice of Comparative Religion. This has to do with the peddling of caricature information and ideas which have begun to

prejudice scholars of religion, particularly the three dominant religious traditions in Nigeria. I have observed in Nigeria, some individuals who combine their religious faith with their religion of scholarship to claim the discipline as scholars of comparative religion. This is an aberration! They thus, define themselves as scholars of Comparative Religion arising from their religious profession and their religion of scholarship. In some cases, such scholars have superficial knowledge of a religious tradition which they compare with their religion of profession. This leads to bias and prejudice. They create more problems and crises, sometimes thinking that comparative religion is about bringing religions into dialogue for tolerance and alliance.

Comparative Religion, it should be noted, could be understood from two perspectives. CR, first and foremost, could be a discipline, which has history with scholars whose classical works are foundational to the emergence and development of the field. Secondly, CR implies an approach to the general study of religion with emphasis on materials, motive and methods which inform inquiry, analysis and interpretation (Wach 1958; Sharpe 1975; Paden 2003). These two broad perspectives have broadened my vision of the field of religion and the practice of the study and research in religion.

As a professor of Comparative Religion, my orientation, locally and internationally, has advanced a border-crossing through inter- and multi-disciplinary engagements to phenomenology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, hermeneutics and others which have been deployed to investigate, analyse and interpret the different dimensions and institutions of human life (politics, economics, international relations, culture, performative arts), and their interface with religious life and experience. In all of these, I have identified as my working tool in the science of religion, “the sacred” which drives my scientific thinking through human life and experience, defined as human existence.

Theories on the Sacred

The four basic and foundational questions which I have found helpful in teaching and researching into religion, and which are sacred and relevant to this lecture are:

- a) Who studies religion?
- b) Why do we study religion?
- c) What do we study in religion?
- d) How do we study religion?

Of the four, the last two questions (c & d) have been quite insightful to me in developing theories and theorising the sacred and its diverse and varied forms of manifestations. In the study of the sacred, the two questions combine to understand how human beings, particularly Africans in the continent and in the Diaspora, make sense of their existence. "What do we study in religion?" interrogates the array of information derived from raw data including mythic narratives, ritual practices, performances, both verbal and visual, symbols and images archival materials and bulletins among others; and secondary sources from documented researches in journals and books. The question "how do we study religion?" addresses the methods and approaches employed in analysing and interpreting data.

Religion, as a behavioural science, focuses on individuals and group of persons (society). It should be understood through the lenses of humanistic and social science disciplines, being a hybrid of the two, and the centrality of the 'sacred' is indubitably fundamental. Among the classics on the discourse and theorizing of Religion, are Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), German philosopher, Georg W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), German Protestant theologian, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), Max Weber (1864-1920), Danish theologian, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), German theologian and historian of religion, Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), Swiss Protestant theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Mircea Eliade, German sociologist of religion (1907-1986).

Historical theorizing in religion, which focuses on diachronic or synchronic dimension, raises the spatio-temporal issues of emergence, characteristics, development, and changes in religious traditions and institutions. **Psychological** theorizing, which major scholars are Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Carl Jung (1875-1961), William James, Abraham Maslow (1905-1970) responds to "how religion accepts the reality of ... shifting states of consciousness and evaluates some as better, higher, and closer to the real self in relation to ultimate reality than others" (Ellwood 1993: 39). As this includes age, it also looks at gender and body structure and human sensibility. **Anthropological** theorizing of religion, either from the structuralist, functionalist or interactionalist perspective, engages in the study, analysis and interpretation of myths, symbols and rites as cultural phenomena. Among the notable scholars of this perspective are Claude Levi-Strauss, Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner.

Sociological theorizing in religion, deals with institutional, relational, interactional from either the functionalist or dysfunctionalist dimensions. The emphasis in the theory of religion for the sociologists of religion is that "all religion is social" (Ellwood 1993: 119). As a human phenomenon, religion coerces and coheres, it is manipulative, as it disintegrates and integrates. It indoctrinates! It soothes and pains. Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim are notable ancestors of sociological theory. **Theological** theorizing which includes several brands as traditionalist, fundamentalist, liberationist, systematist and feminist, emphasise truth claims inherent in the concepts and doctrines of religious traditions. The question of faith and reason is central to **philosophical** theorising. **Ethical** or **moral** theorizing pertaining to religion focuses the determination of rightness or wrongness of actions and what or who determines the rightness or wrongness. Religious ethics emphasises the centrality of the divine or the sacred. It goes beyond human to other issues including animals and the environment. It further raises fundamental moral questions in the age of modernity, sciences, religious plurality and secularization. Theorising from the perspectives of **gender**, **iconography** of religion, **ecology** of religion, **geography** of religion and **economics** of religion, have developed in response to the interface of these disciplines with religious traditions from different contexts and epochs (see Bell 1992; Wuthnow 1992).

In theorizing the 'sacred' within the African universe and context, I have found very valuable, the classical works of scholars like Rudolf Otto (1950, 1992) who is famous for the terms '*numen praescens*' and '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*', Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane* (1961), and 'hierophany', Ninian Smart (1996) and his 'eight dimensions of the sacred', Emile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1961) and Hans Mol (1976) whose notable work focuses on the sacralisation of identity. Rather than take on all of these for extensive discussions here, I shall employ their theoretical bases in my interpretation and analysis of concepts and issues as they relate to my work on the manifestation of the sacred in African universe. Moreover, rather than romanticise the sacredness of Africa as John Mbiti (1969) did that Africans are notoriously religious, the attempt is to present, as it were, human life experiences and expressions of the sacred reality (in form and quality) as shown by our experiments.

The Human, the Sacred and African Worldview

The issue of human existence, either as an evolutionary matter or as a theological concern, is profound. This underlines the identity question which is the locus or index of human existence. Moreover, of the several markers of human identity, I have come to terms with myth (sacred story) and ritual as crucial, determinant, and central to human existence. It is important to note that myth and ritual reinforce the meaning, essence and functioning of the human societies. The power inherent in such reinforcement is underscored by the attached sacredness underlying the quality of human existence. This is what gives society the form, structure and shape which define human existence. The question of human existence defining the different levels of identity is a concern to all disciplines. I submit that the central focus of human existence has been on the profound question of identity which raises evolutionary concern for anthropologists and theologians. Barbara Sproul puts it thus:

[T]he most profound human questions are ...: Who are we? Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives and our deaths? How should we understand our place in the world, *in time and space*? These are central questions of value and meaning.... (1979: 1) (italics my emphasis)

Two important issues which hinge on the existence of the human being here are place and time. Our personhood and place in the world focus on essence, purpose and consequence of being.

In contextualizing the issue of the sacred vis-à-vis human existence, we shall engage the sacred within the African worldview. By worldview, it is meant the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world. It may also be defined as a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group. A worldview is an individual's personal insight about reality and meaning, often termed a life understanding. It is remarkable to note that all human beings desire certainty and assurance by which to live their lives. A worldview will encompass the notions of the existence or nonexistence of the supernatural and a deity or deities; the origins of the universe and of human life; the source of morality and values and identification of what is good or evil; how to live one's life; the meaning of life and of death

etc. To a greater or lesser degree, people have apprehensions, misgivings, uneasiness and issues regarding their ultimate concerns and obtain reassurances from worldview coherency. Much of any person's worldview is shaped by his or her culture and upbringing.

The African worldview holds the conception and construction of a place, which is vastly reflected in their community. Such a conception may differ from what we call the secular perception of place (Olupona 2003: 92). I have demonstrated in my "*Ile (Earth) and Sustainability: Motherhood Symbolism, Sex Metaphor, and Ritual Essence in African Indigenous Spirituality*" (Ògúngbílé 2009a) that most African communities operate with a worldview that recognises an inseparable relationship of the body and the spirit of the humans, the natural and the supernatural that interact at different levels to create such values that reinforce a harmonious human and environmental development. The African worldview anchors on the operation of myriads of spiritual beings that direct their entire life including the social, moral, political, economic and medical spheres.

For instance, what we define as natural has supernatural existence. However, the natural, following from the (cosmogonic) mythic narratives that provide the basis of its existence and spiritual essence, ritual practice reinforces its sacred essence. The sacredness further requires what Hans Mol (1976) calls the processes of commitment and objectification. That is, myth, ritual, and the processes of commitment and objectification sacralise the identity of human beings and other entities. For example, to the scientist, water as a natural phenomenon is H^2O , a constituent of 2 molecules of hydrogen and a molecule of oxygen. To the indigenous Africans, it exists in three forms: the spiritual which is the basis of the other two, that is, the human and the natural (Ògúngbílé 1997a). This provides the basis for the worldviews of most African communities where no distinction is made between the sacred and the secular, and the material and the spiritual.

In my "God: African Supreme Beings" (Ògúngbílé 2005d), a major entry of more than 8,000 words in the 16-volume, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, and "Africa" (Ògúngbílé 2007d) in *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender*, I have identified the basic elements and common features of African worldview, its nature, structure and operations which are contained in their different mythic narratives that focus on the names (ancient and descriptive) of their supreme beings, the deities/divinities

and their nature and relationship with the supreme being and created order, the human beings and their position and functions within the universe; and the relationships that exist among the spiritual, human and non-human entities. All of these involve the activities of the deities, for the Yoruba, these are *orisa*, deities. Let me quickly note here that the Yoruba become important in this discourse since their worldview is central to the African and most transatlantic religious worldviews (Murphy, 1993; Neimark 1993; Karade 1994, 2001; Abimbola, W. 1997; Gibson, 2001; Murphy & Sanford, 2001; De La Torre, 2004; Grail Johnson 2007; Olupona 2008; Ògúnbilé 2015a; Falola & Akinyemi 2016).

I have demonstrated through most of my researches and writings that some of these *orisa* (both male and female), as we have among the Yoruba and Yoruba-derived religious traditions and institutions within and among the African continent and the Diasporas, have three modes of existence: the primordial (which is spiritual), human and natural phenomena. Three notable examples are Osun (Osogbo), Sango (Layookun in Osogbo) and Sango (Oyo, a manifestation in the fourth king of Oyo). Their manifestations in human forms and natural phenomena are sometimes misunderstood as some scholars claimed that these *orisa* are only deified human beings.

Most African deities continue to function through the natural phenomena they embody, including rain, wind, forest, rivers, and trees. Some deities manifest as entities of the terrestrial universe, including the sun, moon and stars (Ògúnbilé 2007d). Also, malevolent spiritual forces sometimes play guests to crossroads, road junctions, streams and rivers, and animals such as cats, lizards, cockroaches, mosquitoes, spiders and snakes. Interestingly, the activities of these deities and spiritual beings and forces on human beings and their communities constitute the locus of operations of contemporary Nigerian Christian and Muslim groups (Ògúnbilé 1997a&c, 2004b,c&d). I shall return to this shortly.

Among the prominent deities of the Yoruba, who are involved in the maintenance of the Yoruba universe are Obataala, Orunmila, Ogun, and Osun. However, the male-female principle of the operation of the deities makes vitality and productivity possible (Ògúnbilé 2007d: 36). I have demonstrated this in my “*Eerindinlogun: The Seeing Eyes of Sacred Shells and Stones*” (Ògúnbilé 2001a) and employed this to show gender relations and how the African universe is constantly being maintained

through the complementarity of male and female deities (see also Ògúnbilé 2003a). One of the Odu that strongly reveals this gender relations and complementarity is Odu Osetua. It states:

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Kómú-n-kọrọ</i>
<i>Awo Èwí n'lé Adó;</i> | <i>Kómú-n-kọrọ</i>
The diviner of Èwí in the town
of Adó; |
| | <i>Òrún-mú-dèdèdèdè-kanlẹ̀</i>
<i>Awo Òde Ìjèsà;</i> | <i>Òrún-mú-dèdèdèdè-kanlẹ̀</i>
Their diviner in Ìjèsà kingdom; |
| 5 | <i>Alákàn-ní-ń-bẹ-lódò</i>
<i>Tí-ń-tẹlẹ-tutu-rin-rin-rin.</i> | <i>The-crab-is-in-the-river</i>
The one that crawls in cold
watery grounds. |
| | <i>A diá f'érindínlógún Oródù.</i> | He divined for the sixteen
principal divinities. |
| | <i>Nijó wón n t'òde ọrun bọ-</i> | On the day they were
descending from heaven- |
| | <i>W'óde isálayé.</i> | To the planetary earth. |
| 10 | <i>Wón dé'lé Ayé.</i>
<i>Wón ye'gbó Orò,</i>
<i>Wón ye'gbó Ọpa,</i>
<i>Wón gbimò,</i> | They arrived in the world,
They cleared Orò grove,
They cleared Ọpa grove.
They planned, |
| 15 | <i>Wón ọ fi t'Ọsun se.</i>
<i>Wón se'lé ayé titi,</i> | They didn't with Ọsun.
They tried to maintain the
world, |
| | <i>Ilé ayé ọ gún rará.</i>
<i>Wón gbé'ra páá,</i>
<i>Wón tọ Olódùmarè lọ.</i>
<i>Olódùmarè kí wón tán,</i> | There was no order in the world.
They rose as one,
They went to Olódùmarè.
Olódùmarè welcomed them, |
| 20 | <i>Ó bèèrè ẹkẹtadinlógún wón.</i> | He asked of the seventeenth
deity. |
| | <i>Olódùmarè ní, "kin ni ó dé-</i>
<i>Ti ẹ kii fii kée síi?"</i> | Olódùmarè asked them "Why-
Why didn't you bring her
along?" |
| | <i>Wón ní, "Nitori pé-</i>
<i>Ó jẹ obinrin láàrin àwọn ni."</i> | They replied, "It is because-
She was only a female amongst
us." |
| 25 | <i>Olódùmarè ní, "Agbẹdò o!</i> | Olódùmarè said, "No, it should
not be so! |
| | <i>Obinrin bí ọkúnrin ni Ọsun."</i>
<i>Olódùmarè ní,</i> | Ọsun is a manly woman."
Olódùmarè said, |

- Boriborí, Awo Írágberí,*
Omo èkòsé Ọsun ní í se.
- 30 *Ègbà, Awo Ílukàn,*
Omo èkòsé Ọsun ní í se.
Èse, tí í se Awo wọn-
N'Íjèbú Erè,
Omo èkòsé Ọsun ní í se.
- 35 *Atómú, Awo wọn ní Íkirè Ilé,*
Omo èkòsé Ọsun ní í se.
Àwọn Irinmọlẹ wònyii-
Ní í jẹ k'omọ sòwò,
Àwọn ní í jẹ k'omọ jèrè;
- 40 *Sùgbón, wọn kì í jẹ-*
K'omọ kéré ojà délẹ.
Olódùmarè ní
"Ohun tí ẹ kò tètè mọ-
Ní ẹ wáa mọ wáyí.
- 45 *È padà silé ayé,*
Kí ẹ sì máa kẹ sí Ọsun,
Fún gbogbo ohun tí ẹ bá fée se.
Ohunkóhun tée bá dáwọ lé-
- 50 *Yóò sì máa túbà-tùse."*
Ìgbà tí wọn délẹ ayé,
Wọn bèrè síi pe Ọsun.
Ní wọn bá n kí Ọsun háyíi-
A-rí pepẹ kó idẹ sí,
storing brassware.
A fí'dẹ rẹ'mọ,
- 55 *Yèè mi, Afìyùn gbà'se.*
- "Boriborí, their diviner in*
Írágberí,
He is a divination apprentice of
Ọsun.
Ègbà, their diviner in Ílukàn,
He is a divination apprentice of
Ọsun.
Èse, who is their diviner -
In Íjèbú Erè
He is a divination apprentice of
Ọsun.
Atómú, their diviner in the town
of Íkirè
He is a divination apprentice of
Ọsun.
These divinities-
They allow a person to trade,
They allow a person to make
gains;
But they do not allow-
The person to take the gains
home."
Olódùmarè said,
"What you were ignorant of-
Is what you now know.
Go back to the world,
And confer with Ọsun,
In whatever you embark upon
Whatever then you lay your
hands on-
Will begin to prosper."
When they got into the world,
They now started to call on
Ọsun.
And praise Ọsun thus-
One who has a big shelf for

One who appeases children with
brass,
My mother, she who accepts
corals for ritual offerings.

*Ota ò! Omi ò! Èdan ò!
Awùrà! Olù! Agbaja!
Abáwònpéjo nídiì imòrà̀n.*

Ládékojú! Oore Yèyè Òṣun!

*Ota! Omi! Edan!
Awùrà! Olù! Agbaja!*

The ever-present counsellor at
their decision-making meetings
Ládékojú! The Gracious
Mother, Òṣun!

An analysis of the contents of the verses of this Odù reveals Òsun's mysterious and mystical power, even though she is the only female among the seventeen principal divinities sent by Olodumare to maintain the universe. Others in this group are Ogun, Sàngó, Obaluaye, Èsù, Boribori, Egba, Ese, Orisa Oko, Baayanni, Òsanyin Ewele, Ajaga, Lagbookun, Ologbojo, Gbuukuu, Peepee, Ore (Adeoye 1985: 30). She is however neglected in their maintenance work. They could not succeed! The sixteen male deities go and report to Olodumare of their predicament and mysterious failure to achieve success in their work. Olódùmarè notes and asks about Osun who is absent among them. They reply that Osun is only a woman and so would not be significant in their maintenance exercise. Olodumare then affirms that they would not succeed if Osun is neglected since she has been endowed with power not lesser than her male counterpart. Secondly, Osun has the ability to withhold the life-force principle. She does this through the network of her four powerful messengers and her divination apprentices; they are part of the sixteen male deities. Moreover, He makes them to understand the fact that four of them in their company are *Boribori* (Overcomer), *Egba* (Paralysis) *Ese* (Grievous Harm) and *Atomu* (Able and Strong Captor), who have been divination apprentices of Osun.

Osun therefore uses this network to destroy the collective efforts of the male deities. *Boribori* assists Òsun in overcoming the others, *Egba* paralyses them, *Ese* causes terrible harm on them, while *Atomu* arrests productivity for refusing to consult and involve Òsun. Olodumare then tells them to go back and invite and consult Osun in their endeavours, once they do this, their maintenance work begins to prosper and becomes productive. Òsun further uses the above network to provide a balance within the framework of opposing characteristics of destruction and construction, ferocity and nurture, disorganising and organising, and causing fortune and misfortune. She confers this mystical power on women, objectified in *Aje*, the most powerful, most highly dreaded and most revered women's cult in Yorùbáland. Besides, Osun epitomises masculinity, bravery and prowess. She is warlike.

Aje (a witch) exemplifies power in the Yorubá worldview. Witches are mysterious, tough, powerful, fearful and ubiquitous. They maintain an ontological equilibrium between the several forces within the spiritual and mundane worlds. They play the dual roles of furthering and thwarting the plans of human beings. Barrenness, illness or death of children, blindness, accidents, damage to farms and other misfortunes are attributed to the influence of the *Aje*. They operate at any time of the day (Abimbola 1976: 165-169, 174-186). They assume less human forms like birds, cockroaches, lizards, cats, sheep, and spiders while performing their activities (Ladele 19xx: 47-48). They are praised thus:

Iyàmi, Ọsòròngà
Apáni-má-hàá- 'gún,

Olókiki òru;
Ajẹdò èniyàn ma bí

Èyí tí lẹ nígbà ọjà bá tú

A-lẹ- 'mọ lójú àlá wiriwiri.

My Mysterious Mother, *Ọsòròngà*
One who kills without giving
vulture a share,

The dominant force at midnight;
One who devours human livers
without vomiting.

One who stays behind after the
market closes.

One who terrifies a child in dreams

The ritual significance of women is also revealed in the practice of divination, particularly the use of *ẹẹrindínlógún* (16-cowrie shell divination) which was originally bequeathed to Osun by Orunmila. Osun, in turn handed down to all the *olorisa* (devotees of *orisa*) including Osun, Ogun, Obataala, Sango, Obaluwaye, and Orisa Oko. Thus, through this bequeathal, women became actively involved in ritual engagement and practice; as *eerindinlogun* is the second most important Orunmila-source form of divination, besides the use of *opele* (divining chain) and *ikin* Ifa, palmtree (Ògúngbilé 2001a, 2003a; see also Olademo 2013).

That is to say that the African worldview is deeply and wholly sacred, centring on the operation of the multiplicity of spiritual beings. I will illustrate this with the Yoruba example. These spiritual beings include benevolent and malevolent spirits: divinities, ancestors, *aye*, *Ajogun*, and *Eleye* (Parrinder 1968: 10; Abimbola 1976: 151; Gehman 1989: 138ff; Idowu 1991: chapter 5). Thus, African universe operates within the complex scheme of benevolent and malevolent forces through ritual activities that instigate communal self-awareness and understanding that would create societal harmony and ontological equilibrium (Ògúngbilé 1997a&c, 2015a). The activities and operation of these spiritual forces revolve around such phenomena/concept as *Ori* (destiny, sometimes

called *Ayanmo* – choice; *ipin* – predestined share; *kadara* (adapted from Islam) – divine share of a man; *iponri* – inner head). Divinities, animals and even inanimate objects possess *Ori*, which is claimed to have been chosen while a person is coming into the physical world. The only way the Yoruba, for example, explain the success or failure, affluence or poverty, fortune or misfortune of a particular individual, is to attribute it to the choice that has been made in heaven. Operating on the success or otherwise of one's *Ori* are *Orisa*, *Esu*, *ajogun*, *aye*, *aje* as is the case with the Yoruba. Every conceivable occasion is interpreted as a product of these forces for which spiritual diagnosis becomes inevitable through consultation with the *babalawo*, diviners and the *olorisa*, who are endowed with spiritual powers as agents of the deities.

