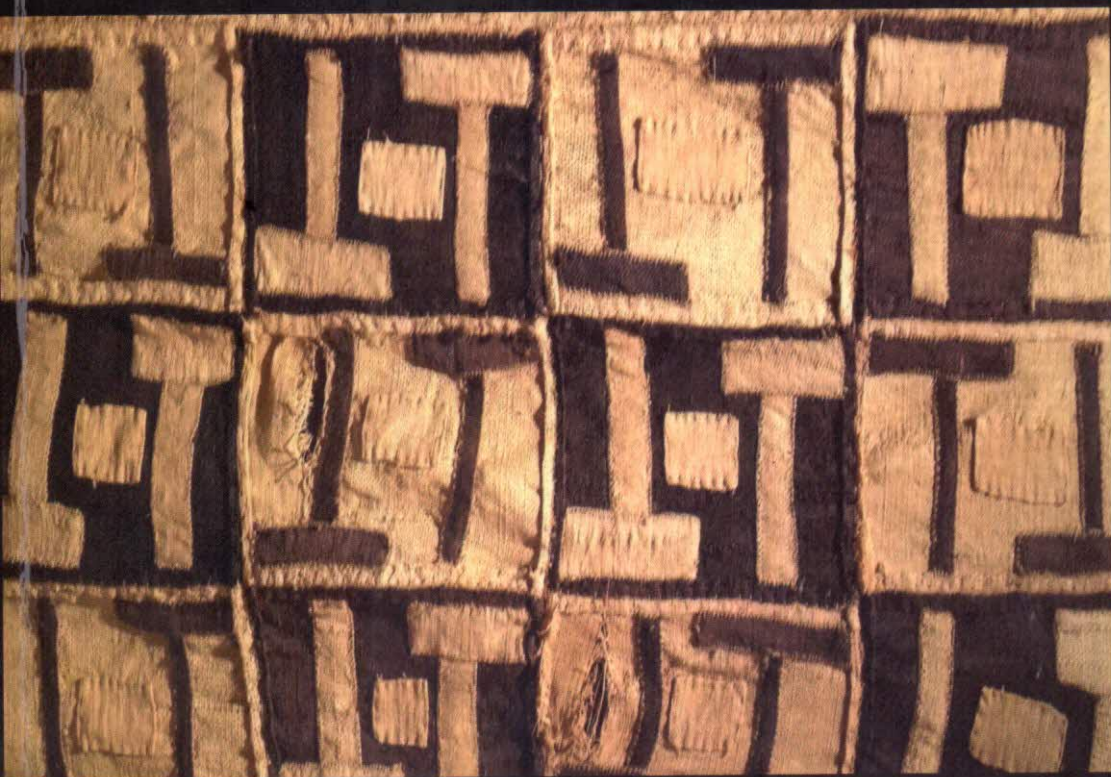


HARNESSING CULTURAL CAPITAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A Pan Africanist Perspective



EDITED BY
Munyaradzi Mawere &
Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye

Publisher

Langaa RPCIG

Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group

P.O. Box 902 Mankon

Bamenda

North West Region

Cameroon

Langaagrp@gmail.com

www.langaa-rpcig.net

Distributed in and outside N. America by African Books Collective

orders@africanbookscollective.com

www.africanbookscollective.com

ISBN:9956-762-50-4

© Munyaradzi Mawere & Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye 2015

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying and recording, or be stored in any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

DISCLAIMER

All views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Langaa RPCIG.

List of Contributors

Munyaradzi Mawere holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Dr Mawere also holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy and B.A (Hons) Degree in Philosophy from the University of Zimbabwe. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Culture and Heritage Studies at Great Zimbabwe University. Before joining this university, Dr Mawere was a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe and at Universidade Pedagógica, Mozambique, where he has also worked in different capacities as a Senior lecturer, Assistant Research Director, Postgraduate Co-ordinator and Associate Professor. He has an outstanding publishing record of more than eighty pieces of work which include more than twenty books and over sixty book chapters and papers in scholarly journals. His research interests include, but not limited to, knowledge studies, environmental conservation, political anthropology, African studies, decoloniality, post-coloniality, African political systems, culture and heritage studies.

Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye is Associate Professor in the Department of Religion and Human Values at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, where he also received his MPhil, BA, and Diploma of Education. Awuah-Nyamekye holds a PhD from the School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science of the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. Awuah-Nyamekye also has a certificate in HIV/AIDS Counselling and Care Giving from the University of Ghana. He is a member of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) and the International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE) Representative for Ghana. His current research interests are focussed on religion and the environment, environmental ethics, religion and development,

Chapter 6

Traditional religion, Sacred Places and Sustainability in Africa:
The Role and Contribution of Sacred Places in

Nigeria.....159

Akiti Glory Alamu

Chapter 7

The Role of Indigenous Religion in Fostering Social Stability
and National Development: Lessons from *Ifá* of

Nigeria..... 179

Hezekiah Olufemi Adeosun

Chapter 8

Intangible Heritage Politics and Sustainability in Africa:
Reflections on the Politics of Language in

Mozambique.....203

Munyaradzi Mawere

Chapter 9

Indigenous knowledge: A Key Factor Towards Africa's
Sustainable Development..... 221

Samuel Anuab-Nyamekye

Chapter 10

Nyaminyami, 'The Tonga River-God': The Place and Role of
the Nyaminyami in the Tonga People's Cosmology and
Environmental Conservation Practices..... 243

Joshua Chikozho, Tapuwa Raymond Mubaya, and Munyaradzi Mawere

Chapter 11

Depiction of Polygamous Marriage in Selected Pre-colonial
Shona Narratives..... 265

Liveson Tatira

Chapter 12

Living a Sustainable Life: African and Old Testament Proverbs
in Dialogue.....279

Kojo Okeyere and Vincent Assanful

Chapter 13

Indigenous Knowledge and Public Education in Africa: A
Search for a Sustainable Education Curriculum.....307

