

probable South Africa – Israeli test of a nuclear device in the Southern Oceans (between South Africa and the Antarctica). Although for political reasons, the Carter Administration preferred ambiguity to outright confirmation, it was, nevertheless, revealed in a British television programme, 'World in Action', that South Africa obtained previous to the incident, 3,000,000 shell casings capable of delivering a two-to-three kiloton nuclear device with the connivance of American officials in the Pentagon. See Thomas O'Toole, "New Zealand Confirms Mystery Atom Test" *The Guardian Weekly* (Manchester) 25 November 1979, and "SA Ships in Zone of Suspected N-Blast", *The Guardian* (London) January 31, 1980.

17. These include nuclear artillery (e.g. The American 155 MGS Howitzer presently assembled in South Africa), battle-field missiles (e.g. Cactus), aerial bombs and air-to-ground missiles (for its canberras, Buccaneers, and Mirage).
18. See "Shagari Addresses Foreign Policy Body" *Daily Times*, 6 October 1980.
19. Frank Barnaby, "Can Nuclear-Weapon Proliferation be prevented?" *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, 1, 1977, p. 12.
20. Despite the segregation of its inhabitants along racial lines, the so-called "White South Africa" is still, in fact, overwhelmingly black as Slovo, among others, have noted. It is white "only in relation to access to wealth and power". J. Slovo et. al *Southern Africa* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1977) p. 111. Besides, given the range of destruction of such family of weapons, even the neighbouring African states cannot be insulated from collateral damages.
21. Editorial, *New Nigerian* (Kaduna), 24 November 1980, p. 1
22. Henderson, *Op. Cit.* 121.
23. This tendency towards elite (bureaucratic, institutional, policy etc.) coalitions, bargaining and competition on issues of national security was clearly apparent in the *laissez faire* politics in The Second Republic. The issue concerning organisational task expansion and funding for the Atomic Energy Commission was raised by a member of the finance committee of the National Assembly at a Conference on Science and Technology (NIPSS, Kuru, 14-17 March 1983) and immediately became a subject of passionate debate.
24. Amoda, *Op. Cit.* p. 187.
25. See Sverre Lodgaard, "International Nuclear Commerce: Structure, trends, and proliferation potentials", *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, 1, 1977, pp. 15-31.
26. For a critique of NPT resolutions, see Asok Kapur, "Nuclear Proliferation in the 1980s" *International Organization* 36, 3, (Summer 1981), pp. 535-555. Richard Betts, "Paranoias, Pygmies, Pariahs and Non-proliferation" *Foreign Policy* 59, 4 (Spring 1981), pp. 875-894; and Louis Rene Beres, "The Porcupine Theory of Nuclear Proliferation: Shortening the quills," *Parameters* 9, 3 (September 1979), pp. 31-37.
27. F. Barnaby, *Op. Cit.* p. 9.
28. Lodgaard, *Op. Cit.* p. 23.
29. Henderson, *Op. Cit.* p. 412.
30. See a front page interview with the former Minister of Defence, Gen. D. Bali. *Champion* July 28, 1989.

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A RESEARCH NOTE

THE EARLY EVANGELIZATION OF BENIN: FURTHER REFLECTIONS

The Middle period of African Church history between early North and East African, and the 19th–20th century, missionary movement—is one of the least known but most fascinating episodes in the history of the Church. I have presented the main events of this period in my book, *A history of the Catholic Church in Tropical Africa 1445–1850*¹. Particularly intriguing is the discovery, when the Portuguese first came to Benin in the latter part of the 15th century of evidence of previous Christian influence.²

Christian influence from the African hinterland

Joao de Barros described a cross which the Benin king wore around his neck. It was sent from the "Ogane". The Benin ambassador to the Ogane wore a similar cross.³ That this cross is a Christian symbol fits well with its shape, as seen on carvings and bronzes, which is the Nubian cross, and with the presence of a chain of Christian influence and/or such crosses from Nubia right to Benin.

The identity to the Ogane is more problematic. De Barros thought he was "Prester John" or the emperor of Ethiopia. Hodgkin⁴ and Obayemi⁵, following Samuel Johnson's theory, that Ife was the cradle of the Yoruba, speculated that the Ogane was the Ooni of Ife. Recent writers have challenged Johnson's theory, which was the foundation of the pan-Yoruba ideology of Awolowo's party. A. Ryder, for instance, argues that de Barros' indication that Ogane's capital was 20 moons to the east cannot be taken literally, but it does make us look elsewhere than Ife.⁶ He finds the Niger valley a likely direction, and speculates that Idah, Nupe country or Jukun could be the site, especially since in these places is found the "cat's whisker" facial mark, which is found on the representations of Ogane's messenger. Corroborating Ryder is D. William's *Icon and Image*⁷ which points out important differences between Benin and Ife art work and speculates that Benin art styles originated first from a tradition of non-figurative brass casting coming across the Sahara down through Jukun. The figurative brass casting he attributes to European influence. Another writer, A. Obayemi, in a later article, goes further and reduces Ife to one small Yoruba kingdom among many, arguing that its fame was merely due to its bead industry.⁸