Among the evil forces are *Ajogun* (belligerent enemies of human beings) and the *Eleye* (witches). The *Ajogun* who include *Iku* (Death), *Arun* (Disease), *Egba* (Paralysis), *Ofo* (Loss), *Epe* (Curse), *Oran* (Trouble), *Ewon* (Bondage) and *Ese* (Terrible Harm) are harbingers of hardship who work against the success and interest of man. They are interested in terminating human existence. They are all messengers of *Esu*, who is more or less, a neutral force between the activities of the *Ajogun* and those of human beings and the divinities. The *Eleye* (witches) are believed to be capable of assuming the form of birds whenever they are on assignment against a person's interest. They are called *Aje* (witches). They are also regarded as the arch-enemies of human beings. The Yoruba express the coexistence and cohabitation of the humans and the entire universal entities in the scheme of these forces as "*ogun l'aye*," "life is (full of) battle."

Ontological equilibrium within the complex frame of benevolent and malevolent spiritual forces is made possible and maintained by several ritual activities which occupy the entire lifespan of a person from birth to life-beyond. Ritual practice, I have observed, provides a context for the meeting of the spiritual, humans and the natural world. Rituals generally provide a renewal, reinvigoration, revitalization, rejuvenation, and rebirth of spaces and times through the agency of human beings. Ritual activities involving prescriptions by ritual specialists, who consult the deities, are based on mythic narratives which often order, empower and dictate processes of commitment and objectification (Ògúnbilé 2007d). I need to mention, though in brief, the framework of hotness and coolness which African deities employ in resolving problems and proffering solutions to them. Sango and other male *orisa* that embody

hotness expressed in fire are only appeased by the female *orisa* such as Osun that embody coolness which personify water.

How do the sacred define and/or reinforce the worldview and identity of the people of African-descent in America? At the beginning of this lecture, I have mentioned that my notion of the African world goes beyond the continental borders of Africa. In my "Borderless Homeland: Memory, Identity and the Spiritual Experience of an African Diaspora Community," (Ògúngbílé 2015c), I demonstrated that identity as well as worldview is perceived and acted out from a group's collective memory and imagination. Closely related to this is Benedict Anderson who defines community or identity as "an imagined political community" (Anderson 1993: 6). From this ethnographic data and study, I noted some elements that inspire the consciousness of this group of African descents: history, politics and economy which define the collectivity. Three major contacts informed this study. One, sometime in the year 2000, during my graduate studies at Harvard, I received a call from Professor Jacob Olupona, then, of the University of California, Davis. He informed me of the desire of a group of African-descent in Boston area to hire a Yoruba instructor. As I accepted the offer, the first meeting was scheduled in the apartment of one of the members who was, and still is a devotee of Ifa. I got to the venue where members, mostly adults, were already seated, adorned in diverse paraphernalia of the different Orisa priests and priestesses, depicting the Orisa they adored and worshipped. They were excited at my arrival. I also noticed on the divination tray placed by the shrine in the room, the signature of the Odu that was cast to ascertain the prospect of my intended engagement with them. We had the introductory meeting; they expressed their collective thirst for Yoruba language and tradition. I discovered immediately their passion to get deepened in the knowledge and practice of Òrìsà. In addition to learning language, they requested me to teach and sing for them Òrìsà songs. This made me reorganize my Yoruba language lesson to incorporate teaching and singing of Òrìsà songs. At our meetings, members were always engrossed in singing and dancing to Òrìsà songs which they usually tape-recorded to aid their memory, learning and practice. The six-month intensive course lasted until I returned to Nigeria in September 2001.

My second experience came on Tuesday, March 20, 2001. I was invited by a group of *orisa* devotees of African-derived religion to Osun festival in Boston, Massachusetts. The arrowheads of the festival were two African American ladies who claimed to be revitalizing Yoruba religion

in Boston area and New York. Their adopted Yoruba-Òrìsà names were Osunkemi Olosun and Sangoyemi Osundiwura. Sangoyemi's given names were Barbara Easton who was at the time the interim General Secretary of Ebi Akinsilola Iroko. The building where the festival was held housed Osun and Sango deities; a room fully ornamented with respective paraphernalia of each deity, was dedicated as shrine, adjacent to each other. Participants at this festival included several persons of white American, African, African American, Cuban and Brazilian descents and a Jewess. The festival, declared opened by the Awise, Wande Abimbola, was full of excitement with a lot of singing and dancing to Òrìsà, and food-sharing.

The third experience was in 2009, during my fellowship year at the Harvard Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research in Cambridge. I was invited again by the group that I taught Yoruba language and Òrìsà songs in 2001. At this time, learning Òrìsà songs was dominant in their desire. I discovered their deeper commitment and devotion to Òrìsà worship and a strong community that had been forged and strengthened. Most of them informed me that they had visited Osogbo, Ife and Oyo, and had been initiated into the deities of Osun, Sango, Ifá and others. These contacts and interactions informed a more intense, deeper, and formal study of the community which is the fallout of this research.

Drawing from the personal narratives, interviews, focus group discussions and participation in their religious and festival celebrations, the study offers a variety of the bases of interpreting and theorising the Diaspora discourse. These are revealed in the living experiences of this group of African descent in the Americas which manifested in how the people have been negotiating, redefining and reinforcing their identity through intense spirituality and indigenous religious practices. Thus, the sacred has been employed to confront the social, political, economic and emotional challenges in their American homeland. They engaged in the redefinition of their identity by appealing to a common spiritual root of African worldview. Since their political identity in the Americas seems to them psychologically traumatic through inhuman or subhuman treatment, they create 'spiritual' community which to them is essential to their entire life meaning and existence. I collected, analysed and interpreted the autobiographies, personal testimonials of a few of the members of this African Diaspora community. Here, the individuals narrated their former and current religious experiences and how they

accepted indigenous religious traditions. They also narrated the practices, consequences and challenges of their newfound faith, particularly in their American homeland.

These individuals made constant references to their nostalgia of their African homeland and the importance of connecting or reconnecting with *orisa* Osun, Sango, Ifa, Ogun and others, through initiation in Yorùbáland and pilgrimage to some annual Yorùbá festivals in Osogbo, Ile-Ife and Oyo. This spiritual 'root' provides ready transitional networks and global linkages to their 'real' reality through certain markers of spiritual identity, including ritual and festivals. It is interesting to note that most of these converts to indigenous traditions built altars in their homes in America, took on *Orisa*-related names, and engaged in the learning of Yorùbá language and *orisa* songs.

From the narratives, it is noted that for the African diaspora community, it is in *orisa* practice that they find meaning, space and fulfilment. *Orisa* practice provides a way of building the bridge between the past and the present, and between the peoples of African descent in the Americas and those in the African continent. These practitioners believe that indigenous spirituality is the root of their real existence, being and beingness, and therefore their African identity. The practice of *orisa* gives them unrestricted access to finding meaning, space and fulfilment in life through the mechanism of ritual. The allurements of members to the practice of *orisa* religion might have stemmed from its aesthetics, flexibility and openness of the worship and practice. They hold African ancestors in high esteem and they claim to be spiritually connected to them. They worship their ancestors through whom they memorialise their past. Furthermore, their acclaimed hierophanic experiences as individuals licence them to express themselves in their desired aesthetics, rhythm and beauty. Thus, they construct personal altars which they claim heal their sick souls and liberate their minds. Also, their participation in festivals in Africa gives them the opportunity to network their relationship which strengthens their spirituality and reinforces their identity with the African community which I describe as borderless homeland.

The African Person and the Good Things of Life

The African worldview emphasises the 'good things of life.' Ifa, the prophetic voice of Olodumare, speaks extensively on these 'good things of life' which include *Aje/Owo*, (money); *Aya*, (wife/wives); *Omo*,

(children or procreation), *aiku bale oro*, (long life which is chief of prosperity), and *ire gbogbo*, (all good things). Two verses of Eji Ogbe express these goodness or fortunes.

Èjì Ogbè (Èṣẹ̀ Èkínnì)

Gbogbo ori afin ewu
Abuke lo r'eru Oosa mo so;

Laalaagbaja lo ti ko ise e de:
A dia fun Orunmila

5 *Nijo ti n lo remi omo Olodumare*
s'obinrin;
Emi omo Olodumare,
Omo ateni legelege f'ori sapeji

Orunmila gbo riru ebo, o ru,
O gbo eru atukesu, o tu;

10 *O gbo ikarara ebo ha fun un.*
O ni ase bemii o ba bo,
Owo m be;
Hiin hiin, owo m be.
Ase bemii o ba bo,

15 *Aya m be;*
Hiin hiin, aya m be.
Ase bemii o ba bo,
Omo m be;
Hiin hiin, omo m be.

20 *Ase bemii o ba bo,*
Ire gbogbo m be;
Hiin hiin, ire gbogbo m be.
(Abimbola 1968: 16)

The head of the albino is full of grey hairs
The hunch-back carries the load of Òòṣà
but cannot offload
He brought his attitude from Lààlàagbajà
Ifá divination was performed for Òrúmilà
The day he wanted to marry Èmí the child
of Olódùmarè
Èmí the child of Olódùmarè
One who lays a sleeping mat diligently
with a head pillow to match
Òrúnmilà heed and performed sacrifice
He gave part of the sacrifice to Èṣù
His sacrifice was accepted
He said, when there is still life,
There will be money
Yes, there will be money
When there is still life,
There will be wife;
Yes, there will be wife.
When there is still life,
There will be children
Yes, there will be children.
When there is life,
All good things of life will come;
Yes, all good things of life will come.

Eji Ogbe (Ese Ekejo)

Orunmila lo di sabini;
Mo lo di sakosi
Jiji ti mo ji
Mo ba gbogbo omo irumole

5 *Nibi ti won gbe n fomi igbin pero ile*

Won ni isii kin ni emi n wa temi o ri?

Mo ni oju aje, omo, aya, ire gbogbo
ni n pon mi,
Won ni bi mo ba dele,
Ki n we'wo ogaa mi nu tenintenin;

10 *Un w'apo agbira ogaa mi nu n wojo n*
wojo

Òrúnmilà says it is to the right;
I said it is to the left
When I woke up,
I met all the children of Irúnmọ̀lẹ̀
Where they use the slime of the snail to
appease the earth
They said "what was I looking for that I
couldn't find?"
I said I was in need of wealth, children and
all good things of life,
They said when I get home,
I should my wash my master's hands well;
That I should wash my teacher's divination
bag neatly;

- Un fadie okoko b'orii mi apere;
Un fobi to gbo n mu b'orun-n mi:*
- Un fakara bo 'Mole.*
- Igba ti un o weyin n ko o, Ifa?*
- 15 *Aje gbogbo waa n torokee bo wa:*
- Aje gbogbo ri windin-windin-windin-windin.*
- Igba ti un o weyin n ko o, Ifa?*
- Aya gbogbo waa n torokee bo wa;
Aya gbogbo ri gbadara-gbadara-gbadara-gbadara*
- 20 *Igba ti un o weyin n ko o, Ifa?*
- Omo gbogbo waa n torokee bo wa;*
- Omo gbogbo ri kudi-kudi-kudi-kudi.*
- Igba ti n wo weyin n ko o, Ifa?*
- Ire gbogbo waa n torokee bo wa,*
- 25 *Ire gbogbo ri fila-fila-fila-fila.*
- Mo ni esin la o maa gun sawo*
- Esin la o maa gun sawo o,*
- Esin la o maa gun sawo.*
- Ayamo se bEjiogbe ko ba laye,*
- 30 *Esin la o maa gun sawo.*
(Abimbola 1968: 21-22)
- I should sacrifice hen to appease my head;
I should use matured kolanuts to appease my neck:
I should use bean cakes to sacrifice to the divinities.
When I looked behind me, what did I see, O Ifa?
Abundant wealth of different kinds were coming from uphill:
There were bountiful kinds of wealth.
- When I looked behind me, what did I see, O Ifa?
Several wives were coming from afar;
Wives of all shapes and sizes
- When I looked behind me, what did I see, O Ifa?
All manner of children were coming from uphill
Children of all kinds.
When I looked behind me, what did I see, O Ifa?
All sorts of wealth were coming from afar;
All good things of life arrived in abundance.
I said "we shall be riding horses on our divination work".
We shall be riding horses on our divination work
We shall be riding horses on our divination work
Unless the Èjiogbè is no longer alive,
We shall be riding horses on our divination work

The lines of these verses of Ifa Eji Ogbe (of the Yoruba) contain important points, part of which we shall employ for analysing and interpreting contemporary African spirituality. The crucial point is the centrality of Orunmila, Ifa, rituals and what constitute the essence of living, that is, the good things of life. The lack of any or some of these good things of life is interpreted as *iponju*, (adversity, affliction, distress, reproach and difficulty) usually attributed to the work of the enemy, and the *babalawo* and/or other *olorisa* or diviner is consulted to know the real cause and necessary ritual prescriptions for solution.

With the contemporary religious terrain and spirituality among the Africans and African-descents in the Diaspora, the basic questions that need to be addressed are: What effects does the presence of Christianity and Islam have on the African worldview and spirituality? How has each or both of Christianity and Islam shaped or is being shaped by the mutual co-existence? What mutual exchanges occur between and among the triple religious tradition and their implications on the lives and living experiences of the African people? How has the sacred worldview been altered and affected?

I have demonstrated from my researches that the African worldview provides a platform for the operations of the contemporary African indigenous religions, the African Initiated/Indigenous Churches (Aladura), the African Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and African Islam, within and outside the continent (Ògúnbilé 1997c, 2001b, 2004c). For the Pentecostals, Ogbu Kalu (2000), and later Matthews Ojo (2010) had also observed that Nigerian Pentecostalism has a uniqueness that is deeply rooted in African primal worldview and that the problems usually addressed and idioms deployed in their operations are sourced from the interior of African spirituality.

My researches have also confirmed that these 'good things of life' form the basis of consultation of *babalawo* (Ifa priests) and *olorisa* (devotees of *orisa*), the Aladura, Pentecostal Christians and Nigerian Muslims (Ògúnbilé 1992, 1997a, 2004c, 2010b, 2014b, 2015d). As I have demonstrated in "Medicine" in *Encyclopedia of African Religion* (Ògúnbilé 2009b), African medicine entails the health practice involving the application of indigenous resources, spiritual and material, in providing mental, psychological, social, and physical well-being and wholeness to a human being and his or her environment. It addresses the well-being of the individual as well as the community, the fertility of the soil, and animal production (Ògúnbilé 1997c, 2001a&b, 2009b: 413). Medicine for the Africans, involves the triad form of explanation, prognostication and control, EPC (Ògúnbilé 1997a, 2009b). Thus, African conception of wholeness and wellbeing goes beyond a simplistic perception of the soundness of body and mind and the stability of mental and physical conditions. It expresses harmonious relationship with the spiritual and physical environments. Africans conceive of disease and illness, in a holistic manner, as having a deep spiritual and metaphysical nature and causation. While the origins, causes, diagnosis, prevention and cure of diseases are embedded and enshrined in cosmological myths,

diseases or illnesses are usually attributed to two main agents: the spiritual and the social. Thus, traditional medical practice includes non-empirical and empirical means to heal human beings from all forms of disequilibrium or dislocation (spiritual, psychological, social, physical and political), and to restore cosmic balance. Africans employ what I describe as a comprehensive approach, the non-exclusive categories which include psychotherapy, somatherapy, metaphysicotherapy, and hydrotherapy (Ògúngbílẹ̀ 2009b: 415).

Ethnographic fieldwork revealed the different perspectives on the good things of life by some brands of contemporary Christianity (AICs and Pentecostal categories) and Islam in Nigeria, and Nigerian religious groups in the Diaspora, and African Diaspora devotees of Indigenous Religions. Though from different perspectives and various intensity, these groups trade on African sacred worldview and its cultural base. Ògúngbílẹ̀ (1997a, 2001b, 2004c) demonstrated that the Aladura brand of Christianity operates on the African spiritual worldview including the spiritual forces that undergird its operations, notably, *ogun aye*, *ogun oso*, *ogun aje*, etc., the system and patterns of its operation, with focus on *ori*, destiny and different kinds of *ebo* and *eto*, ritual preparations and material elements, and linguistic applications and appropriations (Ògúngbílẹ̀ 1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2004).

It is important to note that several brands of Christianity (AICs, Pentecostals and Islam in Nigeria and by Nigerian religious leaders in the diaspora (America) operate with this cultural base to offer divine healing as revealed in my studies. In “Faith Without Borders: Culture, Identity and Nigerian Immigrant Churches in Multicultural American Community” (Ògúngbílẹ̀ 2010b: 311-331), drawing from the data collected through participant observation technique from four cases of which I developed a typology (Immigrant Nigerian-Initiated Churches [INICs], Immigrant Nigerian-Initiated Pentecostal-Evangelical Churches [INIPECs], and Nigerian-Initiated Independent Immigrant Churches [NIICs]), I show that Nigerian immigrants draw from their homeland spiritual baggage to create religious communities through which they connect spiritually and socially, network relationships, remember their homeland and reinforce their cultural identity. An aspect that I like to emphasise for our discussion here is the ritual practices and worship activities of these churches. The strong belief in the efficacy of prayers and the deployment of African cultural elements in those prayer activities is a commonplace phenomenon. One significant element is the spiritual

interpretation of otherwise social space and natural phenomena. One of these movements, Fountain of Grace Church, founded and led by George Bryan Irabor, a Nigerian from the eastern region, held a conference on August 25-27, 2008 in Boston area of Massachusetts. The caption of the conference was “Spiritual Warfare” with the theme “Destroying Ancient Altars”. The conference was attended by people of different nationalities including Americans, African Americans and immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa and others. In a Bible exposition in one of the programmes, George Bryan Irabor pontificated that:

all the natural phenomena – rivers and oceans, hills and mountains, bushes and forests – that made up the communities located in New England have connection with spiritual beings that inhabited them. Each of these phenomena constitute ancient altars for the spiritual beings who cause havoc, calamities, immoralities, destruction, assassination, kidnapping, murder, tornado and hurricane, characteristic of some of these communities (Ògúnbilé 2010b: 323)

Irabor identified these spiritual forces as marine spirit, witchcraft spirit and, Jezebel spirit. Furthermore, the subject of health and healing is most central to the activities of a number of these movements.

It will be important to examine another dimension or perspective of the good things of life which contemporary Pentecostals emphasise: material prosperity. Mystudies (2014) identified a paradigm shift in Pentecostal early/original claim from this-world ‘rejection’ to ‘affirmation.’ That is, African Indigenous Churches and early Pentecostal movements hold the doctrine and practice of what in Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is described as ‘this-world rejection’ and ‘other-world affirmation’. However, contemporary Pentecostal movements embrace ‘this-world affirmation’. The earlier movement practise ‘inner-world asceticism’ which involves the denial of oneself from certain practices and materials that are considered ‘worldly’. For ‘this-world rejectors’, religiosity and spirituality involve restriction from certain food and drink items such as alcohol and personal adornments like jewellery,

make-up, and some types of fabric; and the belief and practice are usually backed up with biblical passages and stories. Earthly poverty is to be preferred. One biblical example is the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16. However, for 'this-world affirmers,' such story of Lazarus and the Rich Man's story is reinterpreted to meet their prosperity message. Some African prosperity preachers assert that Lazarus could not gain direct entrance into the kingdom of God but had to reside first in Abraham's bosom in order to learn how to live in wealth, before he could be admitted into God's kingdom. Thus, these preachers hold that Abraham, the father of faith and model of Christians, was extremely rich as recorded in the biblical passage: "Abraham was *very rich* in cattle, in silver and in gold" (Gen. 13:2) which they emphasise in the lyrics such as:

Abraham's blessings are mine;
I am blessed in the morning,
In the noon, in the evening;
Abraham's blessings are mine.

Older Aladura churches, and Pentecostal churches such as the Deeper Life Bible Church, founded by Pastor W.F. Kumuyi and pre-Adeboye-led Redeemed Christian Church of God represent the 'this-world rejection' model while the group that illustrates the 'this-world affirming' includes Late Bishop Benson Idahosa, the acclaimed founder of prosperity gospel in Nigeria; Bishop David Oyedepo, the founder of the Living Faith World Outreach Ministry (a.k.a. Winners Chapel); Chris Oyakhilome, founder of Believers' Loveworld Ministries (a.k.a. Christ Embassy); Matthew Ashimolowo of the Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) and several others (Ògúngbilé 2014b). What I demonstrate here is that the sacred has been employed or manipulated to promote an attitude of modern model of materialism which is interpreted to mean good things of life. While this new model which inspires material prosperity has at its basis a variety of factors including political, economic, social, and cultural, the phenomenon provides a corresponding response from the same factors (Ògúngbilé 2014b).

A study conducted on a woman-founded and -led Islamic movement in Osogbo, Nigeria, Fadillullah Muslim Mission, confirms the attitude of the African Muslim to the good things of life, which further explains how the African indigenous worldview formed the basis of operation through a practical appropriation and utilization of the African

indigenous elements (Ògúngbilé 2004c). This Islamic movement provided a unique challenge to orthodox Islam which my investigations revealed is strange and unusual. Fadillullah Muslim Mission was founded by a young lady, Sheidat Mujidat Adeoye, who claimed to have had a divine encounter in August 1997, while in her shop, selling beans and rice. She was suddenly caught in frenzy and started to speak in tongues. While in the state of spirit-possession, she started to prophesy in a manner reminiscent of the Aladura.