Munyaradzi Mawere

Chapter 14

Cultural Harnessing Among the Tonga of North-western
Zimbabwe: Breaking out of the shell of stereotyping,
reclaiming identity, and fostering sustainable development
through craft.....329

*Joshua Chikozho, Tapuwa Raymond Mubaya, Munyaradzi Mawere and
Matabbeki Mudenda*

- Gyekye, K., 2002. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*, Accra: Sankofa Publishing.
- Hans Kungs *et al.* 1993. *Christianity and World Religions: Path of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York: Orbis Books.
- Hopfe, L. M. and M.R. Woodward, 1998. *Religions of The World*, 7th ed, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Hornby, A.S. 2000. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Idowu, E.B. 1991. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Ibadan: Fountain Publications.
- Idowu, E.B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, Lagos: Longman.
- Imasogie, O. 1985. *African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan: University Press.
- Laurenti, M. 1997. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, New York: Orbis Books.
- Lele, S. 2004. Sustainable Development: A Critical Review, *Ecological Review*, Vol.32, Spring.
- Ogunbodede, E.O. and S.I. Ikotun, 2010. "Environmental Determinism in the Context of Religious Development: The Nigerian Example" in Adam K. Arap Chepkwony and P.M.J. Hess, eds, *Human Views on God: Variety not Monotony; Essays in Honour of Ade P. Dopamu*, Eldoret: Moi University Press.
- Oyeshola, D, O.P. 2008. *Sustainable Development: Issues and Challenges for Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nig. Ltd.
- Pearce, D.W. and J.J. Watford, 1993. *World Without End*, Washington DC: Oxford University Press.
- Schaeffer, F.A. 1972. *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Weber, M. 1958. *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Trans by Talcott Parsons), New York: Charles Scribner's Books.

Chapter 7

The Role of Indigenous Religion in Fostering Social Stability and National Development: Lessons from *Ifá* of Nigeria

Hezekiah Olufemi Adeosun

Introduction

Nigeria, today, is faced with a plethora of challenges among which is religious rivalry between the two imported religious faiths, namely Christianity and Islam. This ugly development affects the entire aspects of her endeavours, namely; economic, social, political and environmental. This chapter aims at examining the relevance of *Ifá*, a Yorùbá indigenous religion, towards addressing a mirage of problems confronting the Nation as a result of unhealthy rivalry between the two foreign religions. The basic traditional worship of the Yoruba is *Ifá*, it is known as the Yorùbá god of wisdom. *Ifá* philosophy is one of the oldest forms of knowledge revealed to mankind. It encompasses the revelations, way of life and religion taught by *Ọ̀rúnmilá*, who was the Creator's own witness when the creation of all other organic and inorganic substances was undertaken. The method adopted in this chapter is descriptive, using some verses in *Ifá* corpus in Yemí Èlẹ̀bùibon's *Ifá: The Custodian of Destiny*, as data to substantiate claims on the effectiveness of indigenous religion in building a virile Nation. The chapter reveals among other things that indigenous religious system, as exemplified in *Ifá*, enhances social stability and national development. It, therefore, notes that unless the people of Nigeria go back to their root and practice the ethos of their indigenous religion as prescribed, peace and stability may continue to elude the society.

Ifá is a principal divinity in Yorùbá religion, culture and belief systems. It is the repository of all wisdom and the controller of life and death. This is reflected in his description as *Akéré finú sògbòn, akò ẹran tí sòkú aḷẹ àná dààyẹ. Èlà Ìsòdè, tí kómò lóràn bí iyèkan ẹni* (The tiny embodiment of wisdom, the wizard who turns the corpse of yesternight into a living being. The Èlà of Ìsòdè, one who teaches one wisely like one's kinsman) (Ẹḷẹbuibon, 2004: vii). This description foregrounds the greatness of this all-important key divinity among the Yorùbá. He is the mouth-piece of all other divinities. *Ifá* represents the repository of all information concerning the language, culture and belief system of the Yorùbá as a people. According to Ẹḷẹbuibon (2004: vii), the scope of *Ifá* literary corpus is so encompassing that it entails details about all the socio-cultural peculiarities of the Yorùbá people. Yorùbá thought-system, as remarked by Akintola (1999: 1), is evidently a product of the culture and natural environment of the ethnic group identified as Yorùbá. It is not disputable, as far as Yorùbá thought-system is concerned, to say or admit that the wisdom or philosophy of *Ọrúnmìlà*, the Yorùbá god of wisdom, is the all-embracing fountain from which Yorùbá thought-system derives. *Ifá* is the living foundation of Yorùbá culture. Abimbolá (1976: 3) declares that *Ifá* and *Ọrúnmìlà* refer to the same deity. While the name *Ọrúnmìlà* refers exclusively to the deity himself, the name *Ifá* refers both to the deity and his divination system. This position is corroborated by Bascom (1941) as quoted in Abimbolá (1976: 3) when he says "the word *Ifá* is used to mean both the system of divination and the deity who controls it; and this deity is known also as *Ọrúnmìlà*". Ajayi (2002: 2) explains that the Yorùbá oral tradition emphasises the part played by *Ọrúnmìlà* in guiding the destiny of man and *Ọrìṣà*. One reason given for his intimate knowledge of matters affecting man's destiny is that *Ọrúnmìlà* is present when man is being created by God. Therefore, he knows all the secrets of human beings and the *Ọrìṣà* and thus he can reveal what has been destined for and if the destiny is an unfortunate