The latest important contribution to the discussion is Robin Horton's "Ancient Ife: a reassessment."⁹ In this long and complicated article, he reviews all the previous theories and weighs the evidences for them. Sirpri-

singly he returns to some of the Johnsonian ideas rejected by recent critics. He accepts the conclusions of Dr. Akinkugbe's linguistic research that the Yoruba originated around the Niger-Benue confluence and spread south-west in three fan-like projections, or pie slices, giving rise to the present dialectical regions of north-west, central and south-east.¹⁰ Ife, therefore, was not the cradle of the Yoruba, but lay in the centre of the dispersion. Around A.D. 1000 it grew into an important town and was the dominant power of the region. This was because it was in the centre of a northward bulge in the forest and was the nearest supply of forest products, such as kola nuts, accessible to traders from the north. (Horton here assumes that kola nuts were grown in Yorubaland at this time.¹¹) Furthermore going through Ife was the shortest way from the Niger Bend straight south to the coast, unless one wanted to follow the Niger's long and dangerous routes. Benin and Owo were at first outposts of the Ife empire and only around 1500 did Benin come into its own. (This should be in response to European trade.) According to Horton, then, Ife was the home of the Ogane.

Horton answers the problem of De Barros sitting of Ogane's home in the east by pointing out a Dahomean tradition and a prayer ritual of the Oba of Benin to his Ife forefathers through an eastward facing window at dawn.¹² This is illustrative of the praise epithet: "Ife creator of the world, whence comes the dawn"¹². Moreover recent archaeological finds at Ife include both the formee or Maltese (Nubian) cross and the "cat's whisker" facial mark on terra-cotta statuary.¹³ Horton also points to carbon-14 and Thermoluminescence tests carried out on materials of the strata in which the Ife artifacts were found, and these indicate dates for terra-cotta materials ranging from A.D. 1000, while the brass work ranges from between 1275 and 1440. Datings for Owo and Benin artifacts begin slightly later than their Ife counterparts. With this evidence, Horton is encouraged to try to answer the further difficulties raised by Williams about the relationship of Benin and Ife art.¹⁴

Around 1500 Benin would have come into its own, basing its prosperity on the control of trade routes to the north that bypassed Ife. One of these was through Ilesha to Oyo; another was to the Niger, whence the fighting with Idah to control this route. Oyo itself developed into a separate power about a century later. The reduced Ife, for a time played the role of an intermediary, father-figure or elder-statesman toward both these powers as long as their expansion was outward. From the end of the 18th century, Oyo was hard pressed and the inter-Yoruba wars for export slaves disrupted the traditional balance. Ife was hardest hit, particularly by the Oyo refugees which settled in Modakeke, and all traces of its former prestige vanished until its 20th century revival under the British.

So much for Horton's theory. The Arabs have a habit of ending a discussion with the phrase "Wa-llanu a^clan", "God knows best". I conclude that Ife or possibly Idah was the route through which the Christian culture symbolized by the Nubian cross came across the continent to Benin. The Ogane could have been the Ooni of Ife, but I would suggest that, with De Barros, we look for the prototype Ogane far to the east, not in Ethiopia but in Nubia, the origin of the cross.

Subsequent Christian influence¹⁵

An initial happy relationship with the Portuguese, begun in 1486 or before, led to a mission in 1515 by some unnamed priests, who baptized the son of the Oba and some other prominent men. In 1517 a friar from Sao Tome, probably an Augustinian, and three other priests one of them named Jeanes, a native of Benin who had gone to Sao Tome, came to continue the work of evangelization.

We do not know how long this mission lasted, but a Franciscan mission in 1538 found the situation greatly deteriorated. Christians were persecuted and the missionaries not welcome. In 1540 the Oba was again in good terms with the Portuguese, but no mission immediately ensued. Instead the Portuguese concentrated on the upstart state of Warri, which displayed more interest in the faith.

The next known mission to reach Benin itself is that of the Capuchins. Angel de Valencia and some companions, after much suffering arrived in Benin in August 1651. They were favourably received by the Oba, but after two months the officials prevented them from seeing him again. After a year and a half of frustration they interrupted a festival to denounce the human sacrifice, and were thereupon expelled.