It was not only that this practice was a new and strange expression in Nigerian-Islam, but that the practices reflect a deep African-Yoruba root as the Aladura. These practices include strong emphasis on *Ori*, destiny and evil spiritual forces, intensive regular and weekly prayer and fasting programmes (7, 14, 21, and 41 days), ritual bath in rivers and prescription of sacred water. The main focus of this movement is prayer, with emphasis on unresolved physical, metaphysical and spiritual crises arising from marital and procreation issues. Some of its programmes include pregnant women's meeting on Tuesdays, congregational prayers for members and visitors every Thursday, from 3.00 to 6.00 o'clock in the afternoon and every Sunday from 11.00 o'clock in the morning to 3.00 o'clock in the afternoon. The Sunday prayer is called *Adura Isegun*, (victory Prayer). There is a fortnightly prayer meeting from Friday evening through to Saturday morning. There is a seven-day once-in-a-year prayer and fasting which holds from morning to evening between May 10 and May 17. It is also important to note that the prayer services are extemporaneous, interspersed with hilarious choruses usually rendered in Yoruba, the indigenous language of the people. These choruses express the strong belief in the efficacy of prayers and its potency to change an otherwise unchangeable condition sealed in 'destiny.' The Movement believes that prayers directed by them can alter bad destiny. One of the most popular choruses used by this Mission to intensify their deep-seated belief in the potency of prayer over destiny is:

<p>Bi kádàrá o ba gbè mi, K'ádùrà o gbè mi, Olúwa K'ádùrà o gbè mi, Bi kádàrá o ba gbè mi,</p>	<p>If destiny does not favour me Let prayer avail for me, O Lord; Let prayer avail for me. If destiny does not favour me</p>
<p>5 K'ádùrà o gbè mi, Oluwa Òjò ti n pa'gún bò, se b'òjó ti pé</p>	<p>Let prayer avail for me, O Lord; The rain has since been drenching the vulture</p>
<p>A-lé-ni-bá-ni-bá're l'omo aráyé</p>	<p>The wicked ones of this world pursues one into one's fortune</p>

Bi kádàrà o ba gbè mi,
K'adùrà o gbè mi.

If destiny does not favour me
Let prayer avail for me.

Ritual Power, Ritual Ordering

As I have pointed out at the beginning of this lecture, my research engagements have focused deeply on myth and ritual as two important markers of African identity and spirituality. I have demonstrated how an African makes sense of his/her existence from mythic narrative and ritual activities. In this section of the lecture, I shall illustrate how the different forms of ritual practices, order and empower the entire life of an African. It is necessary to state that ritual is a phenomenon that cannot be defined with precision, neither does it have boundary. Most times, however, it is assumed that one knows what ritual is when one sees it. Moreover, "ritual is an enormously large and complex topic. ...not static; varied enormously over the course of human history and across cultures" (Salamone 2004: xi). Its centrality in religion and culture is strong and imposing such that earliest anthropologists such as E.B. Tylor, Sir James G. Frazer, R.R. Marrett, Bronislaw Malinowski and Lewis Henry Morgan sought the origins of religion in culture and found ritual to be the dramatic component in the practice of religion. Anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists have identified the essence and functions of ritual in social cohesion, coercion, manipulation and identity construction and reinforcement. A few of these scholars include Victor Turner, Arnold van Gennep and Emile Durkheim.

Ritual activities constitute the core of African worldview which reinforces meaning, human essence and power structures for the Africans, no matter the religion they profess or affiliate with. No categorisation or typology of ritual can suffice. For instance, Cox (1998) provides a typology of ritual which includes calendrical, life cycle rituals and crisis rituals. His categorisation however is based on the functions the rituals perform for the community that produces and possesses them. Other categorization will focus on the essentialist perspective like the vegetative ritual. For our discussions, I identify three categories of rituals that focus and reinforce meaning-framing and meaning-making for the African: rites of passage, initiation rituals and crisis rituals. However, aspects of a category may flow into the other as in the case of puberty, whose transitional process involves initiation rites. To avoid creating unnecessary and flaw-laden boundary, I shall be discussing the functional aspects of each of these categories in the next few sections.

Rites of passage “are a category of rituals that mark the passages of an individual through the life cycle” (Myerhoff 1982: 109). It is also known as life cycle ritual. To indigenous Africans, both within the continent and in the diaspora, rites of passage present a paradox of belongingness and definition of a person as both a product of nature and culture. The rites offer a platform for, and process of announcing and renouncing social positions in the making of the human being, notably through the rites of **birth and naming, puberty, marriage, and funeral**. Myerhoff interprets rites of passage as “the interplay of biology and culture in the subtext of all rites of passage, and often, the play is fast and loose.” (109). In rites of passage, the dignity and worth of a person as a whole is expressed, be it spiritual, cultural, social, political or economic. Rites of passage give meanings to the human being as “inevitable facts of human experience” in diverse ways: as biological and as social events, as symbolic and experiential, as presentational and representational, and as rehearsals of primordial events. I will give a few illustrations here with my concern on the importance and centrality of body, place and time.

Naming, names and identity have taken new dimensions in contemporary African worldview. After a period of appropriation of Christianity and Islam, there are alterations in the practice of, and materials used in naming, due to an African tolerant/liberal attitude, primarily within the Indigenous Tradition, and compromise among the triple religious tradition. The continued effect, is that the Indigenous Tradition is giving way to the two competing ones. The traditional naming of 7th day for female, 9th day for male, 8th day for twins, when one of the twins was a male while the other was a female, and 7th day when both twins were female, and 9th day when both were male, has given way to the 8th day naming ceremony culture, regardless of sex and type of children. Muslim and Christian names are being borne as they are supplied by the most significant family members who are connected with the newborn baby. For instance, in some Christian traditions (Anglican), the first name may be given as baptismal name. The second name(s) which is descriptive of the circumstance(s) of the birth of the child still reflect the African (Yoruba) tolerance towards religious understanding. An example is the prefix names as *Olu*. There are fundamental indigenous ascribed names depicting important statuses or circumstances. For example, some names are prefixed with *Ade*; ascribed names also include Taiwo, Kehinde and Idowu.

Observations since the last twenty-five years reveal that some Pentecostals have continued to show some aversion to ascribed names such as Taiwo and Kehinde, giving different interpretations of the negative meanings that such names have for their lives. They infer that the name 'Taiwo' has a short-lived meaningful existence while 'Kehinde' would always lag behind in any endeavours. The fear that evil forces of the genealogical names may continue to affect the destiny of the newborn baby has also caused name-changing. I have found that this practice is done with different levels of emphasis. This is due to several factors that are centred on religion, namely, perceived intensity of religious experience of individuals and group, the fear of conversion from one religion to the other, the desire to affirm and strengthen the family's religious affiliation and identity, and the level of exposure to culture and social life. For the Muslims, there is now much emphasis on Islamic names transliterated from the original Arabic language such as Roqeeb or Aminat, and for the Christians, such names emphasise Jesus or Lord as in Jesulayoomi (Jesus is my joy). One effect of this is that identity along religious lines is thickened and sharpened. This sacred fear controls and often affects the psyche and influences other aspects of life.

In recent times, there have been cases of individuals changing their Surname/Last (grandfather and father) name which has semblance of indigenous religious traditions. Christians recast such names with prefix of 'Lord' or Jesus, such that instead of Esulola, we have Olulola Oludare, etc. I recollect after my Grade II training, my elder brother, being Pentecostal, felt we needed to drop 'Ògúngbílé' and bear our father's own name 'Ajayi'. I have also seen some individuals who changed their names from Ogundunsi to Jesudunsi, Farotimi to Oluwarotimi, Sangodokun to Olorunfemi and several others.

Puberty rites are performed to celebrate the coming of age by girls and boys. It is usually attended with seclusion. Central to puberty rites is the cultivation of the body of the initiate since the body provides access to the sacred and the new status (Ògúngbílé 2004b). Its performance is fairly common and elaborate among most peoples of Africa, although with different intensity because it introduces boys and girls into sex life, ushering them into parental and family responsibility. Girls are exposed to sexual functions and motherhood and the dignity of virginity and chastity at marriage in the houses. They learn songs, dances, the customs and taboos of the community list more than one and its myth of origin. Among the ethnic people of Sierra Leone, the male is formally separated

into the *Poro* society while the female is separated into the *Sande* society. For the Tiv, Ibibio, and Igbo peoples of Nigeria, girls observe a period of seclusion that takes four (4) months in 'fattening houses' that are built for the purpose. A few other examples include the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia; the Tswana of Southern Africa, Pokot in Northern Kenya in East Africa (Ògúngbilé 2009c). The body of the initiate is symbolically, mystically and socially transformed through ritual activities.

Truly, the Sacred Still Dwells: Making Sense of Existence in the African World! The way and manner people of diverse religious traditions creatively respond to issues of life, particularly the **marriage** institution with its ritual ceremonies, engage our discussion here. In most African cultures, both ancient and modern, marriage rituals are elaborate and extensive. As a scholar of religion, nonetheless comparative religion, I am often perturbed at the way we conduct marriage ceremonies in my climes. I have responded and continue to respond to this issue from both academic and social points of view. The first time I engaged in a critical academic exercise on the concept of marriage was when an undergraduate was assigned to me who wanted to do her long essay titled "Symbols and Meanings in Marriage Ritual Ceremonies among the Ijesa-Yoruba People of Osun State" (Adesina 2005). When I requested her to write a short proposal, she honestly identified the processes that she considered to be real marriage ceremony. Engagement was not part of marriage; real marriage (wedding) was conducted either in the court registry and/or church/mosque. This I consider to be an aberration, or lack of both cultural and theological understanding. I have engaged in the study of marriage institution in Africa, and particularly in Nigeria.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, sir, I submit that the way we make sense of our existence is in response to the different levels of identity we share. Ritual and ritual activities are created within our cultural, socio-political and religious contexts to locate or express a sense of our place in the different modes and levels of identity where individuals belong. The point being emphasised here is that all parts of the ritual activity of the marriage ceremony are important. Thus to define the family component of marriage as engagement, I believe, is destroying, or mildly put, reducing the value of the African culture. Everything put together is marriage!

Beyond the definition, and to reiterate the above, the ritual creativity brought into marriage ceremony in recent times is another fascinating

issue for my intellectual engagement. This is the issue of the contemporary lady, and recently for men, the Masters of Ceremony (*Alaga Iduro* and *Alaga Ijoko*) in Nigeria. I try to historicise the institutionalisation of the concept of *Alaga Iduro* and *Alaga Ijoko* which gained its currency among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria. It started when a State governor, on assuming office, retrenched all the teachers of Religious Studies, Yoruba, Home Economics, etc. in the State secondary schools. This affected a lot of families, particularly when a couple was involved. A few of them, maybe through divine inspiration started to engage in the practice of Master of Ceremony (MC) in marriages. It thus became a big business as the practice offered the practitioners some fortune. In fact when some of them were recalled by the succeeding State government, what the business of MC offered them on a weekend could not be matched with a month's salary. The business has extended to funeral reception ceremonies and men, including lecturers and other workers have become glued to it. There are now apprentices in the business of Master of Ceremony.

The ritual creativity involved includes the use of some sacralised words, symbols and materials. For instance, there is the use of fruits such as sugarcane and pineapple as invocation. Currencies of all shapes, types, weight and colours are employed in offering prayers for the bride and groom. These acts are highly inspiring, reflecting the African worldview and spirituality.

Death rituals or mortuary rites, according to Dransart (2004), "provide people with means to deal with the loss and disruption caused by the death of a person." Death rituals suggest that the African worldview operates in cyclical and not linear time. That is, funeral practices, celebrations and ceremonies imply that the existence of human beings' extends beyond the physical world. I remember at the age of six when in my presence my father gave up the ghost, my mother agonizingly sang "*un o mo'bi olori gbe yan'ri o, un ba ree yan t'emi, ibi kan naa sa laa gbe yan'ri o, kadara 'o papo ni,*" (the fact is that I do not know where each person has chosen his or her lot/destiny, I would have chosen a better one from there, but it is certain that we choose from the same source, but each person's destiny differs). Furthermore, each time the young widow encountered any crisis in caring for the family, she would go to our father's graveyard inside the sitting room to plead for his intervention. We didn't understand how it happened, but solutions did come!

You are witnesses today, to how Africans perceive, treat and express their minds on those who are claimed to be dead no matter their human state or status, the noble and the poor, the man and the woman. I have engaged a number of my students in the course *Religion and Human Values* to study 'Obituaries' in daily newspapers and what the contents tell and express. Since the past ten years, an aspect of my current research has been cemeterial (pertaining to cemeteries). I have been studying family, religious (Christian and Muslim), and public cemeteries in rural and urban communities. A careful observation of both the old and new cemeteries gives the information that suggests 'the dead don't die.' Memorialising the 'dead' in African communities even in the face of Islam and Christian presence is intense and imbued with ceremonies. It is interesting to note, I learnt from Muslim scholars that the *Fidau* prayers of different expressions are not Islamic, but an African way of celebrating and remembering the dead. I am sure you are well aware of the escapade of money ritualists with the dead in cemeteries! Even though we want the dead to 'Rest in Peace,' Yahooism (Yahoo boys and may be, girls) and some spiritualists in Christian and Muslim cloaks, will not allow them. Let's leave the 'dead' for now.

The second category of ritual is **crisis ritual**. Crisis ritual may involve an individual, a group of people in a community or an entire community. Crisis ritual may be regular or occasional; crisis ritual shrine may be permanent or temporary, mobile or fixed. Crisis ritual addresses unpleasant, difficult, troubling and hard times or situations a person or group of persons claims to be encountering or passing through. On a personal level, it could be illness or health problems, barrenness, failure, delayed marriage and other conditions that are claimed to be beyond human control. At the corporate or communal level, such problems may be environmental, ecological and vegetation-related problems including drought, epidemics and storm. Victor Turner (1969) refers to rituals addressing these situations as 'rituals of affliction.'

In the days of our fathers as indigenous peoples, parents consulted the diviner to inquire of what the oracle had to say on every case, including the foetus in the womb, the deity to which the child-to-be-born is attached, the journey into marriage, the cause of untimely or suspicious death, and the placations to make to forestall dangers through the journey of a human being from birth till death. There were also consultation on the foundation of any project including farming and building. There was always an enquiry concerning any crisis-laden situation.

From the personal level, African worldview detests infertility. It is interesting to note that today, the triple religious heritage of Africa (that is, Indigenous Religion, Christianity and Islam) independently or jointly respond to barrenness of a woman as a crisis. In addressing issues relating to crises, all elements, human, material and the supernatural, are employed as they are believed to have been imbued with spiritual power to provide solutions. The use of words and natural phenomena as water, hill, and air which are considered as vehicles or instruments of power and materials is solicited since the words and phenomena are claimed to be capable of manifesting the supernatural that will provoke divine power to solve problems.

Thus, with the service of priestesses and priests, consultations are made with Osun and other *orisa*, who some claim provide children for barren women. There are purposely established Christian and Muslim clerics who specialise in attending to infertility issues. Osun water, fetched either from Osun river, or empowered through Osun ritual processes is claimed to have efficacious power to primarily grant children, and solve other problems (Ògúngbilé 2001a). The sacredness of the water and its ritual empowerment are the different ways through which Osun deity and spirit manifest and empower natural phenomenon such as ordinary water. I have a collection of 129 songs of Orisa Osogbo which form part of the ritual empowerment process (forthcoming [b]).

Beside the regular consultations with Osun shrines by barren and infertile clientele, we have witnessed several cases during Osun festival's grand finale when ladies publicly undertake ritual bath at the Osun (Osun Agbaye) riverbank. Notably, very early in the morning of Osun grand finale, inside the inner shrine in Osun Osogbo grove, intensive prayers are made in the similitude of Aladura and Pentecostal revival services. Clientele also come to other shrines of Osun such as Osun 'Busanyin who were given ritual bath beside the river. As part of the Osun grand finale ritual ceremonies, children who are believed to have been given through Osun deities were brought into Gbagede Osun in Osun grove as testimonies to the efficacy of the Osun ritual power. Inability to find a suitor as at when due or delay in marriage is considered a crisis which requires ritual intervention. Some ministers, particularly, prophetesses or wives of general overseers, regularly organise what is tagged "Ministration to Waiting Couples and Waiting Singles." Prayer ritual activities and acclaimed confirmed cases of the efficacy of such rituals by several Aladura and Pentecostal prophets and pastors, and some

Muslim clerics are well documented (Ògúngbilé 1997c, 2004b, 2010b; Owoeye 2010).

In most cases, for the Africans, there are claims that evil forces are often behind the ‘misfortune’ of infertility, barrenness and miscarriage. It is believed that even when a child is born, its destiny could be altered. Thus, placenta that is removed is carefully preserved and secretly kept and buried in a dug-hole by the parents so that evil eyes will not see or touch it to alter the destiny of the child.

I have also conducted micro-research on some institutions including hospitals and schools. In some of our private and public hospitals, serious prayers, emphasising the terrible influence of the ‘evil ones’, wicked people, witches, wizards and other forces affecting human’s destiny are offered to bind and destroy them. The belief in the evil spiritual forces has also given birth to the ministries of the firstborn by some Pentecostal movements (see also Gifford 2014). These ministers identify and itemise the noticeable traces of misfortunes characteristic of firstborns, and organise special and occasional prayers to restore their tampered destiny. Notwithstanding my sociological interpretation of the phenomenon of the firstborn, the huge response by clients to the patronage of the ‘Firstborn Ministers’ betrays one’s sociological imagination. Naturally, a firstborn offers a new and somewhat strange experience for a new couple. The firstborn is a test-case which adjustment comes with challenges of nursing and parenting. I have observed the difference in the treatment given by parents to a firstborn male and a firstborn female and their attendant psychological responses.

The rate at which prayer programmes are organised in religious houses, on mountains, on the radio and television as well on social media, is alarming. Publications such as regular prayer booklets and bulletins are prepared to address the forces against fertility and childbearing. My listening and reading audience here today will testify to contemporary bestselling Christian publications in Nigeria namely: Dr. D.K. Olukoya’s *Prayer Rains*; Bishop Dr. Chris Kwakpovwe’s *War Against Heman* (I think this year 2018, we have the series up to Volume 13), *My Womb Must be Open by Fire, A 7-Day Plan on Dealing with Satanic Punishments, An 8-Day Plan on Paralysing Disappointments at the edge of Breakthroughs, Evil Labels must Burn: An 8-Day Prayer Plan, War Against Territorial Spirits Blocking Your Progress, etc.* The once-in-the-month Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye-led Friday/Saturday Holy Ghost

Service organised under the auspices of The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) at the Redemption Camp on Km 46 Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Ogun State, Nigeria is usually attended in huge number by members and non-members of RCCG with focus on healings and miracles, with particular emphasis on deliverance from enemies. June 2018 Holy Ghost service was tagged “Stronger than your Enemies: Victory through Praise.” All of these are considered powerful ritual weapons of war and household battle instruments in several African Christian and non-Christian homes, home and abroad.

Invocation of ‘fire’ and ‘blood’ to consume, destroy and terminate perceived enemies, spiritual attacks and principalities and powers is commonplace practice among the African Christians. Of course, terrible assaults that need quick and destructive intervention and divine vengeance in Africans are directed to such fiery deities as Sango among the Yoruba. All unpleasant cases are termed and addressed as ‘challenges’ or the effects of the principalities and powers for which a superior power is solicited. These forces are ‘spiritually attacked’ through ritual means including anointing oil for breakthrough and the invocation of ‘Holy Ghost fire’. Prayer prescriptions such as the command to ‘Catch fire,’ “fall and die”, and ‘blood of Jesus’ are offered to clients. Asaju (2010) notes, that the expressive and emotional use of the word ‘fire’ among Nigerian contemporary Christians is strong and dramatic.

It needs to be mentioned that great efforts and tremendous success in medical sciences, particularly the field of obstetrics and gynaecology, have been made in resolving infertility through the use of modern assisted reproductive technologies such as Intra Uterine Insemination (IUI) and In-vitro fertilisation/Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (IVF/ICSI). It is however fascinating how strong emphasis is laid on spiritual power and prayers by African medical practitioners, suggesting their inherent attachment to African worldview. Reading through two inaugural lectures delivered in this hall, one is amazed at the level of spirituality displayed by the inaugural lecturers. Of course I have listened to several inaugural lectures in this hall and obtained copies of those I could not attend. I have observed the entrenchment of religious persuasions. I have been tempted to use Inaugural Lecture series to write and present inaugural lecture to be titled “The Sacred in the Belly of the Universe.” However, the titles of the inaugural lectures given by our two eminent professors of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Professor Olabisi

Morebise Loto and Professor Alexander Tuesday Owolabi speak volumes about the inherent religiousness of the African person.