one, *Ọrúnmìlà* can prescribe remedies to avert the misfortune. This is why *Ọrúnmìlà* is described as *Ẹḷẹrì-ìpín* (the witness of destiny or lot), *Òbirikítí A-pa-qjò-ikú-dà* (the great one who alters the date of death). Àṣawálé (2011: 3) notes that the basic traditional worship of Yorùbá people in general is *Ifá*, and that all the other divinities as *Ṣàngó*, *Ògún*, *Oṣun* and others, still pay abeyance to *Ifá* and consult him on matters of importance. Abimbolá (1976: 9) posits that "*Ifá* is the only active mouthpiece of Yorùbá traditional religion taken as a whole. As a mouthpiece, *Ifá* serves to popularise the other Yorùbá gods, he serves to immortalise them. With his great wisdom, knowledge and understanding, *Ifá* co-ordinates the work of all the gods in the Yorùbá pantheon". He serves as a 'middleman' between the other gods and the people on one hand, and between the people and their ancestors on the other hand. He is the mouthpiece and the public relations officer of all the other Yorùbá gods. Akintola (1999: 2) is of the opinion that "the revealed wisdom or *Ifá* philosophy was first revealed by God, as Supreme Creative Energy, to *Ọrúnmìlà*, who in turn reveals it to mankind, through his priests on earth, whom he had initiated into the secrets of this primordial and all-embracing wisdom, or body of knowledge". Akintola submits that *Ifá* as oral literature of the Yorùbá, falls into the category of "Wisdom Literature," a category into which fall certain canonical books of the Hebrews as the Biblical Books of Samuel, Kings, Proverbs, some of the Psalms, Job and Ecclesiastes; and other non-canonical books. Abimbolá (1976: vi) also asserts that *Ifá* literature is perhaps the most accomplished product of Yorùbá traditional culture. "*Ifá* is indeed the Yorùbá traditional body of knowledge embodying the deep wisdom of our forebears. It is a complete system by itself in which all the Yorùbá consider valuable to them throughout the whole range of their experience from the very ancient times can always be found". Abimbolá notes further that no one who has studied *Ifá* in detail will fail to see the fact that the peoples of traditional African societies were not as

ignorant as we have often been told. He posits that the peoples of traditional Africa were largely illiterates, but they were no fools. Among them were elite classes such as the *babaláwo* who have preserved all the ingredients of their own culture in an almost completely oral form but in such a way that knowledge is codified and transmitted orally with care, patience and perseverance. Dopamu (1988: 63) posits that “*Ifá* has no aversion to members of other faiths, its main pre-occupation is the unity and peaceful co-existence of all people in the society. This inter-faith solidarity is further seen in the fact that even when the other religions over-ried the patience of Afrel by destroying what was sacred to it, it still allowed converts to be made within its fold and it encouraged the establishment of mosques and churches within its environment”. Thus, this chapter examines the role of *Ifá* religion among the Yorùbá of Nigeria in fostering social stability and national development.

Origin of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria

Before the advent of Islam and Christianity into the various indigenous communities that eventually became Nigeria, the various peoples had evolved what is generally referred to as African Religion (AFREL). The belief systems that constitute African religion, which emerged from intimate blending of existential realities in different culture areas, were relevant to the lifestyles and experiences of the inhabitants as an instrument for coping with the complexities of human existence in a largely agrarian setting. Essential to African religion is belief in the existence of a Supreme Being or Force, a pantheon of divinities, sacrifices, rituals and festivities for propitiating the supernatural beings. Anele (2013: 1) declares that in virtually every community, each version of (AFREL) has no recognised founder; but there is a priestly class with the responsibility of ensuring that members of the community lived according to stipulations of the religion in each area. The fundamental doctrines and injunctions of (AFREL) were not

embodied in a purported revealed holy book. Rather, they exist as a living and lived reality in the minds and hearts of indigenous peoples, being an integral component of their culture, customs, and lifestyles. The degree of tolerance and pragmatism in African religion is remarkable.

As time went on, widespread acceptance of Islam and Christianity caused marginalisation of indigenous religions, to the extent that the threat of extinction in future is a real possibility. African religions have been variously described as animism, fetishism, juju, or paganism. Thus, the success of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, could only have been possible because a fertile ground of religious faith was already in place. One of the most significant events in the history of Nigeria was the spread of Islam. Balogun (2000: 211) has stated that Islam could have already reached Kanem-Bornu (now spelt Borno) during the early decades of the religion in the 7th Century AD. However, the more acceptable date of the coming of Islam in Kanem-Borno was in the 11th Century when Humai, son of Selemma, is said to have reigned as the first Muslim ruler in Kanem-Borno. The Kanem-Borno Empire, as is well known, includes some parts of the present day Northern Nigeria. By the middle of 17th Century, some Islamic influence had reached Nupe in the present day Niger State of Nigeria. From Nupe, some members of Islamic cleric, known as *ulama* moved further south into Yorùbáland about 17th and 18th Centuries (Balogun, 2000: 218-219). It is also claimed that apart from Nupe Islamic influence into Yorubaland also came directly from Borno. By the middle of the 17th Century, a Muslim community had existed in Oyo. By 18th Century, Islam had spread not only to Oyo but also to Ìgbóho, Kìsì, Ìsẹyin, Ìkòyí, Ògbómọṣọ, Òwu, Ìjana, Kétu and Baagri (Balogun, 2000: 218-219). Balogun explains further that before the end of 18th Century, the Yorùbá were not only receiving the Islamic religion, they were also exporting it to Dahomey. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Yorùbá converts to Islam at the time were still in minority vis-à-vis the

followers of traditional religion. That was the situation up to the end of the 18th Century, when a group of Muslim scholars led by Uthman dan Fodio led the famous jihad in order to reform Islamic practices in Northern Nigeria.

