

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF RELIGION
AND CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN A
MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY: NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVES**

OMOJOLA, Immaculata Olu, PhD

Department of Business Administration and Management
Villanova Polytechnic, Imesi-Ile, Osun State. Nigeria
omojolassma@yahoo.co.uk

&

C. Smart Mokuye

Department of General Studies
Villanova Polytechnic, Imesi-Ile
smkuye@gmail.com

Abstract

Sociologists have considered religion as one of the major agents of socialisation. When it is purposive, it advances and encourages the course of development in a society. In academic debates and at practical level too, there is a degree of polarization between those who view religion, particularly Christianity, as a developmental obstacle and those who regard it as a developmental solution. Such a polarised debate is unhelpful for the study and practice of development. A dispassionate analysis of the role and effect of religion, which could bring the rationalist and post-development discourses closer, can better help development practitioners. Religion in this context is considered with respect to the contribution it makes to nation-building; in particular, in sustaining the cultural heritage of the Yoruba nation of Southwestern Nigeria. This paper explores the African Traditional Religion (ATR) then and now, the Established (and now unestablished) Churches, their roles then and now to nation-building and sanctity of humanity and living. This paper is anchored on the following objectives: to examine religion's role in shaping society, to reflect on the various facets of religion and culture, analyse their interactions with one another and other cultural influences in a global context. The paper utilised primary and secondary sources of data collection, and analysed them using descriptive and content analyses. The study findings revealed that, modern civilisation has adversely affected the efficacy of culture and religion in the Yoruba nation. It also observed that, modern day religion is laden with inherent contradictions and abuses, thereby making it ineffective in the performance of its

assigned and avowed roles to society. The paper concluded that, the present abuses even in the socio-political and economic life of the nation is a function of an abused culture and religion.

Keywords: ATR, Established churches, Culture, Religion, Agents of socialisation,

Introduction

Religion is intended to achieve certain goals which are considered fundamental for development. This, in effect, implies that, society needs religion as an essential input for its wellbeing. Ideally, religion pursues a course of drawing citizens of a nation to the knowledge and fear of God. In other words, a nation should know, fear God and walk the way of righteousness because “...*righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Prov.14v34). If no other thing, the role of religion is to put machinery in place for citizens of society to tread the path of righteousness, honesty, truth and to eschew all forms of evil in every ramification.

Nigeria is a country of diverse religious groupings and practices, yet unrighteousness of all sorts pervades the entire landscape across ethnic divides, as if there are no people calling on God. Research has shown that ranks high among praying nations of the world. The level of its religiosity is almost next to none globally, yet, evidences abound to show that most of these so-called prayers are offered with unclean hands and lips. Both Christians and Muslims go on religious tours annually on huge expenses. The iniquities of these religious folks have hidden His face so that He would not deliver and their sins have so separated them from God that He doesn't hear (Is. 59v1,2). These are the contradictions which have constrained religion from performing its roles for nation building.

It is important to mention that the leadership of this country is basically in the hands of people who belong to one form of religious organisation or another. At least by their names and titles, one can infer that they at least have basic knowledge of God. Some are even as high as Pastors, Evangelists, Apostles, Alhajis, Alhajas, Mallams, and so on. Yet, these have not approximated to genuine religious attitudes and characters that would help to shape the standard of morality in the country. Rather, what is heard are atrocities and mind-blowing acts of corruption and criminality perpetuated by these different religious persons. Whereas, the number of churches and mosques are increasing, evil has not abated in the land. The level of wickedness, inequality, ungodly acts have gone on in the same proportion.

This study has observed that some of the high-profile crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, assassinations, ritual killings and so on are facilitated or helped by

religious leaders, either as *Alfas*, Clerics, Pastors, Prophets, Apostles, as the case may be. For instance, stories have been told of church leaders in particular, who have buried whole human beings either dead or alive either to make foundation of their churches/worship centres, or on the altar for purpose of pulling crowds and so on. Others have been said to have sexual intercourse with their female members right inside their worship centres. These criminal and immoral acts are said to be for some of them who are also said to consult with witchdoctors, herbalists, sorcerers to acquire power or the sources of power.

Furthermore, certain religious bodies made demands of certain items and materials to aid their so-called prayers – ranging from candles (of different colours) to hairs from their private parts, perhaps their first urine in the morning, a tin of a particular brand of milk, white handkerchiefs, olive oil, coconut, and so on. Others will recommend specified number of days' bath in a river (usually women) by the 'man of God'. The essence of these abuses and contradictions, as the study proves, is either to convert people's destinies through hypnotism, pull crowds and ultimately make lots of money.