In addressing crisis-laden situations, I have undertaken a study of this phenomenon of crisis ritual on Obafemi Awolowo University campus. On a number of occasions, I have observed some pots of *eho* (sacrifices) placed at some road junctions and at some auspicious places. A few of them were found under the bridge at Adesoji Aderemi Road (Road 1), Road 7 Junction, Road 7 Quadrangle, Road 18 and Road 20A junctions. It has been observed, that these ritual practices are done when there are important contests for some significant positions such as Deanship and Vice-Chancellorship on the campus. I have also noticed some groups of Christians praying at the side of some roads on the campus. Investigations revealed that those ritual actions by Christians were intended to ward off evil destructive powers causing accidents and untimely death on the campus.

New age movements have introduced a lot of elements to ward off spiritual forces. While there is the multiplicity of 'ministers' and miracle-workers, several ritual systems are adopted in their practices including the use of sacred oil, sacred water, sacred cloths, symbolic material representations (photos, business items, wears) for spiritual impartation and empowerment of the clients. Items like padlock and keys, old cloths that would be torn during prayers, unwanted items to be written and burnt during services are recommended to be provided for the efficacy of prayers. Nowadays, the photos of the 'man or woman' of God are inscribed on flyers, posters, billboards, etc. Interestingly, the traditions that detested the use of photographs and pictorials are now adopting the practices. Several religious institutions adopt captivating seemingly functional and instrumental names that are claimed to be efficacious for ritual empowering and empowerment.

The third class of ritual that I shall briefly address is **initiation ritual** which includes rites associated with royalty (kingship), age-grade (eldership), political offices, vice-chancellorship (academic), etc. While each of this categories presents defined ritual specialists and officiants, their ritual activities function as rites of passage with differing levels of depth and significance. For the kingship rites of initiation, my investigations reveal how Africans in their different communities negotiate among the existing religious faiths. This is however not without tensions and reactions (Ògúnbilé & Awoniyi 2015). On the

whole, the rites of initiation offer the possibility for apparent momentary tolerance, compromise and mutual relationship in the face of religious competition and tension. These rites of initiation provide a platform for each group of different faiths of the triple religious heritage, particularly in Nigerian communities to display the contents, beauty and aesthetics in their religious ritual activities and practices.

Festivals, Festivities and Celebrations

In my work on *Divine Manifestation and Human Creativity: Cultural Hermeneutics of Myth, Ritual and Identity among an African People and their Transnational Community*, I have identified festivals, festivities and celebrations as the African people's way of expressing their entire communal and community life. Festivals in indigenous African communities reflect a connection and interaction of spiritual beings, human beings and the environment. They reflect a connection of the past to the present. That is, they imitate and reproduce the past, thus expressing human creativity in verbal, visual and verbal-visual performances. They reflect different levels of relationship and interrelationship, dependence and interdependence.

Every African indigenous community has one or more festivals, some major and others minor. In most cases, the principal ones, Oyin Ogunba (1991) describes as hegemonic festivals which demonstrate a collective consciousness of the people. Isaacs (1981), refers to this in sociological term as "the idols of the tribe" (p 30). Hegemonic festivals, Ogunba stresses, "incorporate other reenactment ceremonies reminiscent of the foundation of the community" (Ogunba, 51). It is through these festivals that the traditional rulership "periodically projects itself before the citizenry and endeavors to demonstrate the power, greatness and sanctity of its regime" (Ogunba, 51).

Studies on festivals, festivities and celebrations are, in my opinion, a lifelong exercise. In my forthcoming manuscript, *Cultural Memories, Performance, and Meanings in Indigenous Festivals and Celebrations among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, I have documented more than eighty (80) indigenous festivals among Yoruba communities alone (See Appendix I). My hermeneutical exercise on festivals takes on many dimensions as they offer diverse interpretations including anthropological, sociological, psychological, theological, historical, and gender among other perspectives on how people express the common and striking meanings through which they make sense of their existence.

In summary, festival celebrations define, inform, reinforce and reform individual and community identities in local, national and global contexts, through collective performances in music and songs, *oriki* (praise poems of individuals) and *oriki-orile* (praise poems of communities), dances, motion, movements, silence and costumes, and other elements including the use of paraphernalia, symbols and images.

The nature of indigenous communities in Africa has made it difficult to create specific types or forms for, particularly, indigenous festivals. However, phenomenological studies of these festivals have assisted in some ways to provide a rough sketch for possible typology, namely, mytho-historical or political, hegemonic festivals, ancestral lineage or clan, cosmic and land renewal, vegetative (agricultural), non-indigenous (Christian and Muslim) festival, and new or emergent festivals. The three broad elements of festivals are mythic, ritual and social. The mythic dimension expresses some divine encounter or experience and relations. The ritual dimension explains the time and space/place, verbal and visual elements involving song, dance, motion, silence and sentiments, renewal and cleansing. The social dimension includes power and gender relations. Generally, all of these elements are given their spaces provided by the specific ecology or natural environment. Festival activities operate on the cycle of life: birth, rebirth, and birth and death.

I have demonstrated with illustrations in my writings on myth and ritual as the basic and primary definers and framers of festival celebrations and the different forms of festivals, particularly from their essence and functions. In my analyses, I have focused strongly on such issues as identity, gender relations, arts, symbols and images, civil faith, emergent festivals and Christian/Muslim festivals. Functionally, most of these festivals provide a dialogical platform for the community. For the Diaspora, indigenous festivals serve as spiritual reawakening and reinforcer of spiritual identity as well as tourism opportunities. I should mention as I have argued, that ethnic form of identity which anchors indigenous festivals and celebrations makes ethnic identity stronger than both religious and national identity as seen among the Yoruba and other indigenous communities. Thus, I have described Nigeria's national identity as superficial affirmation (Ògúngbilé 1998c). However, political and economic crises and the desire for supremacy and control of power create opportunities for the manipulation of religion which provide for the formation of brotherhood which strengthens religious identity, and thus national identity, even if momentary.

In my study of indigenous festivals, the importance and power of place and time is crucial as these are defined by the annual celebrations. I have demonstrated that mythic narratives and ritual practices serve as the basis of indigenous festivals which inform a construction of three distinct spaces for most Yoruba indigenous communities. These are indigenous, semi-indigenous and non-indigenous. The existence of the triple spatial formation is the presence of Christianity and Islam in African communities which inform what I describe as emergent festivals and the fourth form of communal identity. This creative effort, sometimes informal, provides the basis for a form of imprecative compromise and a dialogical strategy to construct a bridge for tolerance in the face of religious differentiation.

Before I move on to the illustration of indigenous festivals and celebrations, it is important to state that the civil faith represented in hegemonic festivals such as Osun festival, emergent festivals, such as Ojude Oba in Ijebu-Ode and Town's Day such as Akure Day in Ondo, provide the community, irrespective of religious affiliation, a platform for all people of different faiths an opportunity to come together in a spirit of *communitas*. Apart from all of these, there are also Christian and Muslim festivals. For instance, the main festival of the Christians is Christmas (*Keresi* in Yoruba) while the major festival of the Muslims is *Eid'el Kabir* (rendered *Ileya* among the Yoruba). The festivals are celebrated with special meals usually shared among people of different religions. The periods are always witnessed with sharing of food and rejoicing with members of the community without ulterior motive, prejudice or discrimination on the basis of religion. However, the new wave of religious-cum-political sentiments and suspicion of corruption and other attachments has reduced and almost obliterated the practice. Festivals and celebrations thus offer the Africans cosmic renewal, healing and restoration among human, spiritual and non-human entities.

I shall draw illustrations of festivals and celebrations from the Osogbo indigenous community where I have developed important theoretical, conceptual and empirical implications from the ethnographic researches that lasted more than a decade. Since my study of the Osogbo indigenous community, I have identified cultural hermeneutics as an important theory that could be used to analyse and interpret the physical space of indigenous communities. Through this, I have developed an indigenous-structural theory, that could be used to conduct studies on the indigenous, semi-indigenous and non-indigenous communities and it is has over the

years been immensely useful and empirically relevant. The table below illustrates the theory.

Nature of Communities	Quarters/Compounds/Areas /Location	Dominant Religious Mixes
Indigenous Very early settlers in Òsogbo. connected to royal lineages.	Atàója (Palace area); Balògun; Seriki; Ita Akogún; Ísàlè Òsun; Ita-Olóókan; Òkè-Baálè; Gbàènmú: Òkè Ayépe.	a) Indigenous religious traditions: (55%): Òsun, Ifá, Sàngò, Egúngún, Ògún, Orisá Oko shrines and devotees b) Muslims: (50%) c) Christians (5%)
	Oruboka: Oluode: Aganna; ArikAlámú; Eleye; Èsùyale (now Owoyale); Alaadun	Predominantly indigenous religious traditions with some Muslims.
	Ago	98% Christians
	Oluawo - Oba Adenle Látónà - Oba Látónà	Predominantly Christians
	Onto	Mixed Christians and Muslims
	Alakasu: Oleyo: Ògánlá.	Predominantly Muslims
	Falana	Formerly of Egúngún but now Christians
	Enpon	Indigenous tradition. This is the compound where the current Araba comes from.
Semi-Indigenous Immigrants from other Yorùbá towns. They constitute the traditional political institution as early immigrant-settlers.	Lasigun (from Òkini) Oje (from Òkini) Aalie Ile Olóbu Ile Olóbadò Òkè Òsun	Mixed in the following approximate percentages: a) Muslims: (40%) b) Christians: (35%) c) Indigenous: (25%)
	Odi Olówò	Christians
	Gbónmí Igbónnà Agowande	Mixed Christians and Muslims
Non-Indigenous Industrialized center dominated mostly by Industrial companies; Educational institutions; Recreational and Business Centres.	Sábò; Ayétórò: Okefia; Alékúwodò; Dada Estate; School of Nursing; Ògo Olúwa; Omo West; Stadium; Rasco Cinema area; Ègbátèdò; Ago Wande; Ago Coker; Ota Efun; Ajenisuwa; Ísàlè-Jebu; Gbódófon; Afonta; Biket Area; Steel Rolling Camp Quarters; Oke Oni-Tea; College Road; Ísàlè Aro	Mixed in the following approximate percentages: a) Christians: (85%) b) Muslims: (10%) c) Indigenous: (5%)

Table 1: Indigenous-Structural Theory

A careful analysis of the social vis-a-vis the religious spaces in Òsogbo could be understood from the mythic and historical factors that inform the occupation of physical spaces. While the mythic factor imposes a sense of 'primordality' and 'first' settlers, found in the mysterious encounters with the divine, the historical factor could be defined from the colonial encounter, non-indigenous religious occupation and economic enterprises. All of these inform our classification of religio-political spaces of Òsogbo into the indigenous, semi-indigenous, and non-indigenous. In a very strong way, identity is constructed and reinforced through these categories. Identity is further reinforced by the assertiveness of different groups to religious differentiation and space domestication in ritualization process and festival celebrations. This is true as people in the different groups belong to a particular compound where there are 627 compounds. Furthermore, each compound has a distinct name, origin, myth, *oriki* (praise-poem of origin), gift-giving, dance, drumming, custom and tradition including indigenous religious practice, and migration history.

Egunjobi examines the spatial development of Òsogbo as it affects urbanisation of the town (Egunjobi 1995). Even though his concern in this paper is not with the religious dimensions and implications of the settlements, his submission that economic enterprises and political spaces of Òsogbo affect the different spaces of settlement help us to understand the interconnection of religion and economy. Thus, I argue that different spaces of settlement affect other social institutions including economy and politics. His discussions have helped in some ways to explain the religious implications on the Òsogbo physical spaces, which he classified into notable segments namely, the pre-expansion spaces dated between the latter part of the eighteenth century and 1935; expansion period of between 1935 and 1960; further expansion period of 1960 to 1975; and the most recent development of between 1975 and 1989 (Egunjobi 1995).

In mapping of the religious domestication of the physical spaces of Òsogbo, I observed that the sacred narratives define the use to which some centres are put as well as the festival celebrations. They enforce and reinforce identity in indigenous community. I have observed how religious domestication of the physical spaces of Osogbo community play out among the divinities, the humans, physical spaces, and material elements from ritual practices as we find in the national deities of Òsogbo through the festivals of Òsun, Ògún, Egúngún, Ifà, and Sàngó.

The Table above also shows our observations of religious domestication of physical spaces in Òsogbo.

It is observed that the confluence of Islam and the Indigenous Tradition around the Ìsàlè Òsun area as well as the palace was influenced by the Àtáoja Oládéjobí Oládélé, Mátànmí I (1854-1864) whose barren wife gave birth to a child after the recitation of some Qur'anic verses. Several Ataoja have also been Muslims. It is also observed that the Àtáoja Palace remains the centre of Islamic and indigenous religious traditions. About four hundred meters towards Ìsàlè Òsun could be found several mosques and shrines of prominent deities including those of Sàngó, Èsù Ajona, Òsun, and Egúngún. Two hundred meters towards the Sábó areas are located the shrine of Ògún, directly at the center of Ojà Oba, and Ifá shrines at the Compound of Ìyá Dúdú. All these locations are interspersed with mosques. In fact, it is interesting to note that there is a mosque directly beside the Ògún shrine at Ojà Oba. In the semi-indigenous areas, there are mission churches that were established with the introduction of Christianity into Òsogbo, for which certain Àtáoja allocated spaces. In some other settlements which have roads that link Òsogbo and the major towns of Ilésà, Ede/Ìbàdàn, Ìlorin, Ìlobu, and Ìkirun, one can find many churches. These are places where there exist several new age churches. This section is described as the non-indigenous community.

The elements of festival celebration involve the principal deity or deities, shrines and sacred places, sacred persons and ritual specialists, main participants and spectator-audience, sacred meals, and festival calendars, the taboos, and the stages of performances. The essence and functions of the festival and how it affects the individual and the celebrating community are important in the celebrations. I have continued to examine the changes in the festivals, the causes of the changes and the consequences of the changes on the identity of the individual and the community.

My research on festival celebrations has shown that three important themes always feature in indigenous festivals, and with a number of sub-themes. The themes are myth (M), ritual (R) and identity (I). The sub-themes among others, are, sovereignty (sv), power (p), politics (pl), ideology, culture (c), petition (pt), praise (pr), gender relations (g), social (s) and revolution (r). All of these are rehearsed in songs as exemplified with the Osogbo indigenous festivals. The two main types of music in

Òsogbo festival drama are instrumental and vocal. The vocal music is call-and-response which could be categorized into three: solo and refrain, lead and chorus and chorus and response.

Over one hundred songs were collected from the Òsun, Ifá, Ògún, *Egúngún* and Sàngó festivals during my fieldwork between 1993 and 2003 (Ògúnbilé 2003a). (See **Appendix II**) Different kinds of themes emerge from all these songs. It may be noted that a lyric may express more than two or three themes. My discussions and analysis of a few of the songs are based on the three major themes and subthemes.

The above classification has been adopted for the sake of clarity, precision and meaningful discussions. It is however noted that much of what is involved in *Egúngún* is stylistic dancing, while for Sàngó, it is drumming from *bàtá* ensemble and wild dancing. It is discovered that the identified major themes cut across all the festivals. A major theme can contain more than one sub-theme as the contents of the songs show. Some discussions of this follow.

Some of the songs reveal the myth-historical events of a particular deity or a king. This event could reflect the sovereignty or power of the deity which eventually becomes incorporated and understood as the people's cultural life, the actions which are praised and subsequently used as precedence for making further petitions and claims. We shall examine and analyse some of the most popular songs as they reflect cultural memories and gender discourse.

Song 1:

Leading Voice

E k'Oore Yèyé o.....!

Olomo ni'ya o.....!

Se bi'wo ni'ya o.....?

E ma se Yèyé o!

Òsun ko Yèyé o!

Òsun ko Yèyé o!

Chorus

E k'Oore Yèyé Òsun.

Olomo ni'ya awa.

Se bi'wo ni'ya awa.

E mase Yèyé Òsun

Òsun ko Yèyé yin

Òsun ko 'hee' te e da.

Leading Voice

Hail, Gracious Mother.....
Our mother possesses many
children!
Are you not the mother.....?
Do not mock/castigate ...
Òsun rejects mockery

Chorus

Hail, Gracious Mother Òsun
Our mother possesses many children
You are surely our own mother.
Do not mock Òsun
Òsun rejects your mockery.

This song (song 1), which is sung during the procession to and recession from Osun grove, recaptures the essence of the Òsun deity in the life of the people. Lines 1-3 express the sovereignty of Òsun, as the matron of Osogbo community, and the mother of the entire indigenes. This claim reiterates the fact of group cultural identity and the affirmation of 'omo Òsun', children of Òsun, which is the identification name of the entire Osogbo people. She is particularly praised as the possessor and giver of children. Òsun devotees and indigenous participants express her sovereignty in protecting them, in bestowing all the good things of life including and most importantly, children, health and immortality and in the rulership of the town of Òsogbo.

Not only is the Òsun goddess believed to be capable of providing children, but she is believed to nurse them. This is reflected in songs 2 and 3 line 1 of song 2 identifies 'àgbo', decoction, a medicinal term symbolically used for Òsun sacred water as a powerful source of traditional care for children. In most Yorùbá communities, when a child is born, fire is prepared as a traditional way of providing necessary heat and warmth. Such fire is also used to boil water which is used in bathing and towelling the newborn baby. But Òsun is noted for coolness, and she uses cold water for therapeutic purposes. All her devotees use cold waters in nursing and caring of newborn babies. The song thus reflects the culture of the Òsogbo community.

An interesting comparison can be made with the Aládurà movement on the use of water. Of course, the Aládurà are known to have embraced *igbagbo olomitutu* faith with the use of water. The practice of bathing the children of the members with water (ordinary or room temperature water), especially by the *Iya Iwemo*, (a mother designated to ritual bath of children) is a commonplace phenomenon. The Aládurà also practice ritual bathing, especially as prescribed for solving all kinds of problems (water cure) since all problems are attributed to spiritual agents. Most Aládurà build their churches beside river banks and most dig deep wells for ready availability of water for ritual bath.

Besides being a perfect nurse, Osun is believed to have the power to heal diseases, and proffer solution with water. She is also believed to have the mystical power to counteract the works of the evil ones believed to have pervaded every space and always at war with human beings.

Song 2:

*Seleru agbo, agbara agbo
L'Òsun fi n w'omo re
Ki Dokita 'o to de;
A bi'mo ma da'na 'le.*

*Osun l'a n p'owe mo.
A bi'mo l'Osogbo wa,
Osun l'a n re e ki.
B'a n ti n wi,
Omi Oba hee l'o n gbo.*

Natural potion, torrents of potion
Was what Òsun used to cure her children-
Before (western) doctors came;
The one who gives birth to children without fire
being made.
Òsun, we are talking about you.
When we give birth to children in Òsogbo
It is Òsun who deserves the praises.
As we supplicate,
King's river (Òsun), hear and sanction it.

Song 3

*Alawoye ba n w'omo mi...
E-n-le orun ba n w'omo mi
Iya n'Jesa, ba n w'omo mi
Iya n'Jesa, ba n se temi
Iya n'Jesa, ba n w'arun mi
Iya n'Jesa, ba n be'ka o
Iya n'Jesa, ba n sipe fun.
Omi tutu lo le ya kankan
Ere Igede ba n se temi
Alawoye, ba n w'omo mi.*

The perfect nurse, nurse my children for me
The spiritual being, nurse my children for me,
Mother from Ijèsà kingdom, nurse my children for me
Mother from Ijèsà, solve my problems for me
Mother from Ijèsà, cure all my diseases
Mother from Ijèsà, appeal to the wicked on my behalf
Mother from Ijèsà, appease the wicked on my behalf
Only water (of Òsun) can give immediate solution
The beautiful one of Igede, solve my problems for me.
The perfect nurse, help nurse my children.

The notion of cultural identity as it relates to the motherhood of Osun and as pointed out in Song 1, lines 1-3, is also noted in Songs 2 and 3 and reinforced in 'Omo Olosun ni wa', but this time by female devotee singers. Furthermore, song 3 brings into limelight the relationship of Osun to Ijesa kingdom which is claimed to be the origin town of Láróoyè and Timéhin, the co-founders of Osogbo, depicting Osogbo as biologically and spiritually connected to Osun. The natural state of Osun as water, is also held to be important in saving the community and destroying their enemies as reflected in song 3. The intimate relationship of the Òsun goddess with the people of Òsogbo has created such a strong identity for which the townspeople are known.

Song 4:

*Omo Olòsun ni wa o e
Omo Olòsun ni wa o a*

We are (female) children of Òsun!
We are (female) children of Òsun!

Boisi ti 'o fe wa k'o joko
Omo Olòsun ni wa.

Boys who do not want to marry us should go and perish
We are children of Òsun!

The cultural identity of the people, projected in Osun festival is held to be more important than religious differentiation. As 'children of Osun', all are bound by Osun goddess as well as its festival. The orderliness of the world and its sustainability through understanding and mutual cooperation is an important engagement of the Yoruba people. Thus, the inclusive character of the indigenous community where the pantheon houses several deities for communal coexistence and peace, is projected in such songs as '*E j'onifa o bo 'Fa*,' 'Let Ifá devotees worship Ifá.'

Song 5:

E j'Onifa 'o bo 'Fa,
E j'Olòsun 'o b'Òsun,
E j'Olodu 'o m'Odu,
K'aye 'o le gun.

Let Ifá devotees worship Ifá,
Let Òsun devotees worship Òsun,
Let Diviners take their Corpus,
So that the world may be well ordered.