The first attempt to bring Christianity to Nigeria dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries. As at that period, Portugal had established trade relations with the Kingdoms of Benin and Warri. At the request of the Oba of Benin, Portuguese Catholic Missionaries came to evangelise in the Kingdom. The first batch of the missionaries arrived Benin in August 1515 but the Oba was away, fighting the Idah War (Ajayi, 1965: 2). A year later, the Oba returned and allowed one of his sons and others of his chiefs to be baptised and taught to read. However, the Oba was more preoccupied with wars than learning about Christianity. The efforts of the Spanish missionaries who had come after the failure of the Portuguese also were ineffective. The strategy of the missionaries to concentrate on converting the Oba so that his subjects would follow suit could not work. This was also the same story with regard to Warri within the same period. In the latter case, however, the Olu allowed his crown prince to be baptised and educated. The prince later sent one of his sons to Portugal to be educated and he later returned with a Portuguese wife (Ajayi, 1965: 3). This development could have led the foundation of Christianity in Warri and perhaps to other parts of Nigeria, but it did not. The evangelisation was confined to the palace of the Olu. Despite the existence of Christian presence in Warri for one and half centuries, 1570-1733, Christianity was later completely overwhelmed by African religion. Thus, by the beginning of the 19th Century there were only a few relics to show that Christianity ever came to Warri. These included "the huge cross in the centre of the old Warri and a few church decorations surviving among the traditional shrines" (Ajayi, 1965: 3). The success story of the coming of Christianity to Nigeria, according to Ajayi (1965: 31-32), was the second phase in the 19th Century and this time around the port of call was

Badagry. In this place, the Methodist missionaries led the way. Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman was the leading Methodist missionary. He arrived in Badagry in September 1842 and was followed shortly by Henry Townsend, a lay missionary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Four years later, Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries also arrived to join in the evangelisation of Nigeria (Ajayi, 1965: 31-32).

Ajayi (1965: 25-52) notes that for the history of the origin of Christianity in Nigeria, the role played by the freed African slaves takes a central place. The liberated African slaves, many of whom were from Nigeria, were brought back to Sierra Leone where they were educated and converted to Christianity. Many of them later returned to Nigeria and became pioneer Christians and missionaries in Nigeria. A leading figure among the liberated African missionaries was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther of the Anglican Church. He was the first African Anglican Bishop, born in Oshogun, in the present day Oyo State. He was captured and sold to the Portuguese slave traders. However, before they sailed, the ship was captured by the British Navy and Ajayi was taken to Freetown, Sierra Leone. Having been freed in Freetown, the CMS took him and educated and he served as interpreter to the Niger Expedition of 1841. He was ordained in England in 1843 and sent back to Sierra Leone to prepare for a mission to Abeokuta by beginning to conduct services in Yoruba language. In 1846, Bishop Ajayi, accompanied by Rev. Henry Townsend and others worked to consolidate the CMS mission in Abeokuta. Then in 1857 Rev. Ajayi led the CMS Niger Mission to Onitsha and environs to evangelise the area (Ajayi, 1965: 33). Since then, Christianity has begun to spread throughout Nigeria. The next section in this chapter will review briefly the history of religious crises in Nigeria, basically between Islam and Christianity.

A brief review of religious crises in Nigeria

Islam and Christianity are the proselytizing religions which had been imported to Nigeria and at the same time struggle for membership. Thus, this membership drive at times lends credence to mutual suspicion. Nigeria is a pluralistic and multi-religious nation without any particular religion being a state religion. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is a country of diverse cultures, traditions and faiths. But of all the diverse elements, religion has proved to be most sensitive and the one that has often led to conflicts and divisions (Dopamu cited in Alamu, 2010: 98-99). Going by the available statistics, Alamu (2010: 103) enumerates the cases of religious violence bound in Nigeria. These include the tension created over Shariah (Islamic Law) issue in the late 1970, the religious (Maitatsine) disturbance in Kano (1977; 1979; 1980) and the various crises in Zaria (1981), Maiduguri (1982), Kaduna (1982), Kano (1982) and Yola and Gombe (1984). Religious disturbances in Saki (Oyo State) and Ilorin (Easter 1986), the OIC controversy (1986), the carnage in parts of Kaduna and Kano (1987), the 1988 religious crisis in Kaduna Polytechnic are gory instances. Other examples are the Bauchi religious crisis of (1991), Kaduna crisis of 2001, Jos religious crisis of 2001. The religious violence sparked off by a purported blasphemous article on Prophet Mohammed (PBOH) brought violent bloodletting in Kano and Abuja in 2003. Also, the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in faraway United States of America was marked in Kano with arson and bestial killings of non-indigenes, mostly Christians from other parts of Nigeria. The University of Ibadan students saga of 1996, Lagos fiasco of 1998, Owerri uprising of 1996, Sagamu crisis of 2001, Aba reprisal killings of 2001 and Boko Haram insurgency in some parts of Northern States of Nigeria since 2009 till date resulted to the most commanding bloodbath in recent times.

On the contrary, however, indigenous religion is not a proselytising religion nor does it guzzle for members, rather it

is tolerant, it accommodates and remains autochthonous. It is in this light that this chapter looks into ways *Ifá*, a Yorùbá indigenous religion, addresses societal problems through its doctrines and teachings.

Towards a peaceful society: Lessons from *Ifá*

The history of *Ifá* religion among the Yorùbá is as old as the ethnic group herself. It is a religion handed down orally from one generation to another. It is the Yorùbá god of wisdom. It is this great wisdom which gives him a high position among the other Yorùbá gods. This section examines the various teachings of *Ifá* in promoting peace and harmony in the society. The data used in this chapter were carefully selected from the compilation of *Ifá* verses in Yemí Èlẹ̀bùibon's *Ifá: The Custodian of Destiny* (2004). Issues discussed in the analysis include hospitality/kindness, avoidance of wickedness, honesty /integrity, impartiality, and tolerance.

***Hospitality/kindness:** One of the virtues appreciated by the Yorùbá in identifying one as a good person is hospitality/kindness. This virtue is expressed in *Ògúndádi* corpus which reads:

Agbọ̀n-Ọ̀ngbọ̀n-Ọ̀n ọ̀júgún

A dífá fún Ọ̀já tí ẹ̀ Yẹ̀yẹ̀ Àró

Bí ọ̀ bá sí Ọ̀já tí ẹ̀ Yẹ̀yẹ̀ Àró

Bí a ọ̀ bá tí ẹ̀ apá Àró ẹ̀bọ̀ nìyí o

Ọ̀já; inú rere dùn ún ẹ̀, Ọ̀já

Bí ọ̀ bá sí ọ̀lọja tí ẹ̀ Yẹ̀yẹ̀ Àró

Bí a ọ̀ bá tí ẹ̀ itan Àró ẹ̀bọ̀ nìyí o

Ọ̀já; inú rere dùn ún ẹ̀, Ọ̀já.