The Italian Cappuchins Angelo di Ajaccio and Bonaventura da Firenze brought letters for the Oba of Benin while on a mission to Warri in 1656, but they were not granted an audience and returned promptly to Warri.

Francesco da Monteleone in 1692 claimed to have received an invitation to Benin from the Oba, but no mission was sent until Cipriano da Napoli visited Benin in 1709. He never got to see the Oba, but the next year he sent two priests who did see the Oba and received every welcome and encouragement, including the gift of a house. Yet after a three year stay the two fathers were discouraged at their lack of progress. The last Cappuchin attempt to evangelize Benin was by Fr. Illuminato di Poggitello in 1748, and he could not even enter the city.

After this rapid review of events I would like to correct several popular misconceptions about the facts of early Benin Christianity. One of them is

the speculation that Dominicans were there. From all available evidence the first Dominicans ever to set foot in Nigeria were the group that came in 1951, although there were Dominican bishops long ago in Sao Tome.

Another assertion, found in Martin Bané's *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa*¹⁶ and in his *The Popes and Western Africa*¹⁷ is that the Jesuit Baltasar Barreira visited Benin. This is completely mistaken and is based on a confusion of Bena in Sierra-Leone with Benin. The only priests known to have taken part in the early evangelization of Nigeria were Augustinians, Franciscans, Cappuchins and Diocesan priests from Sao Tome.

Another misconception is the transfer of events connected with Warri to Benin. Warri became very Catholic, had a church and kept up a semblance of Catholic practice even for many years without a priest. It even had its own indigenous priest in 1765, who was named Joao Alvares. There is no written evidence corroborating the oral traditions in Egharevba's book for the existence of churches in Benin.¹⁸

From the foregoing we can also clear up the misconception that Fr. Paul Emechete was the first Nigerian to be ordained a Catholic priest, and that was in 1921. We have noted the presence of a Bini priest in 1571 and a Warri priest in 1765.

At this point we cannot avoid reference to the recent book by Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity*,¹⁹ which covers the pre-1850 period in chapters 2 and 3. In spite of its being an excellent survey of the history of the Church in Africa, it has several factual errors regarding Benin and Warri, which I have discussed elsewhere in a review of the book.²⁰

Assessment of the early work of evangelization

Benin, a rich and powerful kingdom, resisted most missionary efforts to lead it to the Catholic faith. Warri, a break-away vassal of Benin, looked for outside support and welcomed the missionaries. The missionaries in Warri were relatively successful as long as their presence was continued. The difference between Warri and Benin certainly points to the influence that a government can have on evangelization. If it is hostile, as in Communist and Islamic countries today, evangelization will be at a standstill. If it is open, evangelization is possible. Nevertheless, even in Warri the Church eventually floundered. That was because of a precarious dependence on outside missionary contact which could not be sustained. There was no lack of missionary volunteers, but Portuguese obstruction to Rome and non-Portuguese missionaries, the hardships of the journey and deaths upon arrival doomed any lasting missionary presence. The natural thing to do, of course, would be to indigenize the Church. This was certainly thought of, and the presence of

indigenous priests in Nigeria and more so in Sao Tome testify to the seriousness of missionary intentions. Yet the existence of the Catholic Church requires some infrastructure of communication and literacy — to say nothing of the questionable essentials of wheat flour and grape wine. According to the Augustinian bishop of Sao Tome, Pedro da Cunha, the Warri people "know how to read and write and are eager for Portuguese books, pens, ink and paper." Nevertheless they did not have the technology of making paper and other supplies for themselves, and were not initiated into the experience of writing in their own language, as was attempted elsewhere in Africa at the time through catechisms in the local languages. Portuguese obstruction and the slave trade, which was not very severe in Benin or Warri, were not, in my opinion, as serious obstacles to the implantation of the Church as the lack of necessary infrastructures.

The missionaries' fixation with the Catholic culture of the Europe of their time was also a hinderance to creative evangelization. For instance Guiseppe da Busseto in 1692 objected to the Warri practice of circumcision because it was a Jewish rite. But I do not think their attitudes were a serious obstacle, any more than was the Latin Mass mumbled backing the people for so many years in Nigeria. Such eccentricities may even have attracted many Africans.