This inclusiveness of diverse religious traditions is further emphasized as there was a noticeable force of Islamic influence. The song '*Mejeeji l'a o maa se*,' 'We shall practice the two together' becomes a direct response to the divisive role of Islam. On the other hand, '*Òsun 'o lee parun*,' 'Òsun cannot perish' shows the primordially of Osun as a symbol of indigenous tradition. This is inferred from the fact that Ifa devotees also have a similar lyric '*Ifá 'o lee parun*,' 'Ifá cannot perish' which reflect on the primordially of Ifá.

Song 6:

Mejeeji l'a o maa se, ko bàjé,
Mejeeji l'a o maa se, ko ba je,
K'a a s'aluwala, ka a w'odo
omo,
Mejeeji l'a o maa se, ko bàjé.

We will practice the two, it is not bad
We will practice the two, it is not bad
To perform ablution and attend Òsun river for the sake
of children
We will practice the two, it is not bad

Song 7:

Iro ni won n pa, Òsun 'o lee parun
Iro ni won n pa, Òsun 'o lee parun,
Atelewo l'a ba 'la,
A o m'eni 'o ko o;
Iro ni won n pa, Òsun 'o lee parun!

They are lying! Òsun cannot be destroyed,
They are lying, Òsun can never be destroyed,
Stripes are met on the palms at birth,
No one knows the engraver;
They are lying, Òsun can never be destroyed.

Moreover, the belief in group cultural identity challenges any disruptions, especially as brought about by the influence of Islam and Christianity and as earlier noted. As we continue to reflect on the festival

performances, we note the heightened notes in the lyrics that are sung in response to intolerant and fanatical actions, particularly of the Muslims, against indigenous spirituality which, it was informed, resulted in crises. For instance, song 1 (lines 4-6) shows an attitude of 'mockery' against Osun worship; song 5 appeals against possible disdain for indigenous spirituality personified in 'Onifa', 'Olosun' and 'Olodu': song 6 appeals for mutual cooperation among religious groups, particularly of Muslims and patronizers of Osun; and song 7 emphasizes the primordially and indestructibility of Osun.

Perhaps the following songs are the most important which focus on indigenous responses to what the devotees regard as the negative attitude and fanaticism of Muslims to indigenous religion in Osogbo. It was informed that an aggressive confrontation occurred between the Muslims and the devotees of Òsun deity during the Òsun festival of 1982. It was gathered that one *Sherrif* attempted an attack on the *Arugbá Òsun* (the votary maid) with a sword and wanted to behead her and other devotees who were on procession from the Òsun grove. It was the intervention of the government agents that saved the situation. The memory of this incident is couched in the following two songs which are now used to lampoon the Muslims:

Song 8:

Nibo lo ni n gbe Yèyè mi lo?
Nibo lo ni n gbe Yèyè mi lo?
Oni-lawani osi, to ni n wa se 'mole
Nibo lo ni n gbe Yèyè mi lo?

Where do you want me to cast/throw my Yèyè?
 Where do you want me to cast/throw my Yèyè?
 You foolish turbaned man who wants to force me to
 become a Muslim
 Where do you want me to cast/throw my Yèyè?

Song 9:

Baba onirungbon, yee gbo t'cho
wa/2x
Enikan ko mo pe o mo mo s'esin tire,
Baba onirungbon, yee gbo t'cho wa

You long-bearded man, desist from poking your
 nose into our rituals,
Nobody disturbs you from practicing your own
 religion,
 You long-bearded man, desist from poking your
 nose into our rituals.

Song 8 has two versions for Sàngó and Òsun devotees. The Òsun version substitutes 'Yèyè' for 'Sàngó'. As a reinforcement of their counter-reaction against the unforgotten castigation, the voices of the singers are heightened when the procession moves close to the mosques which are situated along the street where the annual procession to Òsun grove takes place. It should also be noted that the annual procession takes place on

Fridays, and the return from the grove coincides with the *Jumat* service. The Osun procession is done with such a noisome crowd, which to the Muslims, constitutes a nuisance to their worship.

Several of the songs are also raised in petition to Osun for children, prosperity and good life. These songs fall into the ritual category. They contain the invocation of the deity who is thus solicited and petitioned. Songs contain the prayers that are offered for successful performance of rituals; they also contain curses on any evil machinations that may want to cause the failure of the ritual performances. The prominence and permanence of both the objects and their uses, and the reverence of ritual performers are fully worded in songs. Thus, during festivals and amidst singing and dancing to the deities who control the festivals, petitions are made to the deity by the use of ritual elements. Moreover, payment of vows in form of annual presence at the festivals, public confessions of the benefits and kindness of the goddess are made; and participation empowers and makes the blessings received from a particular deity permanent. All of these are embellished with, and sometimes expressed in songs.

It is interesting to note that Orisa Osun songs are always sung at the opening of the celebrations of most Orisa as it was observed during Ifa festivals. Songs of the other òrisà followed. During the Ifa festival, Ifa and Sango songs are rendered last. The practice of the Orisa Osun songs opening the *Odun* could be interpreted as giving due recognition to the *Orisa* Osun to whom the community owes its primary allegiance. Also, Osun deity commands so many devotees as the entire community is also familiar with Osun songs. Ifa songs heighten subsequent sessions of the ritual in the *Odun*. It is further noted that the songs in these two phases are heightened above the others. The singing session is concluded with a somewhat social but historical song depicting some experiences, especially of early health workers among the people of Osogbo.

The process of dancing commences with devotees of a particular deity, and/or members of the compound that are associated with the deity rising up and stepping out to dance to the rhythm of the songs that are rendered by the Ifa priests. They dance forward towards the seat of the *Ataoja* in circular movement. There are several other songs sung in adoration of Orisa, with very captivating themes such as “E ya a ka r’odo, e gb’omo o” for Òsun, as giver of children, *Alagbo omo o*, *Alagbo omo*, for “Òrisàálá and child care, “File mi bun mi o, file mi bun mi,” for Sàngó as

protector against danger, “Mo ‘tori egusi o, mo b’obe to dun mu, for Obàtáálá as possessing healing soup, “Moja, Moja” for Òrìsà-oko as a totemic symbol of fish, “Aya Awo” for Iyawo Ifá (the wives of Ifá priests) and “Ifá gb’ebun lowo wa” in praise of orunmila (ifa). There are also songs on issues of health such as the one below:

Song 9

<i>E so fun wole-wole, k’o ma wo’le e mi;</i>	Tell native health workers/inspectors not enter into my house,
<i>Ìyàwó mi gba’le, o ko’mi aja.</i>	My wife has swept the floor and removed dogs’ dung.
<i>E ma gba mi loju o; ewo lo ku ti n o se?</i>	Do not slap me; what else do you expect me to have done?
<i>Ìyàwó mi gbale, o ko’mi aja.</i>	My wife has swept the floor and removed dogs’ dung.
<i>E ma gba mi leti; ewo lo ku ti n o se?</i>	Do not slap me; what else do you expect me to have done?
<i>Ìyàwó mi gbale, o komi aja.</i>	My wife has swept the floor and removed dogs’ dung.

The preceeding song reflects the encounters between the Osogbo indigenous people and the native health workers of the colonial period. It suggests that the native workers employed high-handedness in enforcing health laws on the people who were unnecessarily intimidated and arrested. This song suggests that male indigenous people composed some lampooning songs in response to the excesses of the native health personnel of the period. Singing of lampooning songs during indigenous festivals provides a moment of ‘free speech’ that has become one of the ways by which traditional communities criticize, ridicule or resist political authorities or institutions that infringe on the rights of the people.

Orogun Sise and Owu Jije: A Cultural Hermeneutics of Christian-Muslim Relations

Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria take on different forms with varying degrees and intensity. Formal and informal, academic, social and political institutions including the non-governmental establishments have at different times responded in different ways to the practice and implications of Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria (see Olupona 1991; 2008, 2012; Akinade 2013). I have carefully been examining this phenomenon since I was an undergraduate. In fact, the initial topic I wanted to research on when I came for my Master’s programme was

Christian-Muslim Relations and Dialogue among the Osogbo People of Nigeria. My concern then was to examine the formal and informal relationships which inspired dialogue among the two competing religious traditions. Throughout my career, I have discovered this in different forms and have also responded to this question in my presentations and public speeches.

In addressing the critical issue of Christian-Muslim relations, my anthropological Yoruba sensibility offers me an interpretive and analytical model/tool of understanding the competition and contestation among Muslims and Christians, particularly in Nigeria. It is the Yoruba phenomenon of *orogun sise*, where essentially two or more women marry the same man in a culturally legal manner, but in rivalry with one another. Ayo Opefeyitimi (2009) however opines that the phenomenon may not be gender-specific but that it does exist among men as it is for women. He further notes that it may apply to political, social, economic and religious lives (66-85). *Orogun sise*, (rivalry) often times, involves *owu jije*, jealousy, and *ilara*, envy. The phenomenon of *Orogun* sometimes goes with positive and negative feelings. The Yoruba have expressions for showing the negative and positive sides of *orogun sise* and *owu jije*. A Yoruba adage states: "*Ile olorogun kii dedee tu, aso oun ija lo n tuu*," "the home of rivals does not just disintegrate, incessant squabbles and quarrels disintegrate it."

The import of this statement is that rivalry often ends in troubles, misfortune and break-ups which arise out of jealousy when bitterness is exhibited among rivals. A common proverb however expresses a positive side of jealousy thus: "*Obinrin ti ko ba j'owu ni obee re kii dun*," "a woman (in a polygynous setting) that is not jealous is the one whose soup is not delicious." What this implies is that co-wives in a polygynous setting who wish to be favoured by their husband must find special ways of preparing a delicious soup. If the end product of *owu jije* results in a tasty soup, then it is desirable as we find in the establishment of educational institutions by Christian and Muslim groups (see **Appendix III** for the list of the higher institutions or universities).

However, both the adage and proverb relating to *Orogun sise* and *Owu jije* cited above have their antecedence in the myth of some Yoruba deities, *Osun* and *Oba*, rival-wives of Sango. They both always cook soup for Sango, their husband. *Osun's* soup is always much pleasing to Sango from which he loves eating. *Oba* inquires from *Osun* the secret

behind the sweet or delicious soup which Sango always prefers. Osun tells Oba that the main ingredient is *esi* (an Ijesa word for *elegede*, pumpkins). Unfortunately, Oba mis-heard *esi*, pumpkins for *eti*, human ears. Oba, in an attempt to prepare sumptuous delicious soup for their husband, cuts her two ears to prepare soup for their husband. Amazing! Sango however could not eat the soup prepared with human ears. Oba feels so much deceived and was embittered, having lost her ears and still could not satisfy their husband. Their relationship goes sour, becomes strained and unhealthy. In bitterness and sorrow, Oba leaves her matrimonial home to metamorphose into a river that now bears her name in Ogun State. Osun is also unhappy and displeased about the incident because of the effect of the misunderstood honesty. She also leaves and metamorphoses into Osun River. The overall effect of these *orogun* has physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions. It is however interesting to state that the devotees of *orisa* Osun and Oba interact in a fashion that defines Yoruba attitude of co-habitation and co-relationship. In a situation where *owu jije*, jealousy, becomes intense, there is the tendency for each rival-woman to want to protect their personal interest including biological children for which sometimes some women are called *aje*, (witches). This seems to me, to be the relationship between Christians and Muslims, where both exist together as rivals.

I have observed three major and distinct forms of identity that exist in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. One, the national identity (as Nigerian) which describes the geo-political territorial self-assertion; the second is the Muslim/Christian identity, a product of Christian and Muslim enterprises introduced into Nigeria; and the third is the cultural identity, a taken-for-granted reality which equates the cultural patterns of the various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups of Nigeria. This third mode of identity is distinguished by specific cultural groups such as Efik, Ibibio, Igbo and Yoruba, and sub-cultural groups such as Oyo, Ijesa, Ife, Ekiti and Ondo among the Yoruba. I have described Nigeria's national identity as superficial affirmation, and that ethnic or cultural identity is perhaps stronger than the other forms of identity. I have however argued that religious identity is sometimes used or manipulated as a form of bond that reinforces, sometimes momentarily, ethnic or national identity (Ögúnbilé 1998b&d).

While admitting the positive side of *orogun* phenomenon among Christian and Muslim groups in the development of Yorubaland in particular, especially in terms of education and recently medicine, the

phenomenon has produced gross suspicion and enmity which have begun to tear the fabric of the people till this day. I will illustrate with a few instances. It should be noted that indigenous culture which contains the people's religious tradition offers unusual space for the establishment of Islam and Christianity among the Yoruba. Indigenous culture accommodates, absorbs, and sometimes compromises for peaceful coexistence. This is seen from a family setting among the Yoruba. As a polygynous culture, a man marries more than a wife. Most of the wives often bring/carry the deities of their homes to the husband's family to be added and incorporated into the family pantheon and shrines. This was the case when Christianity and Islam came to some parts of Yorubaland. For instance, the prediction and proclamation of Ifa gave impetus to the acceptance and establishment of Christianity in Egba in the 19th century since the coming of a "power from across the seas would help the Egba and make them a great nation" (Adewale 1978: 26). Beside that, the people should offer sacrifices for earnest arrival of the powers that would usher in prosperity and development which as predicted, was fulfilled with the arrival of Christianity in Egba.

Also, my research in Osogbo confirmed that Islam gained a foothold, not through the invasion of the Fulani jihadists which overran the Northern Province through many parts of Yorubaland, but in a peaceful way by the prediction, encouragement and proclamation of Ifa oracle (Ògúngbílé 1998c). The peaceful coexistence among the people of triple religious tradition of Nigeria had yielded immense results for the traditions and practitioners. One prominent area of the benefits was the translation of the sacred texts of the Christians and Muslims to indigenous languages. Pieces of evidence of this are immense in the Yoruba translations of the English Holy Bible and Arabic Holy Qur'an, and Igbo translation of the English Bible where elements of/from Arabic, English and indigenous languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Efik are appropriated, adopted, adapted and incorporated into those scriptures. I have also investigated and discovered that the initial places that were offered to different Christian groups were forbidden forests where people who were believed to have been killed by mysterious forces or died of mysterious diseases were initially buried. Two local examples of these gifts which were rather a test of people's faith include the recent sites of Christ Apostolic Church, Moore, and Ijo Orile-edo Adulawo Ti Kristi in Oke-Ijan in Ile-Ife (Ògúngbílé 2001c and 2010c).

In my “Christianity and Democratization Process,” I demonstrated the religious dimension of Nigeria’s political determination and arrangement showing the Muslim-Christian sentiment in the political space. It has been established in Nigeria’s political arrangement that Muslim-Christian religious balancing at the national level is taken for granted since independence. That is, the system of Presidential/Vice Presidential or Head of State/Chief of Staff ticket has been in operation except during the Buhari-Idiagbon era [See Appendix IV]. I observed, particularly during the SDP Presidential race of late M.K.O. Abiola (a Southwestern Muslim), the flagbearer of the party, that he succeeded in having Babagana Kingibe (North-central Muslim) after a lot of interventions and persuasion by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the umbrella body representing Christians in Nigeria. According to Abiola, it was difficult for his party to get a politically strong Christian running-mate from the core north. It was reported that after holding about sixty-four meetings on the issue alone and fifteen meetings with some Christian bodies and with the influence of some CAN members, Abiola came up with the choice of Ambassador Babagana Kingibe as the Vice Presidential candidate. However, the choice came with mixed feelings particularly among the Northern and Middle-belt Christians (Ògúngbilé 1995).

In this paper, I also showed that the pattern of Muslim/Christian balancing in southwest has been the practice, while in the Southeast, it is Catholic/Protestant since Christianity of these two brands are dominant. Even with the third leg showing up in form of gender balancing in giving the feminine-gender a space, religious balancing is still a strong factor (see also Olupona 1992, 2003; Ilesanmi 1997). Noting this religio-political determination in Nigerian political arrangements, the Nigerian historian, Toyin Falola asserts correctly, that:

Indeed, religion has become so important in recent history that no analysis of modern Nigerian politics in the last quarter of the twentieth century can fail to consider it fully. Religion is used by the power-hungry as a stepping-stone to power and political legitimacy. (Falola 1998: 3)

The phenomenon of *orogun sise* as well as *owu jije* is intense and deep. I have demonstrated how competition and/or contestation have continued

to expand the gap and deepen suspicion, particularly, among and between adherents of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria. Such include creating and reinforcing sharp religious identities in the form of religious dresses such as *hijab* and cashocks at social and public spaces, religious exploitation and misuse of physical space and official time, and public institutions, indiscriminate adornment and use of religious titles (e.g. Pastor/Revd or Alhaji/Alhaja) by public officers, religious domination of air space (radio and television), government sponsorship of personal religious duties and functions such as Muslim hajj and Christian pilgrimage, religious agitation for equal representation in public policy-making and policy-decision among Christian and Muslim religious organisations, and undue interference of religious individuals and groups on public policies and institutions. For instance, traditionally, Sunday is a religious day and orthodox holiday for Christians while Friday is a religious day and holiday for Muslim *ummah*. Both days are now contested by Christians and Muslims.

Competition and contestation among Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have been noticed to be producing new forms of these traditions in global religious space. In my "Tradition and Response: Islam and Muslim Societies in a Nigerian City" (Ògúngbílé 2011), I illustrate this with the establishment of the Nasiru-Laahi-Fathi Society (NASFAT) in Nigeria. NASFAT came into being through the meeting of some Muslim elite in form of a prayer meeting held on Sunday, March 5, 1995 in Lagos. Members claimed they have been inspired to rub minds with Islamic scholars with a view to learning about their religion and with the aim of maximising their leisure time on Sunday mornings. The group arose for prayer services and as a matter of principle and practice, as stated in their general programme, that their members from all strata of the society should attend these programmes in order of priority: (1) Asalatù session, every Sunday morning, from 8.30am – 12.30pm, (2) Tahajud session, the night of every first and third Fridays of the month (12.00am till Subhi), (3) Ramadan program (throughout the holy month), and (4) Lai-latul Quadri (night of majesty).

There are claims that the NASFAT phenomenon has drawn its inspiration from The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) which spreads like wildfire in Nigeria. The monthly Friday/Saturday Holy Ghost service, which activities centre on prayer, held at The Redemption Camp along Ibàdàn-Lagos Expressway is patronised by people of different denominations and religions. The legitimacy for NASFAT's

formation and prayer practices is claimed to have hinged on certain Surat (chapters) and Ayat (verses) of the Holy Qur'an. Two examples are cited here:

Quran 3:104: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: they are the ones who attain felicity."

Quran 40:60: "And your Lord said, call on me and I will respond to your call, verily those who scum my worship and do not invoke me will surely enter Hell in humiliation."

It is important to note that NASFAT occupies a space along Ibadan-Lagos Expressway very close to the Redemption Camp. A prominent leader and Chairman for Osun State NASFAT chapter, Alhaji Abd-Ganiyu Oyèládùn, expresses the goal of the movement as reported in *Saturday Tribune* thus:

Between now and 2010, the whole country (Nigeria) should become Muslim. God be with us, the whole of Nigeria, even the remotest villages must have accepted Islam. Islam is the only acceptable religion by God. It is our duty to make all Nigerians become Muslims by 2010. We will continue to preach good things and forbid bad things. We will intensify our membership development programmes (*Saturday Tribune* 2002: 15).

While NASFAT has in its membership prominent politicians and traditional rulers, their activities involved aggressive evangelism and structures as their Pentecostal Christian counterparts. It is worthy of note that the movement has a common prayer book which contains various matters of human concerns (*Saturday Tribune* 2002: 15). They produce stickers and labels stuck on cars and commercial vehicles; they have

special NASFAT Guilds with special uniforms who served as ushers at the various programmes of the society.

As a scholar of comparative religion and sociology of religion, I observed in the last few years the upsurge of Muslim male and female singers in Nigeria, a replica of their Christian counterparts. A further reflection provided the basis of the paper "Contemporary Gospel Music in Nigeria: A Melting Pot for Christian and Islamic Religious Culture" co-presented at the 8th Pan African Society for Musical Arts Education Conference (PASMAE), organised by Makerere University and The Uganda Society for Musical Arts Education in Kampala Uganda on 29 July – 1 August, 2013. Raising the question on the Islamicism of the practice, my Muslim informants responded that the practice was un-Islamic. However, today, we have hundreds of these singers. Interestingly, the contents of their songs which are made into CDs and VCDs address social and cultural issues focusing on destiny and prayers.

Other practices which show a great deal of space and time contestation including such programmes as wedding services, sometimes imitate or adopt the patterns of the other group. One quick interpretation of this competition which involves suspicion, compromise, borrowing, appropriation, in my opinion, is the creation, enforcement and reinforcement of sharp religious group identity (Ògúngbilé 2011, 2013; Obadare 2016).

An emerging trend with the traditional political institution is being witnessed in recent times. In the last few years, our traditional institution has been challenged by each of Christian and Muslim traditions on the one hand, and by the competing forces of the two, on the other. I believe, we are aware of the nature, structure, pattern and operation of the traditional political institution embodied in kingship and the palace. In our paper titled "Indigenous Tradition in Transition: 'Born Again' Traditional Rulers, Religious Change and Power Contestation," we identified the formation of 'Association of Born Again Christian Obas' (AOBACO), an association of a group of Yoruba traditional Oba (rulers) (Ògúngbilé & Awoniyi 2015). The issue for me here, is not the rationality or consequence of this action of traditional institution. But, a few years after the formation, I observed an NTA programme, where an announcement of a meeting of the 'League of Muslim Obas' was announced. This was not only informative for me but was also amazing

as I began to read into the *orogun sise* and *owu jije* which are capable of inspiring collectivity on one hand, and dividing on the other.