(The straight-forwardness legs

Dilapidated walls are rugged at the back

Ifá divination was performed for Ọ̀já (sash) the mother of Àró

This is how Àró's arm would have been offered as sacrifice
Ojá; it is always good to show kindness

But for Ojá the mother of Àró

This is how Àró's thigh would have been offered as
sacrifice; Ojá) (p. 126).

This excerpt explains a time when *Orúnmilà* embarked on divination trip to a town and was accommodated in a chief's house called *Àró*. All the household of *Àró* did not recognise *Orúnmilà* including *Àró* himself. As a result, he was merely offered accommodation, no food nor water was given to him. This they regretted and paid dearly for later. *Orúnmilà* had been in the town for upwards of five years when a particular incident happened. The eldest prince of the king's town was sick. All the traditional physicians in the town had tried their best in vain. At last, the prince died. They were then confronted with the problem of how to resurrect him. It was this time that someone suggested the name of a guest in *Àró*'s house. He said he suspected that the man was a strong man in terms of herbal medicine. Immediately, *Orúnmilà* was summoned to the palace. When he got there, he consulted his *Ifá* and rehearsed the corpus that emerged. Moreover, *Orúnmilà* told the king that if he needed his prince alive he should offer the *Àró* of the town as sacrifice. Following *Orúnmilà*'s explanation and advice, the king thanked him and promised to send for him later when the prescribed items were ready. Immediately after *Orúnmilà*'s departure, the king sent his emissaries to the town to look for *Àró* wherever he could be got and be brought to the palace. The directive was carried out with dispatch. *Àró* was picked and was tied-up ready to be offered as sacrifice.

However, someone had gone secretly to inform *Àró*'s mother of the death looming over her son. Immediately she heard of this, the woman dressed up and made for *Orúnmilà*'s apartment. She appealed to him passionately. Already, she had been briefed about ill-treatment meted to *Orúnmilà* in the household of *Àró* all this while. She appealed that *Àró* be

forgiven on her behalf. When *Orúnmilà* could no longer contain the weight and intensity of *Àró*'s mother appeal, he told her to return home; promising that her son would escape death. A little while after, a servant from the palace came to inform *Orúnmilà* that his attention was needed in the palace and that the materials for the sacrifice had been got ready. When *Orúnmilà* got there, he asked them to bring out the sacrificial items. *Àró* was therefore brought. Immediately *Orúnmilà* saw *Àró*, he denied he ever told them to look for him. He said it was *Àróko* (he goat) that was mentioned. Those that were there in the first instance suspected that it might be a misconstrued information on their own part. They, therefore, provided a goat as substitute instantly, the prince got up hail and hearty after the offer of sacrifice.

It is observed from the corpus that if not for *Àró*'s mother, *Àró* would have been killed. The lesson learnt from the corpus is that strangers should not be looked upon with disdain, they should be treated with good care. The corpus is also relevant in the present day Nigeria where peoples of different ethnics and tribes live together as a Nation. Living with peace and love is hereby emphasised in this *Ifá* corpus irrespective of where one hails from.

*Avoidance of wickedness: Goodwill is one of the virtues approved by the Yorùbá. To them, nursing ill-will towards one's fellow human being is unethical. This virtue is foregrounded in *Ogbèsá* corpus as this:

Abínú ẹnì nítí gbé tẹ̀nì jù sínú ibú

Èyàn tí ò bínú ẹnì

A sì gbé tẹ̀nì jù sókítì eṣon

A dífá fún Bórí ẹnì ò paní

Èyí tí ẹ̀ ààyò Alákòókó

Njẹ bẹrú n gbáḗ bọ,

Bí ẹrú n kọrin

Ó ní obun tí ẹrú rí.

(The wicked mischievously throws one's
 fortune into the deep sea
 The less mischievous
 Could throw one's fortune to the forest hill
 Ifá divination was performed for Bórí-ẹni-ò-pani
 The favourite of Alákòókó
 Behold the slave while sweeping
 And he is singing
 He has secret experience inside him) p.130.

The narrative in the corpus tells the story of a town known as *Àkókó* in the distant past. The traditional chieftaincy title of the king of the town was *Alákòókó*. This king had many wives as it was customary for all other Yorùbà kings. Among these wives was a particular favourite one known as *Bórí-ẹni-ò-pani* (if one is spared by one's luck). The implication of her being chosen as the favourite was that she should be the one to be directly saddled with the responsibilities of preparing the king's food and not only that, she would know all the secrets pertaining to the king more than anyone else. What qualified her for this exalted position was not only her exquisite beauty but also the type of amiable character she often demonstrated. This is in agreement with the traditional philosophy of placing high premium on human character. However, this favourite's office, position and character engendered rivalry and hatred among the co-wives. One significant tradition of this town was to celebrate annual *Ifá* festival. During this festival, the king would put a special crown on his head. After this crown was put off, it would be kept in the exclusive custody of his favourite wife till the following year when another annual festival was about to hold. In a particular year, however, this favourite wife took custody of the special crown as usual. But her colleagues in the palace stole it and threw it into a flowing river.

When it remained just about five days to celebrate yet another festival, the woman thought of getting prepared for the

occasion, so she went to where the special crown was kept. She felt disturbed to note that the crown was no more at the place it was kept. When she could not find solution to her problem, she went to her *Ifá* priest for consultation. The priest consulted with *Ifá* and discovered that something significant had got lost from her, and that the thing was in the deep bottom of the river. She was however prescribed some sacrifice after which she was assured of recovering her belonging. She was asked to buy a big fish to propitiate the inner-head of her husband. It was that very day she offered the sacrifice as prescribed. The second day after the offering of the sacrifice, she went to the market to buy fresh fish for soup. When she got to the market, she found one extra big fish but the money she had on her was not enough to buy it so she rushed back home to bring more money. All this while, the other wives were just making jest of her with the expectation that her days were numbered. When she eventually brought the fish home, she dissected it and was greatly amazed to discover that the special crown had been swallowed by the fish she had just bought.