The aim of this article is to present and discuss the main ethnic, cultural and religious diversity challenges that Nigeria is facing today. The paper surveys the country's diverse religious organisations amidst multi-ethnic-nationalities. It also identifies the minority groups aside the three major tribes of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba that pose the most important ethnic or religious diversity challenges within them. The article, which is anchored on *Yoruba Culture and Society*, x-rayed the interface between culture and religion within the Yoruba extraction of Southwestern Nigeria.

In this context, the article critically examined the different religious and cultural practices of the Yoruba people, and how culture and religion have shaped the Yorubas among diverse ethnic groupings with their own different religions and cultural heritages, and the interruptions created by the Christian and Islamic religions which are portrayed in this study as foreign religions. However, these religions are assessed on the basis of their effectiveness, efficacy and/or levels of relevance to the larger society.

Nigeria as a multi-faith or multi-cultural society has lots of religions and beliefs as implanted into the country. The different ethnic groups had their different cultures and traditional religions. The different religions and deities recorded appreciable degrees of efficacy and effectiveness. Religion has become an issue of great concern today in Nigeria as a result of variations in departing from the norms and values establishing them. Meanwhile, this article examined the three major religions

practise in Nigeria, amidst its ethnic diversities. These include: Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional religion (ATR), which has variously been referred to by the West as pagan or idol worship. These different religions used to be the media through which humans related with the Supreme Being. The different deities in the case of the ATR were both effective and efficacious. They were consulted to attend to life issues like bareness, infertility, epidemics or diseases and so on. Among the Yorubas for instances, deities such as the *Ifa*, *Olookun*, *Ogun*, *Obatala*, *Oya*, were held in high esteem and worshipped by their different adherents. The same goes for the different ethnic groups in the country.

The adherents of the Christian religion consulted God through Jesus Christ both to establish, retrain and maintain relationship with the Almighty. Prayers by past prophets and patriarchs were very effective and this made for a cordial relationship with God. Whenever there were challenges, the people called on their leaders such as prophets, kings, priests, and later, apostles for solutions, and they had them with no strings attached. Islam is considered a religion of peace. This presupposes that the relationship that subsists between its adherents and the other, both within and outside the faith, is peaceful and cordial. Muslims were known to care for one another, not co-adherents alone, even neighbours and acquaintances. Governments enjoyed these states of affair of the religions. They were seen by governments as partners in progress. Kings, who were the governments consulted religious leaders for solution to national problems. Prophets of God in Israel then for example, were in the midst of the people as problem-solvers. The likes of *Elijah*, *Moses*, *Samuel*, the *Judges*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, other prophets, and lately, the *Apostles*, played vital roles in their then societies.

However, the situation today among these different religions is that of desperation. Relationship with the Divine is no longer cordial. The religious centres, especially with Christianity and Islam, and different groups formed, these have not approximated to evocation of divine presence in the affairs of men as it used to be. Some of the so-called wonders and miracles seen these days are said to be induced by charms and other unconventional means which more often than not, are shielded in secrecy. It does become safe to submit that the native religion appears to still maintain its efficacy. Christianity and Islam have vastly compromised and as such failed to play their expected roles in society. It is logical therefore to assert that, since Christian church leaders and Islamic priests consult herbalists and other actors in the ATR, to acquire power, the traditional religion has maintained its relevance. This of course is not advocating for the worship of idols; it is just logical to reason that way.

Literature Review

Culture

Culture, according to *Hofstede (1997, cited in Adepeju Oti & Oyebola Ayeni, 2013)* refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. They contend further that it is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. The position that the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as members of society determines human nature. People are what they learn. Therefore, culture ultimately determines the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners and scholarly pursuits and many more. To *Johnson (1921)*, culture is a particular stage or form of civilisation. Different cultural groups think, feel, and act differently. There are however, no scientific standards for considering one group as essentially superior or inferior to another. Culture is considered to be the tradition of that people and is transmitted from generation to generation. This varies worldwide in relation to the different groups in terms of their eating habits, kinds of food eaten, language, music, dressing, and the likes. The duo of *Babatunde, (1992)* and *Akintoye, (2010)* assert on a general note, that Africans, especially the Yorubas are considered to be rich in terms of culture and tradition.

Over the centuries there have been attempts to define the phenomenon of religion. These attempts have come from various perspectives, ranging from the psychological, sociological and anthropological to the philosophical and theological (*Momen 1999:52–73*) and, most recently, they have come from a biological perspective (*Hammer 2005*). Not only can these attempts be arranged according to perspectives, but also according to theories (*Crosby 1981:5*), providing definitions for the groups of definitions. Although varied, the theories and definitions became fixed in conventional forms. As a result of the confusion caused by the glut of definitions, there have even been suggestions to discard the mostly dominant western term 'religion' altogether (*Asad, cited in Figl 2003:71*). The majority of definitions of, and theories on, religion have originated from a western background. Even the whole existence of the term 'religion' is seen as a eurocentric term (*Figl 2003:73*). *Sundermeier (1999:11)* points out that the mere question about what religion is betrays a western background. Thus, a whole world of western-determined references is implied when talking about religion, but such a so-called western understanding of religion is not necessarily homogenous.