Let's come home to our campus as miniature of a State or larger community to further illustrate the phenomenon of *orogun sise* (rivalry) and *owu jije* (jealousy). I have demonstrated in "Space Contestation and Religious Identity among Christian and Muslim Students in Nigerian Universities" the ways in which Christians and Muslims compete and contest for physical space for relevance and identity reinforcement (Ògúngbilé 2013). I have enumerated about fifty (50) Christian groups and four (4) main Muslim groups. A few practices that I have identified, beginning from the main gate of the campus, include the display of posters and banners bearing religious inscriptions and invitations to religious services and programmes. Notably, at the beginning of a session when new students are admitted, these religious groups make vehicles available to convey new students to the campus, perhaps in order to attract members. Moreover, executive committee members form themselves into advisers and actively engage in guiding prospective members to orientation.

Three recent notable ethnographic researches that focus on the O.A.U. campus carried out under my supervision include "A Socio-Psychological Analysis of Religious Behaviour among Selected Christian Students Fellowships of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria" (Oluwarotimi 2012); "History and Growth of Departmental and Faculty Christian Students' Fellowships in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife" (Ololade 2017) and "A Socio-Ethical Study of the Perception on Religious Activities vis-à-vis Noise Pollution in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife" (Elesemoyo 2018). Oluwarotimi did a structural and functional analysis of Christian groups on the O.A.U. campus and the socio-psychological effects of religious activities on some issues such as cultism, sexuality and examination malpractices as each Christian group attempts to creatively and uniquely offer solutions to those problems. Ololade identified the development of Departmental and Faculty Christian Students' Fellowships and discussed how each group competed for spaces, while Elesemoyo examined the effects of the perceived sacred noise of the competing Muslim and Christian religious groups on the academic community. These and other researches carried out in the Department of Religious Studies have offered important recommendations which I believe would be useful for policy making and implementation.

Our concern here is that the competition and contestation of these different Christian and Muslim groups have continued to reinforce unwholesome behaviours including the use and mis-use of facilities such as the halls of residence, lecture rooms, car-parks and the sports complex in spite of the designated Religion Ground and the allocated spaces. Thanks for the divine intervention and the wisdom employed by the university administration and the tactfulness of religious peace-builders in the institution that rescued the institution from a possible religious imbroglio.

The Serpent under the Sacred Canopy

I draw a theoretical assumption for this section from Peter L. Berger's *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* and Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (1950) to examine the human factor in "an enterprise of world-building" (Berger 1990: 3) among the Africans with particular emphasis on Nigeria and its triple religious heritage. Berger says: "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established" (Berger 1990: 25). He suggests the nature and elements of the sacred cosmos to include "a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience" such as sacred rocks, sacred tools, sacred cows and chieftain. He notes further that "space and time may be assigned the same quality, as in sacred localities and sacred seasons" (25). Canopy essentially and functionally characterises sheltering, covering and shading. We have thus far demonstrated that African sacred worldview, like canopy, seems to provide shield, shelter or bonding for communities of believers.

(a) *The Sacred and the Serpent Metaphor*

My use of the serpent as a metaphor for the mystery and uncanny nature of the object is to explicate the dialectics of the sacred and violence which characterise the practice of religions, particularly the triple religious heritage of Nigeria, and most importantly the two competing forces, both at the institutional and individual levels. In his most famous work, *The Idea of the Holy* (published first in 1917 as *Das Heilige*), the German Protestant theologian and scholar of comparative religion defines the concept of the holy (sacred) as that which is *numinous*. He explained the numinous as a "non-rational, non-sensory experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self." Rudolf Otto summarised the numinous experience of the sacred with the Latin expression, *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a mystery that is

terrifying and at the same time fascinating. Such mystery is inexpressible and awe-inspiring; it produces emotional wonder through which human beings suspend rational mind for non-rational possibilities (Otto 1917). Otto illustrates this mystery with the serpent and its uncanny nature and character, using the Moses' experience of the 'unburnt' burning bush in the wilderness.

In "Serpent," (Ògúngbílé 2009d: 607) my contribution to *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, I observed that "African communities express a variety of views about the serpent as an animal of mysterious complex characteristics and symbolisms. It is regarded as a mysterious messenger of death that is often sent on dangerous errands by wicked persons or evil eyes to bite their victims. While some parts including its fur and teeth are often used for serious ritual preparations for healing, magicians also use the serpent in their drama activities; they turn to serpent and scare their audiences who offer gifts to them. A citing of serpent evokes several attitudes: awe, uneasiness, panic, fright, shock, terror or scare. An alert of a WhatsApp message titled "God's Miracles never end and they are marvellous in our eyes" to which five photos were attached was sent to a group platform on April 09, 2018 by a lecturer. The sender narrated that it was only God that saved him "from a dangerous horrible looking cobra yesterday night (at about 7.34 p.m. in my toilet seat (WC) here in Abraka, Delta State)." According to him, it took about two hours before the snake could be killed with a gun by a vigilante group. (Adeyanju, *CONUA Platform*, 5 posts posted on April 9, 2018 at 12:48-12:51 hours) What was informative for me were the attitude of the lecturer and the uneasy response of those he called to assist in killing the dangerous creature. My surprise was not really the extra efforts, resources and energy it took the crackers engaged to destroy the dangerous creature, but the destruction of the entire closet and other costly materials in the restroom.

The metaphor of the serpent under the sacred canopy explains the uneasy calm and troubled silence among and between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria which produce religious violence. In his *Terror in the Mind of God*: Mark Juergensmeyer (2003) "points out that "religion seems to be connected with violence virtually everywhere." (xi). Examining the cultures of violence and logic of religious violence, he explores what he describes as the "dark alliance between religion and violence" to examine acts of religious terrorism which perpetrators and supporters of religious terrorism admit "as forms of symbolic statements aimed at

providing a sense of empowerment to desperate communities. The author also says that “religion often provides the mores and symbols that make possible bloodshed....” (Juergensmeyer 2003: xi). Thus, in several ways, we as individual human beings and as religious bodies might act the serpent in the drama of sacred violence.

The basis of these is religious fundamentalism as well as extremism. My studies have shown that religious fundamentalism is sometimes provoked by what I describe here as Islamophobia and Christophobia arising from sound and sentiments evoked or manifested in religious rituals, symbols, emblems, signs, images and negative stereotypes. In most of the cases, some religious leaders and teachers often employ some narratives from the sacred texts, develop them into doctrines under the guise of inspiration. Such teachings, which are capable of manipulating members and hearers who do not have adequate knowledge of the stories of the sacred texts, are printed as canons. In some cases, the teachers and leaders invoke such religious teaching and doctrines to manipulate for personal benefit (see also Wright 1985; Ali 2002; Adekunle 2009; Vaughan 2016). A few of such words or terms will illustrate our point. In a community of believers, sounds of terms or words from the person of faith that is claimed to be in competition the other, raises sentiments. I have tested this on many occasions. Such words as Jesus (PBOH), Muhammad (PBUH), evangelism, crusade, Jihad, Shari’ah, Christian/Muslim names, greetings, prayers, curses, conversion, hijab, stir suspicion.

Manipulation through indoctrination, bribery and corruption, welfarism, gift and gift-giving by religious leaders for beneficiaries including political leaders continues to play decisive role in instigating suspicion which often leads to fundamentalism. Our experiences at the local, state and national levels in Nigeria demonstrate the troubling serpent under what we hold as our shelter, and sacred shelter for that matter. A few of the events will illustrate my metaphor of the ‘serpent under the sacred canopy’ in two ways: (1) the sacred face of violence and (2) the violent face of the sacred. The sacred face of violence indicates the masking of the sacred, that is, religion and religiosity/spirituality to instigate, inspire and provoke violence while the violent face of the sacred would mean the manifestations of violence in religious manner. Both gear towards religious violence and take different forms and shades, particularly in Nigeria. Religious violence may be intra- and inter-religious.

Religious fundamentalism is the sacred face that produces mutual suspicion, unhealthy competition and contestation, negative stereotypes and agitation, and deliberate attempt to create and provoke crisis through sharpening of religious identity and strengthening brotherhood, surreptitious move to impose doctrines and religious ideas on the diverse people of different religious affirmations with the intention and goal to gain more ground, increase membership, occupy better and higher positions and control more space and resources locally, nationally, and globally. Hence, international communities with religious biases sponsor and reinforce their religious influence and space through financial support in order to extend their power-base locally, nationally and globally.

Several cases of violence ‘in the name of the sacred’ have been witnessed and documented. Religious fundamentalism which results in violence manifests in form of words, pens, swords, symbols, identity, architectural designs, suicide bombing, and other forms of terrorist attacks. A few weeks ago, an academic whatsapp platform was created in our university for disseminating academic information. Shortly afterward, religious postings began to filter in by Christians and Muslims in form of preachment, religious incitement, assault on other religious traditions. Sometimes, a political debate that could provoke religious sentiment was posted to incite persons of other religious traditions. Two examples of such posts were “Our Girls and Faith, May God have mercy on us. Aameen” posted on March 26, 2018 at 8:35 am, which was pro-Muslim and biased against Christians; and “Another Sign that the end is near...Mysterious Birth at Kubwa General Hospital, Abuja” which was pro-Christian (*Congress of Universities Academics (CONUA) Platform*, March 26, 2018 at 8:35 a.m. and May 03, 2018 at 21:26 hrs). The first posting referred to the cases of Firdaus Aljanatu Amasa, a Muslim lady who declined the removal of her hijab on the ground of her faith during her Call to Bar programme. The second case was that of a Christian lady who was mandated to renounce her Christian faith and put on hijab for her to be released by the Boko Haram insurgents. The author insisted that the case of Amasa demanded the sympathy, attention and intervention of President Buhari to allow her wear the hijab against the existing regulation guiding induction of Law graduates at the Nigerian Law School.

On both postings, there were reactions and counter-reactions among individuals, notably Muslims and Christians. One of the comments

likened the cases of Leah Sharibu and Firdaus Amasa, which the original author described as of equal strength, as of the difference between sleep and death. Interestingly and sadly enough, it was clear as members on the two religious divides represented my serpent metaphor, of dangerous suspicion in defence of faith even in an academic institution like ours. As much as the administrators of the platform warned against such postings, it seems that elements of fundamentalism still continued to surface in skilful manner. For instance there were repeated cases of posting by the first cited author on the just mentioned platform which could inspire religious intolerance and provoke religious violence.

Several documented cases of religious fundamentalism among youths in our institutions, both secondary and tertiary, are immense. The reports on the legal issue pertaining to the use of *hijab* in Osun State government secondary schools and the diverse reactions, and the legal and professional dimensions of the Firdaus Amasa's *hijab* are still on the pages of Nigerian dailies. Issues of and agitation on admission of students, appointment and promotion of staff in state and federal institutions on the basis of religious affinity, membership of religious-based countries, unguarded and sided restructuring of social institutions in favour of the religion of the political class, etc are replete in our dailies and monthlies.

I have shown that the mutual interactions and cordial relationship that had existed among people of different faiths in different indigenous communities in Nigeria are now being threatened by certain social and political forces. There are documented cases of unhealthy rivalry between devotees of Indigenous Religious Traditions and Islam as well as Christianity. I have demonstrated in my writing how when, in 1982, there was an assault on Osun Osogbo devotees during Osun grand finale by Muslims, there was a violent response which subsequently became a reference point and provided a platform for reactionary move by Osun devotees. Osun grand finale is usually held on Fridays when the *igba osun*, Osun sacred calabash would usher the Ataoja (Oba of Osogbo), devotees of indigenous religions, traditional chiefs, Osogbo people and the teeming participants to and from Osun sacred grove. The recession from Osun grove, which is always done with much singing and drumming, fall on the time when *jumat* service would be on-going as there is the Osogbo central mosque and other mosques on the road that goes to Osun Osogbo grove. The Muslims considered this as a *halal* (a taboo) and challenge against Islam.

It was reported that there was a Muslim cleric who wanted to behead the *Arugba*, sacred calabash carrier. The devotees engaged in a violent protest against the Muslims. Since that episode, there were composed series of songs which are now usually sung during Osun Osogbo festival. A few of them are “*Baba onirungbon, yee gbo t’ebo wa*,” “Long bearded man, stop interfering in our ritual”; “*Baba a yin l’o so wa d’imole*”, “Your forefathers forced us to Islam”; “*Iya t’o bi Kenferi*”, “The same mother gave birth to *Kafirun* (infidel)” and “*Yoo ba’yalaya won*”, “Their foremothers should go into blazes” (Ogúngbilé 1998b, 2003a).

(b) *Competing Ideologies and Legitimacy Crisis at the Political Space*

Ideology, defined in terms of politics or religion, goes with it, certain fundamental issues and concepts which focus on human societies and their administrative structures and instruments. Weber’s thought on the relation of religion and social action, and decisive influence of religion on social action underscores the distinction between the different kinds of authorities under which societies operate (Robert Bellah, in his foreword to David Little’s *Religion, Order and Law* (1969 [1984])). Competing ideologies exist particularly in the Nigerian context where political and religious structures lay claim to mutual relationship that is based on institutional, legal-rational or traditional authority. Whether defined as secular or multi-religious state, the current situation in Nigeria where legitimacy is challenged by religious authority calls into question the constitutional framework of Nigeria as a country with regards to independence, freedom, rationality, legality and legitimacy. In Nigeria where there is plurality of religious traditions with distinct truth claims, value systems and ethical codes, religion is employed in a divisive manner in keeping only groups of believers together. David Little, supporting Max Weber’s view, affirms that “religion is a legitimating agent in social life..., supplies the final authority for action, and at the same time, binds together all the various aspects of society into a coherent pattern” (Little 1984: 7, 8; see also Olupona 2012).

As a sociologist of religion, I have tried to reflect on the numerous questions that border on the constitutionality of religious interference in Nigerian polity. Several arguments have been pushed forward. A pro-Muslim argument is that the formulation as well as the structure of the current Nigerian constitution is Christian due to the historical basis of the country itself. A pro-Christian argument says that the constitution of Nigeria is more in favour of Muslim as some aspects of the constitution

specifically include Islamic symbols and legal codes including Shari'ah. Yet another argument is that Islam does not recognize any governmental structure besides Islamic theocratic system. Four recent defining issues along these lines of thought are: the Shari'ah question, the hijab controversy, the Boko Haram insurgency and the Fulani herdsmen attacks.

While the Shari'ah question, with its claim to have had a long history in Nigeria, has constitutional backing, certain clauses that provide for its operation within the Nigerian state are interpreted variously as they suit the protanogists. The hijab issue, from my study, is tainted with a lot of doctrinal controversies even among Islamic scholars and certain Muslim groups. From its structure and operations, **boko haram** is both ideological and religious. The movement, officially recognized by its members as *Jama'at Ahlis-sunnah Lid-Do'wat Jihad*, meaning 'people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad' which appellation is Boko Haram was founded by Ustadh Muhammed Yusuf in the North Eastern part of Nigeria (Opeloye 2012: 177). The ideology of Boko Haram "forbids western education and any culture that is western." Muhib Opeloye's study of the Boko Haram Movement suggests three perspectives for interpreting its ideology:

- (a) another sectarian insurgency for the propagation of heretical doctrines;
- (b) a manifestation of global terrorist's organizational networking; and
- (c) an insurgency occasioned by the nation's flawed political process.

Even though Opeloye's opinion that in the third proposition, the Boko Haram insurgency has socio-political undercurrent, is most plausible, I suggest that the operations of the Boko Haram supports the three interpretative perspectives. Opeloye's position is a simplistic way of explaining away the entire ideology of Boko Haram movement hence it may not offer opportunity and possibility for dealing with the issue in a holistic manner. Opeloye however identifies the several flaws in the ideological stance of the movement, particularly negative attitude and response to western education which has become the basis of their agitation. In several cases in human history, religion and religious institutions have been manipulated by the political and economic classes,

most importantly because of its ultimate claim of reference to the Divine as the ultimate validating power.

The operation of the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria in recent times, their pronouncements and targets, clearly demonstrates their religious-political and ideological stance. They may however be defined from any perspectives since definitions point to both the essence and the function of an object so defined. From the confirmed cases of bombing, kidnapping, abduction, etc., some questions that beg our answers include for instance, for the school where the students were kidnapped, what was/were the religion(s) of the generality of the students? In several cases of abduction, the religious identities were not declared. I believe that this may be intentional so as not to set the nation on religious fire. The case of Leah Sharibu, the Christian lady who was not released with the other abductees on the ground that she did not convert to Islam and use hijab has a good argument for those who claim that the Boko haram movement is pro-Islam. It is important that the federal government recognizes the sovereignty and status of Nigeria as a multi-religious society and urgently responds to the crisis of legitimacy which Boko Haram insurgency is perpetrating.

The recent sporadic and incessant killing by the **Fulani herdsmen** presents another case that underscores a debate on identity and legitimacy crisis. Some issues that arise from the Fulani herdsmen phenomenon include the questions of identity, boundary, security, economy, and ethics or morality. Strictly speaking, I suggest that the Fulani herdsmen phenomenon is ethnic and economy-based. The Fulani are a major ethnic group in Nigeria whose traditional occupation is cow grazing done in a peripathetic manner across other communities. The grazing is however done with the cooperation and understanding of their host communities. A few of the Fulani herdsmen have a temporary settlement among their host communities where they enjoy relative cordial relationship. They have been found in southern part of Nigeria in tens living peacefully and herding and selling cows. Starves are the common instrument used to rear and direct the cows.

In recent times, there are reports and/or assumptions that the operation of the Fulani herdsmen has gone beyond the usual cow-rearing business to unbridled harmful and deadly activities involving intimidation of their host communities, destruction of farmlands and properties and killing of human beings with sophisticated weapons such as AK47 rifles and other

harmful and dangerous weapons. The reports on the recent activities of the Fulani herdsmen raise three fundamental sets of questions for us as Nigerians and in particular, as academics. These questions are the following:

- (a) Are these deadly set of Fulani the old group that has assumed a new face? If they are, why is this new face assumed? What is/are their intention(s)?
- (b) Are these harmful Fulani herdsmen a new group, different from those that have been dwelling peacefully with their hosts? If yes, who are these new-comer Fulani in terms of nationality? What are their ideologies?
- (c) Are they really “herdsmen” or simply a case of some gimmicks on language politics?

Reactions to the activities of the Fulani herdsmen from different quarters, with diverse ethnic, political, social and religious orientations call for examination and reflections. That the attacks have been focused on, and have dastardly effects on some Middle-Belt and southwestern communities have raised some questions along the lines of ethnicity and religion, particularly Christianity. Concerns raised by the southwesterners have continued to read ethnic cleansing on the attacks while Christian leaders have been interpreting the Fulani herdsmen attacks as a religious war against Christians and Christianity.

Ethnic and Christian religious readings of the responses of the federal government, particularly the Presidency on the attacks continue to generate some suspicion bordering on national question. Newspaper reportage of the President’s responses to the incessant killing and destruction of lives and properties were: (1) that people in the communities where killings occur need to learn to live in harmony with the Fulani herdsmen; and (2) presentation of the proposal of grazing bill as well as creation of cattle colonies in the southern part of Nigeria to the national house of assembly by the President.

The questions that arise from the activities of the Fulani herdsmen would include whether the issue is: (1) a local or national one; (2) ethnic or religious; (3) political or legal. How do the so called Fulani herdsmen and their deadly activities affect their host communities and Nigerian

collectivity as a sovereign state? How does the issue affect Muslims and Christians? Does it or does it not pose a security threat to the Nigerian state? Overall, how do these questions relate to the sacred that we are currently dwelling on?

Several arguments for and against, and defences of the statements from the Presidency follow the above questions. One argument is that those Fulani herdsmen who kill and destroy are not Nigerians but Fulani citizens of neighbouring countries. This calls into question national security which bothers on the porosity of Nigerian border, a challenge to Nigerian constitution and sovereignty of the country. The use of sophisticated weapons in rearing cows by the Fulani herdsmen is a major challenge to the legal institution. It is understandable that the possession and use of some weapons of even less qualities than AK47 rifle require legal sanction/backing. Most importantly, the targets of the attacks by contemporary Fulani herdsmen in some parts of the country, some argue, have both religious and economic effects. As I have argued, religion is often times employed as a bond that empowers and strengthens ethnicity through which boundaries are broken, borders are extended to recreate a sense of peoplehood. Hence, in responding to the effects of the activities of the Fulani herdsmen, the southern Christians would sometimes feel agitated as we have observed in the comments of the Christian leaders in Nigeria. This is even more so that some individuals in the national house of assembly justify the move that would legitimise the extension of Fulani borderless spaces. The destruction of farmlands and continuous killing of human beings in the middle-belt and southern parts of the Nigeria has raised serious concern for economic problems.

These concerns are for all of us to objectively consider with a view to procuring result-oriented deliberation and solutions. I honestly do not presently have answers to these heartbreaking questions. My hope however is that the leaders of this country at the national, federal and local levels, legal practitioners, religious communities, political analysts and the intelligentsia will continue to engage in positive result-oriented deliberations (see also Olupona 2008; Dopamu 2009; Ayantayo 2018). Obtaining timely and pragmatic solutions to these questions will undoubtedly engender the continued corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation.