Early in the morning of the festival, they had all prepared for the great expectations to happen. After the necessary rituals in the inner room and when it remained the ceremonial aspect of the crowning ceremony, these women led the way and chorused "come and remove this crown and replace it with the special one". To the surprise of her detractors, *Bórí-ẹni-ò-pani* emerged with the special crown. This was greeted with both astonishment and disappointment on the part of the detractors wife and admiration on the part of the public. The co-wives became downcast and were permanently put to shame and ignominy. As from then on, it became a parlance that if one is not destined to die, no one can kill one. Thus, from this *Ifá* corpus, it is established that wickedness to one's fellow human being in homes, places of work, and in the society is condemnable.

*Honesty/Integrity: The Yorùbá believe that an honest person is regarded as a victor. From infancy, the child is trained

to imbibe the culture of honesty in everything he/she does. This philosophy is enshrined in one of the *Odu*s (corpus) called *Ìdin-Ìlẹkẹ* which states:

Panpẹ awo adegboro pẹ
Sọkùnrùndìgbà awo òkẹ Ìjerò
Ọrun mijà ọkọ nù ẹ sawo ọrun sekin
Àwọn mẹtẹẹta nù ẹ ọmọ Ìkọfá ilé Olódùmarè
Ifá kọ wọn ní didá ọwọ
Wọn mọ ọn dá
Ó kọ wọn lójuntẹ alẹ
Wọn mọ ọn tẹ
Ó kọ wọn lónkara ẹbọ
Wọn mọ ọn ha

(Panpẹ, the priest of Adegboro pẹ

Sọkùnrùndìgbà, the priest of Ìjerò-city
 Ọrun mijà ọkọ is the priest of Ọrún sekin
 The three being the apprentices of Ọrúnmilà
 Ifá taught them how to conduct consultation
 They mastered it well
 He taught them how to make divination signatures
 They mastered it
 He taught them the sacrificial intricacies
 They mastered it well) (p.61).

This piece talks about the three *Ifá* priests started learning the profession of *Ifá* priesthood at the same time. In the process, *Ọrúnmilà* taught them how to handle the *Ikin* (consecrated divination palm kernel), how to cast the *ọpẹlẹ* (divination chains) and how to prepare and offer sacrifices. After that, *Ọrúnmilà* laid down the rules and regulations associated with the profession. These included abstinence from adultery and fornication. He told them that if they did this, they would not have peace of mind and the oracle of *Ifá* would cease to reveal himself to them. This would not allow them to

be successful in life, and as such, they would have nothing to show for their trainings and subsequent undertakings. These principles confirm the sanctity of *Ifá* as a religion among the Yorùbá which its adherents comply with.

One day *Ọrúnmilà* embarked on a visit to *Olódùmarè*. He directed his apprentices to take care of the house on his behalf and abide by his ethics and tenets. Hardly had *Ọrúnmilà* left than his apprentices started misbehaving and perpetrating different atrocities. He consulted the oracle from *Òde-Ọrun*, and saw all what his apprentices were doing. He then decided to give them test. *Ọrunmila* thus mandated a beautiful lady with beads on her buttocks and who paraded a charming beauty to visit each of them. She was asked to tell each of them that she would like them to consult *Ifá* oracle for her. Since this lady was already aware of the reason why she was being sent, she got money from *Ọrunmila*, her father, and descended into the earth. When the lady got to the *Ifá* priests of *Panpẹ* and *Sọkùnrùndìgbà* to consult *Ifá* on her behalf, they both proposed to marry her. The lady tongue-lashed them and told them that the actions of priests of their calibre were responsible for the decadence of the society. She then moved on to the third priest - *Ọrúnmijà ọkọ*: the priest of *ọrun sekin*. The appearance of this latter priest to the lady signalled to her that the apprentice was totally unlike his colleagues. He did not show any sign of fornication. After consulting for her, he told her that she had no sacrifice to offer except that he should take good care of her. So, the priest entertained her and accorded her befitting reception. This lady felt very happy and satisfied. Later, she returned to her father.

After some days, *Ọrunmila* came back to the earth and brought this lady along. He, on arrival, sent for all his apprentices and told them all they had done while he was away. He told them that he was all this while monitoring their activities. He then handed the lady over to the third apprentice, *Ọrúnmijà ọkọ*; the priest of *ọrun sekin*. He proclaimed her his wife as he was the only one that acted honestly and respected

the ethics of their profession. From that day on, it became an abomination and taboo for true *Ifá* priest to allow himself to be infatuated by the beauty of his client.

Going by this account of *Ìdin-Ìlẹkẹ* corpus, one could situate the incident with the happenings in most religious places in Nigeria today. There are cases of Imams and Pastors having secret affairs with some of the women members of their congregations, ignoring the commandment of God against adultery and fornication. These categories of Imams and Pastors are nothing but *Panpẹ awo Adegboro pẹ* and *Ṣokùn-rùndìgbà awo Òkè-Ìjẹrò* in *Ìdin-Ìlẹkẹ* corpus, who are supposed to put sanity into the fabric of the society but are found committing all sorts of atrocities. However, those that truly practice the tenets and ethics of their religion, be it Islam, Christianity or African Religion (AFREL) are as good as *Qrúnmìlà ọkọ*.