Lamin Sanneh, in the book mentioned above, attributes the demise of the Benin and Warri mission to too close identification with existing European interests. This does not point to any African racial prejudice, yet kings, traders and commercial agents did adopt Christianity in order to enjoy the benefits of European cooperation. When African bargaining power was strong it resisted evangelization. Only in the 19th century did new forces come to erode that resistance and compel Africa to accept new influences. Lamin Sanneh is right in his analysis of the political and economic factors that permitted or prevented evangelization, yet for the period under discussion not enough credit is given to the strength of Christian roots once they take even the slightest hold. This was witnessed over and over again in the case of Warri by visitors who saw a church maintained with crosses, statues and candles, and processions and prayers carried on for many years without a priest. This reminds of more of the Nagasaki Catholics. It seems only the economic recession and radical breakdown of Warri society in 1848 caused the demise of Christian tradition there for a time.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. J. Kenny, *A Short History of the Catholic Church in tropical Africa, 1445-1850*, (Ibadan, Ibadan University Press), 1981.
2. See pp. 68-70 of my book.
3. Cf. Joao de Barros, *Asia* (Lisbon, 1945, reprint of 1553), Dec. 1., lib. 3 ch. 4, pp. 90-91.
4. Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian perspectives* (London: O.U.P., 1960), p. 68.
5. A. Obayemii, "The Yoruba and Edo-speaking peoples and their neighbours before 1600", in J. Ajayi & M. Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa* I, p. 247.
6. A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485-1897* (London, 1969, p. 7, and "A reconsideration of the Ife-Benin relationship", *Journal of African history*, 6 (1965), pp. 25-37.
7. London, 1974.
8. A. Obayemii, "Ancient Ife-Ife: another cultural historical re-interpretation", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 9:4 (June, 1979), pp. 69-150. Cf. also R.C.C. Law, "The heritage of Oduduwa: traditional history and political propaganda", *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), pp. 207-222. Note that in my book, p. 69 and note 6 I mistakenly attribute to Mauny & Talbot the opinion that the Ogane was the Alafin of Oyo.
9. R. Horton, "Ancient Ife: A Re-assessment", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 9:4 (June 1979) pp. 69-150.
10. O. Akinkugbe, *A comparative phonology of Yoruba dialects, Itsekiri and Igala*. Ph.D. Thesis, Ibadan University, 1978. Cf. Horton, *op. cit.*, p. 72ff.
11. Paul E. Lovejoy, in "Interregional monetary flows in pre-colonial trade in Nigeria", *Journal of African History*, 15 (1974), pp. 563-585, and elsewhere points out that kola was grown for centuries in Ashanti but only in recent times in Yorubaland.
12. Horton. *p. cit.*, pp. 85ff.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
15. For this section see my book, p. 45ff.
16. Dublin, 1956, pp. 77-78.
17. New York, 1968, p. 136.
18. Jacob Egharevba, *A short history of Benin* (Ibadan U.P., 1966), p. 27 ff.
19. L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity* (London, 1981).
20. In *Orita*, 16:1 (June, 1984), pp. 67-68.

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BOOK REVIEW

ETHICS: A SYSTEMATIC AND HISTORICAL STUDY

By Joseph Omoregbe

London: Global Educational Services.

1979. 200pp.

The book *Ethics*, by Joseph Omoregbe is an invaluable contribution to Moral Philosophy. The author delivers his message in a very clear and lucid language and without any equivocation. Like several other books on Ethics, Omoregbe's book examines some of the fundamental issues in moral philosophy.

The work is divided into two parts. The first part, which deals with a systematic consideration of ethical issues contains nine chapters. In these chapters, the author treats in a systematic way the core issues in Ethics. First, the problems involved in defining what ethics is all about. He makes a distinction between morality and law, ethics and morality, ethics and religion. He also argues that ethics like all other branches of philosophy is not merely a theoretical abstract discipline but has an essential bearing on man's concrete, historical and existential problems. Hence, the popular accusation against philosophy that "it does not bake bread" is dismissed by Omoregbe. (cf. p. 9) Man is often described as a moral being per naturam. In Chapter Two, the author probes the *raison d'être* for this. Chapter three treats the relationship between freedom and morality. The basis of morality is located in man's freedom. The author also examines one of the thorniest issues in ethics namely the problem of determinism. He finally settles for freedom, though not absolute freedom. The question of standards of morality is treated in Chapter Four. How do we determine right from wrong action? The relation between moral law and moral principles is examined in Chapter Five; the morality of human action is in Chapter Six; the psychology of moral behaviour comes up in Chapter Seven and social morality follows in Chapter Eight. The author concludes this part with a beautiful consideration of African traditional ethics.

The second part of the book is a historical study. Here the author provides the reader with a resume of the predominant ethical theories in the history of philosophy beginning from the ancient epoch through the medieval to the modern periods and then the contemporary times. Each of the four chapters in this part of the work treats the theories found in each of the four epochs of history of philosophy. Chapter One deals with the ethics of ancient philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, St Augustine. Chapter two deals with the ethics of Medieval philosophers like Aquinas, Machiavelli, Dun Scotus and William of Ockham; Chapter Three grapples with the ethics