Reflections, Revelation and Recommendations: Contributions to Academics and Human Development

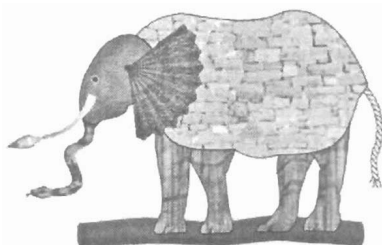
Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, my reflections took me through some areas of life with focus on contribution to human and academic development. As a trained teacher, I was taught that education offers three basic domains of engagement: the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The first area of my reflection rests on the cognitive and affective on which lie the focus of the study of religion. My teaching engagement has taken me through primary, secondary, college of education and university levels. I have all along considered teaching, training and mentoring a divine call. The charge in the testimonial ceremoniously presented to me by the Principal of the Government Teacher Training College, Ilesa, has become a driving force of my life - Mr. David O. Ògúnbilé is "very suitable as a teacher (and) recommended for appointment as a teacher... He should always be conscious of his responsibility as a moulder of the lives of children."

Thus, upon my assumption of duty in early 1993, I looked for innovative and creative ways of imparting knowledge to my students. I considered it my failure, if students, especially in a large number failed class tests and examinations. To prevent this, after teaching a topic in a particular course, I would give some written assignments to know if I had correctly and adequately imparted knowledge. I could teach and re-teach a topic until I would be satisfied that I communicated right and well.

I like to draw some reflections on the impact of some of the courses I have been teaching since the last 25 years have had on my students. The courses include 'Religion and Human Values' (Parts 1 & 2 courses), 'The Psychology of Religion' (Part III course) and 'Ethics' (Part IV course). Generally in these courses, I stimulate students into moral reasoning and thinking. I, together with colleagues that co-teach 'Religion and Human Values' with me, have developed some models beyond the usual focus on religious traditions that are practised in Nigeria (of Islam, Christianity and AIRs). The syllabus, which is yearly reviewed, has been designed to include Asian traditions, Abrahamic faiths and African Indigenous Religions; it involves the use of simple and practical styles of narrative, use of symbols, images, biographical notes and writings, and moral philosophers and thinkers. It engages social, cultural and political issues such as sexuality, nationalism, peace and violence.

In the context of multi-religious nature of Nigeria where Islam and Christianity continue to pose a threat to harmonious relationship and collective existence, the story told by Jesus on 'The Good Samaritan' (Luke chapter 10:25-37) is a reflection for all categories of humanity. It is important to draw lessons from this story. From the sacred texts of the Muslims and Christians, and through this story, I have developed a model for harmonious living and relationship which I titled "Being Spiritual, Being Religious and Being Human." This and several versions of the story have also been presented at international conferences.

Moreover, my peace advocacy in multi-religious Nigeria makes me to adopt a Hindu-Buddhist model evinced in the '**Parable of the Six Blind Men and the Elephant**'.



This parable by an American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) was based on a fable which was told in India many years ago. The poem states the long arguments and disputes by six Indostan blind men who observed a giant elephant. The first blind man feels the broad and sturdy side and declares it to be a wall. The second who feels the tusk cries to have felt a spear; the third feels the trunk and speaks that it is like a snake. The fourth who touches the knee feels the elephant was like a tree; the fifth blind man also touches its ear and emphatically declares it is like a fan; while the sixth blind man who holds the tail of the elephant says the elephant is like a rope. This elephant which represents religion and humans' perception of it holds human beings accountable for the religious crisis and wars that continue to engulf human beings. The moral lesson which concludes the poem thus states:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

Through the narratives, practical life discussions, pictorial and news report strategies, the course “Religion and Human Values” has been innovatively revised. Students from the Faculties of Law, Environmental Design and Management, Education, and Arts take the course. Of significance in the course content is the explication of the moral and social aspects of life. Within this ambit, indecent dressing which has been a menace in contemporary Nigeria has constantly been addressed. Since the past ten years, I have been constantly engaging my students in the reading and interpreting of the two-page “Fashion Court” column of the *Sunday Sun* to inject into them the culture of decent dressing. This has been a teaching-mentoring technique which has continued to improve the quality of life. In fact, this has developed into a paper entitled “Visual Terrorism and Social Violence: An Analysis of Sexual Body in a Nigeria’s Print Media” which I presented at an international conference in 2016.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, it is important to state that I have successfully mentored students who undertook groundbreaking research to which my teaching of Psychology of Religion and Ethics was precursory. These essays focus on issues of local, national and global relevance; some of them are contemporarily relevant to campus religiosity, students’ sexuality and their implications for the life and living experiences of students. I have successfully supervised a number of research theses (three doctoral and seventeen Master) with topics on the interface of religion and social, cultural, educational and political institutions. Seven doctoral candidates are presently being supervised.

My research activities are deeply ethnographic in nature. I have been able to develop some theoretical models including “Cultural Hermeneutics” which are employed in interpreting and analysing ethnographic data. My focus on theories and theorising in religious studies has resulted in groundbreaking publications as listed in the references.

My passion to revitalise teaching and research of Religious Studies in Obafemi Awolowo University prompted me to take some decisions during my graduate studies at Harvard University, where I specialised in World Religion. Of particular interest to me were conceptual issues on *Diversity and Dialogue, Religion and Social Theory, New Religious Movements and Society, Religion, Nationalism, and Peace, Syncretism, and Understanding Islam and Contemporary Muslim Societies*. On my

return from Harvard in 2001, I convinced the then Acting Head of Department, Dr. (now Professor) Andrew Olu Igenozu to mount the course 'Psychology of Religion. I am happy to state that today, the course attracts about 50 to 60 students every Harmattan Semester from other Departments. Moreover, a number of our students in the Department have written their long essays in this area (see also Okeyode 2012; Agbakazobi 2013; Somoye 2013; Adeeko 2015; Ajayi 2015; Ogunmoyole 2015; Jegede 2017; Abiodun 2018).

As a junior lecturer, I proposed, with the support of the then Head of Department, a combination of Religious Studies with Sociology which was approved. My contacts with the Harvard University provided fresh insights into the pragmatics of the pedagogy of Religions. This afforded me the opportunity to further propose combinations of Religious Studies with other disciplines within the Humanities, Social Sciences and Administration. As Chairman of the Departmental Curriculum Review Committee, between 2010 and 2017, an overhaul of the entire curriculum was undertaken. Our curriculum to date is in consonance with international standard. I am happy to state today, that as Head of Department, Religious Studies could now be combined with any of these ten disciplines, namely, Sociology, Psychology, International Relations, Political Science, Music, Drama, English, Philosophy, History and Yoruba.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished audience, it should be carefully noted that the Department of Religious Studies of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria is not a Christian theological seminary, neither is it a Qur'anic college. It is not also devoted to training students in priesthood in Christianity, Islam or Indigenous Religion. The programmes are not structured on confessional faith-based model. Rather, **the Department is devoted to the scientific study and analysis of religious tradition and its interface with other social institutions in and of which it exists and operates.** Besides, it should be emphasised that the philosophy that created the Department in Ife provided a unique programme that is non-partisan, non-sectarian, and non-faith based. However, the contents and the design of our Religious Studies programme offer great assistance and training support for those in the Ministry, Christians, Muslims and devotees of Indigenous Religions.

The perpetuation of the ideology that a specialist non-believer in a religious tradition could not teach courses or conduct research or write

and publish in the religious traditions other than his or her own, is globally unacademic and parochial. This attitude reduces academic study of religion to sheer confessional training (see also Ayantayo 2018). As a specialist in Comparative Religion, my research deeply focuses on Indigenous Religious Traditions. Do I need to be a *babalawo* or *dibia* or *olorisa* to be able to teach courses or conduct research in this area? This of course should certainly not be the case. It is a known fact that in the academic study of religion, a good number of prominent, established scholars and specialists in Christian or Islamic traditions were/are not believers in the traditions in which they specialise. A few examples are Professors Jacob K. Olupona of Harvard University, Elisha Babalola and David Ògúnbilé of the Obafemi Awolowo University and Late Adelumo Dopamu of the University of Ilorin who are specialists in African Indigenous Religions; Late Professors Joseph Kenny of the University of Ibadan and Oguntoye Oyelade of the Obafemi Awolowo University who were specialists in Islamic Studies. Rather than undermine or destroy the structure of Religious Studies in Obafemi Awolowo University, we should assiduously enhance and enrich the discipline by recognising the uniqueness of OAU Religious Studies, building on, improving upon and reinforcing the existing structure by drawing from global academic practices.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, I wish to use this occasion to suggest that our postgraduate studies need to examine the peculiarities of disciplines in the university to make decisions, particularly on regulations concerning deadlines for completing a doctoral programme. Even though we understand the why and how of the regulations on these deadlines, this need be re-examined. As a product of graduate programmes of Ife and a student of myth and ritual studies, my fieldwork experience showed that to produce a quality doctoral thesis with focus on myth and ritual studies and festival celebrations require quality time and intensive field work. The current four-year maximum duration might be unrealistic for some longitudinal studies if the product will stand the test of time.

Before assuming the position of the Head of Department, I have been the Chairman of the Postgraduate Committee and of the Curriculum Review of the Department. I have served as the Associate Editor of the Departmental *Ife Journal of Religions*. It is noteworthy that I designed the logo for our Departmental journal. It is with appreciation to my colleagues in the Department that, under my headship, the Department is able to revitalise the Departmental journal. The Department has been

able to publish four issues and the next one is being completed. Under my headship, an intensive renovation of the Department and its environs was undertaken.

At the Faculty level, I have been involved in and played leading roles in the academic and physical development of the Faculty. I have served as representative of the Faculty of Arts on the University Postgraduate Board and Academic Research Committee. In 2001, I led a three-person team that worked on the Faculty of Arts internet connectivity when the Faculty was omitted with regard to Internet facilities and services. I am happy to state that I have worked with some Deans to organise Faculty International Conferences which resulted in the publication of a number of peer-reviewed volumes in which I also served as co-editors (Ògúngbílé 2004a, 2006a, 2007a, 2014a and one, forthcoming[a]). I have served as Vice-Dean between 2012 and 2014. As Vice-Dean, I ensured the successful formation of the Faculty of Arts Students' Association (FASA) which emphasised 'responsible unionism'. I have also served as representative of the Faculty of Arts in Senate and representative of Congregation in Senate. I am currently a member of the Business Committee of Senate of our great university.

Reflecting on the challenges of career advancement, pedagogical practices and the desire for a healthy academic culture, I use this medium to offer some modest recommendations. First, it is important that the university takes cognisance of the three components of a lecturer's engagement which are, teaching, researching and undertaking administrative duties. The present practice in which publication largely determines elevation could be counter-productive to the university on the long run.

At home and abroad, my collaborative effort is visible in the area of publication of well-researched academic books. Scholars within and outside Nigeria have made significant contributions to my authored books apart from the conference proceedings published by the Faculty of Arts of the Obafemi Awolowo University.

In 2016, I served as the convener of the First Global African Indigenous Religions conference which was held here at the Obafemi Awolowo University. The conference was attended by scholars, devotees and practitioners of indigenous religions in West African countries, the Americas, and Europe. The second edition of the conference will hold in

Brazil in October, 2018. I have presented keynotes at national conferences in academic and religious institutions in Nigeria.

Besides serving as internal examiner for Departments in the Faculties of Arts, Education, Social Science, Environmental Design and Management, I have served and continue to serve as external examiner to a number of Nigerian universities and institutions including University of Ibadan, University of Ilorin, Lagos State University, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ekiti State University, Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) Ikeji-Arakeji, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho and Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta, Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure and others. I serve as reviewer for international journals such as Sage Publishers, *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*; *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, University of Ilorin; *African Journal of Gender and Development*; *Numen*; *Open Theology*; and *Ife Journal of Religions*. I have been serving as member of Accreditation Panel of National Universities Commission (NUC).

As a member of national and international professional bodies, I have been involved in policy-making and policy-implementation in such organisations as Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR), National Association for Christian Studies, African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR), International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), American Academic of Religion (AAR) and International Sociological Association (ISA). As a Nigerian Representative of AASR, I led the Nigerian delegate to Botswana in 2007 and served as the convener of 2010 biennial conference held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in January 2010. It was remarkably attended by scholars from several parts of Africa, America, and Europe. I am currently the West African Regional Representative of AASR and I have been nominated to steer the adhoc committee to review the operations of AASR. I have attended national and international conferences as paper presenter, chair of sessions and lead paper presenters in Nigeria, Ghana, Cairo in Egypt, Botswana, South Africa, Uganda, San Francisco in California, Providence in Rhode Island, Boston in Massachusetts, Spain, Athens in Georgia, Cambridge in Massachusetts, Washington, D.C. and Miami in Florida.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, religion is a volatile phenomenon. It is capable of building as it is of destroying. Proofs of these are evident around us

and across the globe (Modjez 1998; Appleby 2000). Religion has an inherent and in-built capacity to be manipulated for peace and for war by individuals and groups, all classes of people and the media. But what is religion? It is nothing but what people make of it! Human being is the measure. Hence, Mahatma Gandhi's submit that:

All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults. We must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faiths also, yet not leave it on that account, but try to overcome those defects. Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only hesitate, but would think it our duty to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths. ... True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith. Cultivation of tolerance for other faiths will impart unto us a truer understanding of our own (1962: 2, 3).

It is pertinent to address the stakeholders in the practice and management of religion. Here I refer to practitioners, religious leaders, scholars, commentators, news reporters and governments at local, national and global levels. In the lead paper presented at the conference organised by the National Association for Christian Studies (NACS) titled "Afro-Christian Approach to Economic Recession," and the public lecture delivered at the 53rd Founder's Anniversary of Motailatu Church C&S Worldwide on "Nigeria and Qualitative Education: How would Religious Bodies Partner with the State in Getting it Right?", I noted the very great contributions that Christianity and Islam had made, and are still making in Nigeria, particularly in the areas of education, economy, medicine, and other social development. I also identified those areas that need to be examined. These include the current attitude of materialism leading many into engaging in unwholesome practices, misplacement and attribution of failure to destiny and evil spirit, world-affirming theology and mentality shrouded in prosperity message and exaggerated lifestyle, and praying against and demonization of poverty rather than hardwork and integrity. I argued in the paper that religious leaders are guilty in the

way they encumber their followers with religious programmes and activities. Religious leaders only add new programmes without reviewing the old. Thus, members are choked with programmes at the expense of all-round development.

For scholars in religious studies, the field is extensive and ripe for harvest. We can no longer sit down and grope under any kind of pretense. We need to engage in extensive, indepth and innovative research that will address issues of local, national and global concerns for policy-makers of this and future time. For me, being a professor does not offer one a “seat on arrival”. It only offers a challenge for excellent, ground-breaking and transforming research. While rethinking and expanding my earlier work, I hope to engage more on the interconnection of religion and ecology, geography, bio-diversity and other areas. I owe myself a duty for mentoring a generation of scholars in the field at undergraduate and graduate levels. I challenge my colleagues in different areas of Religious Studies on the need for broadmindedness in their scholarly pursuit and theoretical grounding that will enable sound analysis and interpretation.

Government at the state and federal levels need to moderate and check their involvement in religious matters. I have mentioned that religion ought to be treated as a private affair. Government’s sponsorship of such programmes as pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Makkah encourages politicization of religion and government’s offer of unsolicited assistance as a gift during religious festivals is an aberration (see also Gbadegesin 2014/2015). Rather, government ought to organise programmes that will encourage mutual cooperation among the two competing religious traditions in Nigeria. I have examined the laudable objectives behind the formation of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) in 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration which was aimed at addressing devastating consequences of religious conflicts. The composition of its membership and the roles of Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) from the beginning, have weakened NIREC’s management and operations, thus reducing it to a non-functional entity. The body needs to be reconstituted to have membership with focused, guided and meaningful objectives.

With the nature of Nigeria and the sensibility of Nigerians to religious issues, there should be collaborative effort by the government at all

levels and religious institutions with focus on comparative religion and sociology of religion to design diploma programmes in Religious Education for politicians and political leaders. As a way of addressing the spate of misuse of religion and religious manipulation. Departments of Religious Studies, particularly in Nigeria, need to design programmes in religious management which will be offered to ministers of religions, particularly for Muslim and Christian clerics and clergy. Also, I have observed that ignorance of the contents of religious texts has contributed greatly to religious crisis and conflict in the present Nigeria. My argument is that if the Holy Scriptures, the Bible and the Qur'an, are translated and made available to the public, right and proper information in the texts would be disseminated and practitioners will be rightly guided. The government need to support policy-oriented researches in religion, and research outputs should be given thorough debate, discussion and implementation. Intervention of scholars of religious need be sought for proper guidance by the government and other institutions. At a micro level, the formation of Committee on Interfaith or Interreligious Understanding in universities where no scholar of religious studies is a member is an anomaly.

Conversion! Why the quarrel? Over the years, the issue of fanaticism and fundamentalism is heightened by publications and documentaries on testimonies of conversion, particularly from Islam to Christianity, and Christianity to Islam. Why the fight? Religion is a personal matter. Every religion offers or pretends to offer itself the stance of 'no compulsion in religion'. How can we justify this in the face of fights in the name of religion? The great evangelist and Apostle Paul notes that the reason for his passion in winning people is that:

We labour...that we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, *we persuade men...* (II Cor 5:9-11; KJV)

Mr. Vice Chancellor, sir, distinguished audience: The recommendation here is that religious people should engage in persuasion and not force! Religious practitioners and leaders, and their religions are defined by

their lifestyle and relationship with fellow human beings. A bad Christian or a bad Muslim defines what his or her religion is. News reporters and commentators have to understand the tenets and practice of religion so that such will not inflame religious crisis and conflicts. In all, the meaning and purpose of human existence, all the Holy Scriptures affirm, are directed towards eternity and the quality of our life here. Making sense of existence requires that the sacred in our faces, thoughts and actions gear towards our service to humanity. Mother Teresa of Calcutta enjoins us:

Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.

Acknowledgments/Appreciation

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, distinguished audience, I am a debtor to several people and institutions that have been ordered into the journey of my life. I lack the virile eloquence to express my appreciation to all of them, both friends and foes, who have shaped my life in so many powerful and decisive ways. The loving memory of my father, Michael Ajayi Ajao Ògúngbilé who left the terrestrial world when I was only six years old reverberates in my soul. My mother of over 100 years, Felicia Oyebimpe Anike Ògúngbilé present here; her love of motherhood and daily prayers continue to sustain me. I appreciate my elder brother, a father-indeed, Samson Olusegun Akanmu Ògúngbilé who sacrificed to give me education, and his wife, Victoria Adeogun Ògúngbilé who supported his aspiration for us. I acknowledge my aunt, Late Mrs. Abimbola Malomo who fetched me from the hopeless state; I thank my immediate family members for their love and prayers.

I thank my twin-friend and his wife, Isaac Ademola Adebisi and Aderemi Adebisi whose life of forthrightness and boldness influences mine. I am eternally grateful to my all my teachers who have been involved in my formal and informal training to be who I am today. I appreciate Late Pastor & Mrs. Joseph Fasunle-Brown and Pastor Isaiah Oluwakayode Anifowose & Late Mrs Olanike Anifowose for playing crucial role in my life while at Harvard. I am eternally grateful for the immense spiritual impact of the Christ's Trumpeters' Church on me. I

am thankful to Pastor (Dr) Samuel Odunlami Orioke & Pastor (Mrs) Oladunni Orioke and the entire Christ Way Church including the Abundant Life Choir, for the love, care and joy we have continued to share.

I appreciate the comradeship of colleagues, administrative staff members and wonderful students in the Department of Religious Studies. Special recognition goes to the retired Professor Andrew Olusegun Igenozu who invited me to apply to the Department and Professor Simon Godknows Azuwo Onibere for playing a crucial role in my life; my teachers, Professors David Omoleke Olayiwola and Elisha Oladele Babalola for their impact on my academic life; and my wonderful Secretary, Mrs. Abigael Oluremi Olagunju for her administrative ingenuity and godly counsels to staff and students. I appreciate my research collaborators and colleagues in Obafemi Awolowo University and other institutions at home and abroad.

I am also greatly indebted to the following people for contributing to the success of this lecture: Dr. (Mrs.) Taiwo Soneye, Dr. Kehinde Ayoola, Pastor Olusegun Hunsu, Dr. (Mrs.) Folasade Hunsu, Dr. Olusegun Oladosu, Dr. Olujide Gbadegesin, Pastor (Dr.) Olufemi Oladepo Popoola, Mrs. Funmi Oluwaloni Popoola and Dr. Olubunmi Bernard.

Special mention and recognition are due to my teacher and mentor, Professor Jacob Kehinde Obafemi Olupona and his wife, Mrs. Josephine Modupe Olupona who adopted me as their son. Professor Olupona's relationship extends beyond the bounds of academics. That he inspired and provided me guidance and mentorship is divine.

At the institutional level, I am grateful to the Obafemi Awolowo University for offering me opportunities at different times to achieve this great feat that culminated into presenting an inaugural lecture. Immense gratitude to the Harvard University and Harvard University W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research for the two-year fellowship that provided me unique privilege to use the available facilities for productive research output.