*Impartiality: *Òtúrà-Rẹtẹ* corpus points to the fact that balance must be made when one is adjudicating over a matter between two parties involved. The corpus is put succinctly thus:

*Òjò pátápátá ní bọṣẹ olẹ
A difá fún Qrúnmìlà
Èyí tí Akápò ó pè lẹjọ nílẹ Olódùmarẹ
Òjò pátápátá ní bọṣẹ olẹ
A difá fún Qrúnmìlà
N lọ rẹẹ jejọ Akápò nílẹ Olódùmarẹ.*

(Heavy downpour provides a cover for the bugler

Ifá divination was performed for *Qrúnmìlà*

When *Akápò* instituted legal action against him at

Olódùmarẹ's court-yard

Heavy downpour provides cover for the bugler

Ifá divination was performed for *Qrúnmìlà*

Who was going to defend himself on the accusation levied by *Akápò* at *Olódùmarẹ's* court-yard (p.57).

In the olden days, there was a man called *Akápò* who usually bore *Qrúnmìlà's* divination sack along with him. He followed diligently all the rules and methodology of *Qrúnmìlà* to the last extent. He was a true devotee. When he consulted *Ifá* oracle about his destiny and he was required to provide anything in form of sacrifice, he did it without hesitation. However, despite his commitment and adherence to instructions, he did not seem to have any headway as failure trailed him about. He became tired and fed-up that he decided to carry his protests to *Olódùmarẹ's* court-yard. When he narrated his experiences concerning the number of sacrifices he had obediently offered but all to no avail, *Olódùmarẹ* himself became so angry that he ordered that *Qrúnmìlà* be sent forth from the earth.

As *Qrúnmìlà* approached the court of *Olódùmarẹ*, he saw from afar that *Olódùmarẹ* was visibly angry and that his eyes were filled with fury. *Olódùmarẹ* flared up in anger saying *Qrúnmìlà* had been very unfair to *Akápò*. *Qrúnmìlà* was equally infuriated and he was speechless. He later busted into uncontrollable tears and started chanting *Ìyẹrẹ* in elegiac form saying:

One who gives a verdict judgment
on hearing just a version of the accusation
is a wicked, partial arbiter
Why can't you listen to the second version (p.59).

When *Qrúnmìlà* finished saying this, *Olódùmarẹ* calmed down and allowed him to give his own side of the story. In response, *Qrúnmìlà* claimed that he had no fault for the pathetic abject-poverty condition in which *Akápò* had found himself. *Qrúnmìlà* explained that he usually did his part whenever a sacrifice was offered. He added that he had discharged the responsibility placed on his shoulders by *Olódùmarẹ* very well and that it was the partner of *Akápò* (in the metaphysical realm) who should be called upon to explain what really went wrong. *Akápò's* partner (his inner head) testified that he usually got things that

Orúnmìlà offered to him as sacrifice but the fact was that the agreement reached with *Akápò* had a specific date before things could be alright for him. He said there was nothing he could do to save the situation before his appointed time. *Olódùmarè* was now very happy. He consoled *Orúnmìlà* not to be annoyed as the friction was caused by exaggerative accounts of human beings. This accounted for why *Olódùmarè* did not listen to his own side of the story before proclaiming verdict. *Olódùmarè*, there and then, commanded that no matter the importance of the issue, direct interaction between him and human beings must cease henceforth, and they should only reach him through delegations of unseen forces.

The import of the narrative, therefore, is that in case of conflict or quarrel between two parties, the arbiter should ensure that he/she listens to both parties before passing judgment. Hence, the saying among the Yorùbá "*agbejò ẹnìkan dá, àgbà ọ̀sìkà*" (a partial arbiter is the chief of all evil-doers).

*Tolerance: Another virtue that is often preached by *Ifá* is tolerance. This is exhibited in *Òtúrá-rẹ̀tẹ̀* corpus which says:

Ìyáọ̀ṣọ̀!

Babaláwọ̀ Agbe ló difá fún Agbe

Ìyáọ̀ṣọ̀!

Babaláwọ̀ Àlùkò ló difá fún Àlùkò

Babaláwọ̀ Odídẹ̀rẹ̀ ló difá fún Odídẹ̀rẹ̀

Babaláwọ̀ Àkúkọ̀ Ọ̀tàngàlájà ló difá fún Àkúkọ̀

Ọ̀tàngàlájà

Tíí ẹ̀ ọ̀mọ̀ lénjẹ̀lẹ̀nje nínú wọ̀n.

(Ìyáọ̀ṣọ̀!

Agbẹ's priest casts Ifá divination for Agbe

Ìyáọ̀ṣọ̀!

Àlùkò's priest casts Ifá divination for Àlùkò

Odídẹ̀rẹ̀' s priest casts Ifá divination for Odídẹ̀rẹ̀

Ìyáọ̀ṣọ̀!

Àkúkọ̀ Ọ̀tàngàlájà's priest casts Ifá divination for

Àkúkọ̀ Ọ̀tàngàlájà

The youngest of them all) (p.139)

According to *Òtúrá-rẹ̀tẹ̀* corpus, there was a particular woman who had the following four children: *Agbe*, *Àlùkò*, *Odídẹ̀rẹ̀* and *Àkúkọ̀*. *Àkúkọ̀* happened to be the youngest of them all. These children lost their father at their tender age. It was their mother who singlehandedly took care of them. However, this woman could not demonstrate any tolerance. She was too choleric and so very wicked to her children. She treated every offence with stern corporal punishment and display of intolerance. In her absence one day, the children felt hungry and they decided to look for what they could eat in the room. While searching, they mistakenly broke the pot which contained the red palm oil of their mother. They felt bad and became gripped with fear, knowing full well what their mother would do to them. These children gathered together to deliberate on what they could do to escape from the wrath of their mother. *Agbe* was the one to decide. He said he would leave for the sea-side (*Ilé Olókun*) where the forest was thick. *Àlùkò*, on his own part decided to leave for the lagoon's end. Whereas the decision of *Odídẹ̀rẹ̀* on his own part was to leave for *Olú-Ìwọ̀*, *Àkúkọ̀* resolved to wait to see what the reaction of their mother would be when she arrived. So he did hide himself in a corner.

When the woman arrived, she searched every nook and cranny of the house in vain. She then began to feel apprehensive. Moreover, when she saw the broken pot inside the room, she shouted and wept bitterly but there was nobody to come to her aid. She then began to panic why there was none of her children around. She could no more emit hot words as she would ordinarily have done. Instead, she changed her temperament to a more soothing one. Saying that mere breaking of the oil pot should not be sufficient reason for their flight from home, she was meaning that to demonstrate her

quest for her children. It was then *Àkùkò* (cock) noticed this change of attitude, he crowed from his hide-out to all his brothers that they should come home since their mother did not complain after all. The reply given by *Agbe* was that he had already decided to head towards the jungle and no one could draw him back. *Àlùkò* said the same thing that he had already made for the savannah region. This was how all the three children fled away, remaining *Àkùkò* that is still living within the town and house premises till today. With this incident, it becomes clear that intolerant people cannot be good leaders either in homes or public places.

Religions in Nigeria: A closer look

Most religious crises such as Saki and Ilorin (1986), OIC controversy (1986), Jos crisis (2001) that have been witnessed in Nigeria were caused by intolerance between the adherents of the two foreign religions, namely Islam and Christianity. It is noted that such ugly rivalry that results to crisis or violence has not been recorded in the history of Nigeria where adherents of two different indigenous religions clash over issue of superiority or trying to win members. In most cases, despite the fact that the two foreign religions usually come out, in the name of evangelism, to condemn the practice of traditional religion, yet the adherents of traditional religion have not come out to cause public disturbance as in the case of Islam and Christianity. I, in recent time, had a discussion with an adherent of *Ìgunnukó* masquerade cult in Abéokúta, Ogun State of Nigeria over the relationship between them and those practicing Islam and Christianity in his neighbourhood. The man replied that the relationship between them and adherent of other faiths is cordial. He added that, though, the leaders of these faiths usually, in their sermons, condemn them and their religion but they are tolerant about it. He even mentioned that despite some of these foreign religious leaders patronise them for spiritual assistance to attract more members or other issues,

and at the same time go to the public to condemn them, yet they are not provoked. He claimed that their tolerance is rooted in the ethics of their religion not to disclose any secret entered into with another person, that is why it is unethical for them to come out openly to say "Pastor A or Imam B" do patronise them. Compared to Islam and Christianity, the degree of tolerance and pragmatism in indigenous religion is remarkable. For instance, in my home town, Abeokuta, the capital city of Ogun State, Nigeria, there are adherents of various indigenous religions such as *Ògún* (god of iron), *Ṣàngó* (god of thunder), *Ifá* (god of wisdom) worshippers, who relate peacefully and harmoniously among themselves. Each of these religions has a definite period in a year which they celebrate their gods in form of festival. During these festivals, adherents of other religions join their friends and families in the celebration without rancour. To me, this is a lesson to be learnt by all. This is the foundation on which the African/Nigerian society was established. It is common to find a husband and wife propitiating different divinities and yet living in peace and harmony. Modern religions like Islam and Christianity are aliens to Nigeria. Their incursion into the country has brought a lot of disaffection, hatred and suspicion among the people than uniting them. African religion fosters peace amongst its members and in the society at large. Dopamu (1988: 89) has pointed out that when one looks at the relationship between African religion and other religions in Nigeria, one discovers that African religion has related to them in a constructive manner, its purpose being to maintain peace and concord in the society. He notes that African religion with its communal background has always been tolerant, accommodating and cohesive in embracing even strangers without segregation.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to establish the fact that indigenous religion, as exemplified in selected *Ifá* corpuses, is capable of addressing some societal vices that have bedevilled Nigeria today. It also recalled some religious crises that have been recorded in Nigerian history due to intolerance and unhealthy rivalry between the two foreign religions. The chapter examined some factors from *Ifá* corpuses that can bring about peace and harmony in Nigeria. These factors are hospitality/kindness, avoidance of wickedness, honesty/integrity, impartiality, and tolerance. One of the problems facing Nigerians today is the negative feeling against the indigenous religions labelling them as fetish. They tend to see nothing worth embracing in the religions and the people practicing them. That is why these people are not always recognised or considered in the scheme of things in the country. This chapter is concluded by suggesting that the society should look inwards to see those virtues that are useful in the practice of indigenous religion and incorporate them in the building of a virile society.

References

- Abimbola, W. 1976. *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*, Oxford University Press: Ibadan.
- Ajayi, B. 2002. *Ifá Divination: Its Practice among the Yoruba of Nigeria*, Shebiotimo Publication: Ijebu-Ode.
- Ajayi, J.F. 1965. *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*, Northwestern University Press: Illinois.
- Akintola, A. 1999. *Yoruba Ethics and Metaphysics*, Valour Publishers: Ibadan & Ogbomosho.
- Alamu, A. G. 2010. Religion as Scapegoat in Ethno-Political Violence in Nigeria. In *Religion and Culture: Understanding the*

- Dynamism of Faith in Africa* (Eds. Anyanwu, H. O. & Udo, M.E.) pp. 97-111, Universal Academic Services: China.
- Anele, D. 2013. 'How Religion Underdeveloped Nigeria', Available at: www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/religion-underdeveloped-nigeria-2/ (Retrieved: 07 February 2015).
- Asawale, P. 2011. The Relevance of Images in Yoruba Traditional Worship to Effective Christian Evangelisation. In W.O. Aso (Ed.), *The Relevance of Images in Worship: A Path to Evangelisation*, pp. 1-8, Seminary of All Saints: Ekpoma.
- Balogun, S.A. 2000. History of Islam up to 1800. In *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ed. Ikime, O.), Heinemann: Ibadan.
- Dopamu, P. A. 1988. Religious Tolerance and Peaceful co-existence: The case of African Religion in Nigeria. In *Dialogue and Alliance: A Journal of the International Religious Foundation*, pp.63-89, New York.
- Elebuibon, Y. 2004. *Ifá: The Custodian of Destiny*, Penthouse Publications: Ibadan.