Today is a great day in my life due to the immense support I received at the home front from the wife of my youth, the one who bears the burdens and pains of a productive and engaged scholar, the one who offers timely

support, my one and only Margaret Olusola Abeni Ògúngbilé. May we live long to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

Finally, Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, my appreciation goes to my maker, the Almighty God, the designer of my destiny, who gave my formless life a shape, who brought hope to my hopeless state. My standing here today is a testimony of what the Almighty can do in a human's life. He is the One who could truly bring meaning into meaningless lives and situations. Mine is a testimony that God still lives and dwells in whoever allows Him and surrenders to Him. At about 15 years when I surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, He took over my entire life and He made sense of my existence which makes my life to be meaningful.

While I thank all of you, my audience for listening to my story, I conclude this lecture to express my gratitude with the lyrics authored by Carl Gustaf Boberg in 1885:

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy pow'r throughout the universe display

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sing my soul, my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Yoruba Festivals across the Nigerian States

S/N	Festival	State	People(s)
1	Aba	Edo	Igarra in Akoko-Edo
2	Adamuorisa/Eyo	Lagos	Lagos
3	Aeregbe	Ondo	Oba Ile
4	Agbeleku	Osun	Erin-Ijesa
5	Agemo	Ogun	Ijebu
6	Alaguso		Ijara-Isin
7	Amomo	Ekiti	Ise-Ekiti
8	Are Egungun	Ekiti	Ikere-Ekiti
9	Awon	Kwara	Shao
10	Ebekun	Osun	Iresi
11	Edi	Osun	Ile-Ife, Ipetumodu
12	Egungun	Ogun	Igan-Alade in Yewa North, Ayetoro, Abeokuta
		Ondo	Ese-Akoko: (Gudugbe), Ado-Odo
		Ekiti	Efon-Alaaye: (Alagbo)
		Osun	Ilesa: (Gbogoru, Lagboje of Risawe), Igbajo, Osogbo (38 compounds)
		Oyo	Ibadan: (Oloolu)
		Oyo	Oyo: (Melemuku Arinadegbo Akala)
13	Eje	Ondo	Irele in Ikale
14	Ejialuoroke	Ekiti	Ilomo Qrt of Ilupeju-Ekiti
15	Ela	Ogun	Ijebu-Ife
16	Ere Esie	Kogi	Esie
17	Gelede	Ogun, Oyo	Egbado Ketu, Sabe, Ohori Egbedo Anago & Awori. Yoruba, Benin Republic, Togo, Ijio in Oyo.
18	Idio	Osun	Ile-Ife
19	Ifa/Orunmila	Osun	Osogbo
20	Igogo	Ondo	Owo
21	Imole	Ondo	Oka-Akoko
22	Imuko	Ondo	Ondo
23	Irele & Akinorun	Osun	Ikirun, Ada
24	Mogunsoke	Ekiti	Ilupeju-Ekiti
25	Obalogun	Osun	Ilesa, Iloko-Ijesa
26	Obataala	Osun	Ile-ife
27	Obitun	Ondo	Ondo
28	Odun Oba	Ondo	Ondo
29	Ofosi & Imole	Kwara,	Okunland

		Kogi	
30	Ogun	Ekiti	Ero
		Ogun	Ado-Odo
		Ondo	Ondo
		Osun	Ilesa, Ipole, Igbaye
31	Oke	Osun	Iragbiji
32	Ojude Oba	Ogun	Ijebu-Ode
33	Oke'badan	Oyo	Ibadan
34	Okosi	Ogun	Makun-Omi, Ijebu
35	Okota	Ondo	Arigidi Akoko
36	Olobe	Ekiti	Ikoro-Ekiti
37	Olofin	Osun	Ikeji Ile
38	Olojo	Osun	Ile-Ife
39	Olokun	Ekiti	Iyin-Ekiti
40	Olomolu	Ogun	Egba
41	Olooku	Osun	Okuku
42	Olosunta	Ekiti	Ikere-Ekiti
43	Olua	Ondo State	Igbara-Oke
44	Olumo	Ogun	Abeokuta
45	Oluweri	Lagos	Awori people
46	OPA Oodun	Ekiti State	Iyin Ekiti
47	Ore	Ondo State	Ode-Irele
48	Ori Oke	Osun	Iragbiji
49	Orisa-Oko	Osun	Osogbo
50	Osaami	Ondo	Iromi-Ipesi Akoko
51	Osun	Osun	Osogbo, Ipanda
52	Owari	Osun	Ilesa, Ipole
53	Oya	Oyo	Oyo
54	Sàngó	Osun	Ede, Iragbiji, Osogbo
		Oyo	Oyo
55	Udiroko	Ekiti	Ado-Ekiti

Appendix II: List of Songs Collected from Òsun, Ifá, Sàngó and Ògún Festivals (1993-2003)

Songs (first line)	English Translation (first line)	Ritual Context	Theme/ Sub-themes
A o fi' Búsanyin s'apata	We shall make 'Búsanyin our shield	Òsun	M/p
A see se tun se	We shall continue to celebrate	Sàngó	R/c
Adùnní l'a ba wa'ye	We live in the time of Adùnní	Òsun	ID/s
Akirun k'ina	The ardent fanatical Muslim	Òsun	ID/r
Alakori ni mo tun n lo	The senseless mocks that I'm going again	Òsun	ID/l,r
Alalamu, Òsun n be lehin re	Alamu, Òsun is behind you	Òsun	ID/p
Alawoye, ba n w'omo mi	Care for my children, the successful nurse	Òsun	R/pt
Arira, fi'le mi bun mi	Arira (Sàngó) spare my home	Ifá	R/pt
Aso n be nibi	There is plenty of cloths here	Òsun	ID/l
Aya Awo	Wives of the Babaláwo	Ifá	ID/s
Ayun-un re, abo o re	Go and return in peace	Òsun	ID/pt
B'e e le wa, awa o le lo	If you drive us away, we shall refuse to go	Òsun	ID/s
B'egbe omi wu yin, e wa	If you love our (Òsun) company, come and join us	Òsun	ID/s
B'eje ba'le, ibi a d'ero	When blood touches the ground, calamity terminates	Ifá	R
B'ina f'aju k'odo	If fire comes in contact with water	Òsun	R/p
B'o d'ajodun ka pe'se	We'll come back again next year to celebrate	Ifá	R/pr
B'o o ba lo, o o mo bo o	As you go, you'll return safely	Òsun	R/pr
B'o o l'ale n be	If you have a concubine among them	Ògún	ID/l
Baba Onirungbon	The Long-bearded Man	Òsun	ID/r
Baba yin l'o so wa d'imole	Your father made us Muslim	Òsun	ID/r
Dokodoko l'a n ba nibi ole	It's only the promiscuous that steals	Ògún	ID/l
E ba mi pe 'Yalode wa	Help me to invite Iyalode	Òsun	ID/pr
E j'omo yin o wa o.	Permit your children to come	Òsun	R/p
E j'onifa o bo'fa	Let Ifá devotees sacrifice to Ifá	Òsun	ID/c
E k'Oore Yèyé o	Hail, Gracious Mother	Òsun	ID/s
E ma sohun ti o to sibi a wa	Never engage in obnoxious practice in our company	Ògún	ID/s
E ro'fo fun won je	Prepare (hypnotising) vegetables for them	Òsun	M.R/p

E so fun wole-wole	Warn the native health workers	Ifá	M/s
E yaa ka r'odo, e gb'omo	Come to (Òsun) river to be given children	Ifá	R/p
Ebi 'o le p'oko eleran	A husband of a meat seller can never go hungry	Ògún	ID/g, s
Ebi omo n pa mi	I hunger for children	Òsun	R/pr
Efo 'yanrin l'Òsun fi n se 'segun	Òsun uses <i>yanrin</i> vegetables to win victory	Òsun	M.R/p
Egbe o jare, Egbe joojoo jere	Company members, please join in this dance	Òsun	ID/s
Egbe olowo l'egbe omi	The company of (Òsun) water devotees is a rich one	Òsun	ID/s
Eni ni o ma r'odo	Whoever will obstruct you from going to (Òsun) river	Òsun	ID/pt
Eni t'o ba le b'iru awa	Whoever could give birth to our likes	Òsun	ID/i
Eran n pa, eje n se bala	As the animal is sacrificed, its blood oozes	Ifá	R/p
Eye o, kabi a roro oro	Celebrations! Where is the next one?	Òsun	R/s
Eyi ye wa na	This occasion is admirable	Òsun	ID/s
F'awon de ko le	Tie it (the animal) well with rope	Ifá	R/p
F'omo kari egbe	Grant children to every member	Òsun	R/pt
Gbee ko mi, Olomo Ajifilupe	Give me children, you the giver of children, the one who is always praised with heavy drumming at the dawn	Òsun	R/pt
Ifá gb'ebun lowo wa	Ifá has accepted our sacrifice	Ifá	R/pt
Ijo n o fi gb'oso	I shall dance to receive my ornament	Òsun	R/pt
Ijo omo l'a n jo	We dance to be given children	Sàngó	R/pt
Ika, dakun, ma b'odo je	The wicked, please do not desecrate the river	Òsun	R/pt
Iku ko maa lo	Death, vanish!	Ifá	R/pt
Ise iya mi mo n se	I am engaged in my mother's business	Ògún	ID/s
Ise Ògún la n se	We are engaged in Ògún's profession	Ògún	ID/s
Iwo nikan, maa yin'mu	You, continue to grimace	Òsun	ID/l
Iya mi mo ni k'o se	My mother (Òsun), sanction the request	Òsun	R/pt
Iya n'Jesa gbere ko mi	Mother of Ijèsà, bring fortunes to me	Òsun	R.ID/pt
Iya to bi Kenferi l'o bi Lemoomu	The same mother gave birth to both the gentile and the Muslim cleric	Òsun	ID/r, l
Jaginni ja, ki n b'olomo pe	Hurrah! Let me be in the company of mothers	Òsun	R/pt

Je n j'olomo o, Òsun ba n se	Let me be a mother; Òsun do it for me	Òsun	R/pt
Kabiyèsi n 'o r'oko fin	Kabiyesi, I do not deride our husband	Òsun	ID/š, c, p
Ko lee mo dun ju'ra won lo	This (festival) cannot but surpass the others	Òsun	ID/s,c
Ko ni I j'àsemo	This (festival) shall not be the last	Òsun	ID/pt
Laelae se b'Ògún ti wa	Ògún has existed from the beginning	Ògún	ID/p
Lawurubututu, Omo waa jo	Great dance, children come and dance	Òsun	R/pt
Lekeleke l'awa	Our company is of Egret (pure)	Òsun	ID/s
Ma f'edo ha l'enu	I shall stuff liver into his/her mouth	Ògún	ID/g,s
Ma r'odo Oluode	I shall go to Oluode	Ògún	ID/p,s
Me le pon'ku	I cannot back a dead child	Òsun	R/pt
Me lee tiju omo	I would not be ashamed of children	Òsun	R/pt
Mejeeji l'a o maa se	We shall continue to practise the two	Òsun	ID/c
Mo b'aju w'orere o	I behold, see in front of me	Òsun	R/p
Mo ba 'Jesa soro	I celebrate with the Ijèsà (woman)	Òsun	ID.M/I
Mo j'ede, k'omo de	I eat crayfish so that children would come	Òsun	R/pt
Mo ko leta s'Òsun o	I write a letter to Òsun	Òsun	R/pt
Momo je n wo lule	Please do not let me fall	Sàngó	R/pt
Mo rababa n'tori omo	I flutter for the sake of children	Òsun	R/pt
Mo ri'na ribi emi ti wa	I'm aware of where I come from	Òsun	ID/s
Mo sa di Yèyé	I take refuge in Mother (Òsun)	Òsun	R/p,pt
Mo te l'olomo lo	I follow the company of mothers	Òsun	ID/I
Mo tori egusi	Because of Egusi soup	Ifá	ID/I,s
Moja Moja	Moja Moja (Sango priests)	Ifá	ID/pl
N o maa pee e	I shall continue to call her	Òsun	ID/p
Nibo lo ni n gbe Sàngó mi lo?	Where do you want me to carry my Sàngó?	Sàngó	ID/c,l,r
Nibo lo ni n gbe Yèyé mi lo	Where do you say I should carry my Mother (Òsun)	Òsun	ID/c,l,r
Nile Akeredewe	We are from Akeredewe compound	Òsun	ID/pl
O ma rora rin	Walk carefully and majestically	Òsun	R/s
Obedu omo Ayiloba	Obedu, children of Ayilola	Òsun	ID/pl
Ofun ni mo ro, ala ni mo wo	I am wearing a pure garment	Òsun	ID/s
Ogáálá p'era n je	Ogáálá has qualified to be given the goat	Òsun	R/pr
Ògún lo da'ko onilu	Ògún circumcised the drummer	Ògún	ID/I
Ògún lo gb'oko so obo	Ògún inserted penis into vagina	Ògún	ID/s
Ògún m'era n ki n mu	Ògún, give me meat to sell in the	Ògún	R/pt

re'ja	market		
Ògún to ni t'emi	Ògún is sufficient for me	Ògún	ID/s
Ògún, ma fi wa s'eran je	Ògún, do not consume us	Ògún	ID/pt
Ògún, mo mo je n bimo ole	Ògún, do not permit me to give birth to a thief	Ògún	ID/s
Ògún, mo mo je n rare omo	Ògún, do not let me suffer for want of children	Ògún	R/pt
Ògún, mo mo je n ri'ja odo	Ògún, let me encounter trouble with the river	Ògún	R/pt
Oke l'eye n fohun	Bird is found at the upper sky	Òsun	ID/p
Oke n'ile 'mole	The abode of the deities is at the top	Òsun	ID/s
Okooko o, Eni ba o wi, o mo gbe f'Osun o	Okooko, deliver to Òsun whoever spurns you	Osun	R/pt
Oku ejo n jowere	The dead snake is only struggling	Osun	R/s
Okun o, Osa o	O Ocean! O Niger (river)	Òsun	R/pt
Oloosa n be ni Meka	Òrìsà devotees are also in Mecca	Òsun	ID/r,c
Oloun j'oran t'emi 'o l'oju	God, let my matter be settled	Òsun	ID/pl
Omi 'o ni I gbe wa lo	River shall not drown us	Òsun	ID/pt
Omi a segun	(Òsun) Water will conquer	Òsun	R/pt
Omi n t'odo o bo	(Òsun) Water is coming from the river	Òsun	R/p
Omo elegbe ni wa	We belong to a company of Egbe	Òsun	ID/g,s
Omo kekere, mo gbo t'oko o	Young ones, I obey my husband	Òsun	ID/c
Omo l'o gbe mi wa	I come because of children	Òsun	R/s,id
Omo Olósun ni wa	We are a company of Òsun devotees	Òsun	ID/s,i
Oni l'a o s'oro eleran	Today is the butchers' celebration	Ògún	ID/l,c
Ori iya re ko ni pa o l'ekún	May your mother not allow you to weep	Òsun	ID/pt
Ori mi o gbe, Oran Òsun	I cannot bear Òsun's trouble	Òsun	ID/s
Ori mi o gbo	My head is not strong enough	Òsun	R/pt
Ori wa sunwon l'Òsun wa	We are fortunate in our Òsun land	Òsun	ID/i
Òrìsàálá, alagbo omo	Òrìsàálá, the possessor of infants' medicinal pot	Oosaala	R/pr
Òròkí l'omo ti n wa	Children come from Òròkí (Osogbo)	Òsun	ID/i
Òsun 'o je gbe wa lo	Òsun (river) will not drown us	Òsun	ID/p,l
Òsun 'o lee parun	Òsun cannot go into extinction	Òsun	ID/c,i
Òsun ba n se!	Òsun, do it for me!	Òsun	R/pt
Òsun l'oba	Òsun is the King (Sovereign)	Òsun	ID/s
Òsun le tente	Òsun is above all the others	Òsun	ID/s

Osun Osogbo f ikoko se'be	Osun Osogbo has prepared soup with pot	Osun	ID/I
Osun Osogbo to fun mi	Osun is enough for me	Osun	R/s
Osun Osogbo, wa a jo	Osun Osogbo, come and dance	Osun	R/pr.i
Osun Osogbo, waa jo o	Osun Osogbo, come and dance	Osun	R/pr,pt
Osun wa lo le se	Only our Osun can do it	Osun	ID/s
Osun yoo p'eni 'o ba ni 'a ku	Osun will kill whoever desires that we die	Osun	R/pt
Osun, ba n damuso soro mi	Osun, rejoice at my matter	Osun	R/pt
Osun, yo mi	Osun, rescue/deliver me	Osun	R/pt
Owoo'de, Ese ide	Hands of brass, Legs of brass	Osun	ID/s,p
Pere l'ewe 'yeye	Iyeye's leaf is ever clear and sharp	Osun	ID/i
Sàngó wa di Sàngó ldera	Our Sàngó is now a Sàngó with simplicity	Sàngó	ID/i,s
Se b'o lo n kirun?	Don't you say you say <i>salat</i> ?	Osun	ID/I,i
Se b'olomo l'o k'aye ja	Only child bearers are successful	Osun	ID/I
Seleru agbo, agbara agbo	Natural potion, torrents of potion	Osun	ID/i,c
Sibi oníde, bàtà oníde	Spoon of brass, shoes of brass	Osun	ID/p,i,s
W'eyin mi wo, se mi l'abiyamo	Look at my back and grant me children	Osun	R/pt
Yèyè, gba mi Elejigboro	Mother, Elejigboro, deliver me	Osun	ID/s
Yoo ba'yalaya won	Their mothers shall be ridiculed	Osun	ID/I,r

Appendix III: Faith-Based Universities Established by Christian and Muslim Groups/Individuals

Name of University	Denomination	Year Founded
Babcock University, Ogun State	Seventh Day Adventist	1999
Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State	The Nigerian Baptist Convention	2001
Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Edo	Church of God Mission	2002
Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State	Living Faith Church	2002
Caritas University, Enugu State	Catholic Church	2004
Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State	Anglican Communion	2005
Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State	Islamic Foundation (AROIF) and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)	2005
Crawford University, Igbesa	Apostolic Faith Mission	2005
Crawford University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti	Apostolic Faith Mission	2005
Crescent University, Abeokuta, Ogun State	Muslim	2005
ECWA Bingham University, New Karu	ECWA Church	2005
Redeemers' University, Ede Osun State	Redeemed Christian Church of God	2005
University of Mkar, Benue State	NKST Church, Dutch Reformed Church/Sudan United Mission of South Africa and North America	2005
Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State	Christ Apostolic Church	2006
Fountain University, Osoyo Osun State	Nasrul-Lahi-L-Fatih Society (NASFAT)	2007
Salem University, Lokoja, Kogi State	Salem International Christian Center	2007
Veritas University Abuja	Catholic Church	2007
Wesley University of Science and Technology, Ondo, Ondo State	Methodist Church	2007
Caleb University, Ikorodu, Lagos	Private	2008
Paul University, Akwa-Anambra	Bishops of the five (5) ecclesiastical Provinces of the Anglican Communion, East of the Niger	2009
Rhema University, Obeama-Asa Rivers State	Living Word Ministries	2009
Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State	Living Faith Church	2011
Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa, Edo State	The Apostolic Church	2011
MacPherson University, Ogun State	Foursquare Gospel Church	2012

Appendix IV: Political Offices within the Federation since October 1960

Date	Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces/President	Chief Of General Staff/ Vice President
October 1, 1960 – January 14, 1966 (1 st Republic)	Nnamidi Azikwe (Christian, South-East)	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Muslim, North)
January 15 – July 29, 1966	T.J.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi (Christian, South-East)	-
July 29, 1966 – July 29, 1975	Yakubu Gowon (Christian, North)	Akinwale Wey (Christian, South-West)
July 29, 1975 – February 13, 1976	Murtala Muhammed (Muslim, North)	Olusegun Obasanjo (Christian, South-West)
February 13, 1976 – October 1, 1979	Olusegun Obasanjo (Christian, South-West)	Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (Muslim, North)
October 1, 1979 – December 31, 1983 (2 nd Republic)	Shehu Shagari (Muslim, North)	Alex Ekwueme (Christian, South-East)
December 31, 1983 – August 27, 1985	Muhammadu Buhari (Muslim, North)	Tunde Idiagbon (Muslim, South-West))
August 27, 1985 – August 26, 1993)	Ibrahim Babangida (Muslim, North)	- Ebitu Ukiwe (Christian, South-East) - Augustus Aikhomu (Christian, South-East)
August 26 – Nov. 17, 1993 (Interim Administration)	Ernest Shonekan (Christian, South-West)	Mustapha Umara (Muslim, North))
Nov. 17, 1993 – June 6, 1998	Sanni Abacha (Muslim, North)	Oladipo Diya (Christian, South-West))
June 6, 1998 – May 29, 1999	Abdusalaam Abubakar (Muslim, North)	Mike Akhigbe (Christian, South-east)
May 29, 1999 – May 29, 2007	Olusegun Obasanjo (Christian, South-west)	- Atiku Abubakar (Muslim, North) - Musa Yar'Adua (Muslim, North)
May 29, 2007- May 29, 2011	Musa Yar'Adua (Muslim, North)	Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (Christian, South-south)
May 29, 2011- May 29, 2015	Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (Christian, South-south)	Nnamadi Sambo (Muslim, North)
May 29, 2015 – date	Muhammad Buhari (Muslim, North)	Yemi Osinbajo (Christian, South-west)