African Traditional Religion

Jaco Beyers (2010) stated that, western thought has influenced the way that religion

is understood. Western philosophy supported the separation between the sacred and the profane. Modernism, focusing on human rationality, reduced religion to a set of correctly formulated beliefs and doctrines. Western thought, dominated by Christianity, created a hierarchical structure of world religions through a theology of religions. At this juncture one may want to ask if an African understanding of religion contributes to the understanding of what religion is. Such a question requires both an African understanding of religion, and an understanding of African religion.

Adepeju&Ayeni (2013) argued from an African perspective, that religion emphasises the human effort to systematise, in society, the continuation of a religious experience that is relevant to a specific context. According to them, tradition, expressed in rituals and ethics, becomes the social expression of these religious experiences. They assert further that religion tends not to differentiate the mystical from the earthly. However, African scholars do not present one unified understanding of religion. Some scholars would even argue that an African understanding of religion is nothing more than an internalised form of western perspectives. Therefore, to characterise ATR as a separate type of religion is tantamount to minimising the contribution that an African understanding can make to religion.

The dominant religion of the West has been Christianity. Consequently, a Christian (Western) understanding of religion dominated the scholarly field. There are those who now believe that there are no proper equivalents to the term 'religion' in other cultures (*Figl2003:73*). A Christian theology of religions led Western scholars to arrange religions in a hierarchical structure, implying that some religions were inferior to others (*Momen1999:69*). The typology of religion as a result of Western scholarship led to a categorisation of religion according to levels of development. The discovery of new cultures and continents during the 17th and 18th centuries created a dilemma concerning the relation among religions. Western thought on this led to the creation of a category named 'primal' or 'traditional' religions. This category was used to group religions together that showed similarities in structure. The premise for this categorisation was the acceptance of the evolutionistic development of religions.

Thorpe (1992:5), cited in *JacoBeyers (2010)* contends that, the earliest religion in 'original' form could be discovered by studying religious practices of contemporary tribal societies. The assumption was that some religions progressed in development and others did not. The underdeveloped religions were pejoratively referred to as primal, traditional or primitive, or even tribal, religions (*Sundermeier 1999:31*). Even in efforts to try to understand African religions, scholars have 'abstracted African religions from their cultural and historical contexts' (*Westerlund 1993:59*). Scholars of religion, as well as anthropologists, 'tended to "Westernise" African

religions' (*Westerlund1993:59*). *Magesa* (2002) points out that Western scholars defined African religion in terms of Western philosophy. 'If there was such a thing approximating religion at all in Africa, they [Western scholars] argued, it was "animism" or "fetishism", a multiplicity of ritual actions with natural objects as deities' (*Magesa2002:14–15*). The purpose of missionaries in such conditions was to 'do away with' this religion based on superstition and convert Africans to the God known by Europeans. *Momen2009:356* contends that, African Traditional Religion was part of the category designated as primal religion. *Thorpe1992:5* states that, a major characteristic of primal religions is the fact that they originated and developed in relative isolation from other cultures.

In religious studies, according to *Wikipedia*, an ethnic religion is a religion or belief associated with a particular ethnic group. Ethnic religions are often distinguished from universal religions, such as Christianity, or Islam, which are not limited in ethnic, national or racial scope. The ATR refers to the indigenous religions of the African people. It deals with the cosmology, ritual practices, symbols, arts, society and so on. Religion relates to culture and society as they affect the world's view of African people. Generally, believe in an afterlife, one or more spirit worlds, and ancestor worship are important basic concepts in traditional religion.

Culture and Religion of the Yoruba

AdepejuOti&Oyebola Ayeni (2013), writing on *TheYoruba Culture of Nigeria: Creating Space for an Endangered Species*, revealed that, the name Yoruba was applied to all linguistically and culturally related peoples. The Yoruba People, of whom there are more than thirty-five million (*CIA World Fact book, 2012*), occupy the southwestern corner of Nigeria along the Dahomey border and extends into Dahomey itself. To the east and north, the Yoruba culture reaches its approximate limits in the region of the Niger River. However ancestral cultures directly related to the Yoruba once flourished well north of the Niger (*Fadipe, 1970*). They discussed further that, Portuguese explorers "discovered" the Yoruba cities and kingdoms in the fifteenth century, but cities such as Ile-Ife and Benin, among others, had been standing at their present sites for at least five hundred years before the European arrival. *Eades(1980)* posits that, archeological evidence shows that a technologically and artistically advanced Yoruba were living somewhat north of the Niger in the first millennium B.C., and they were then already working with iron.

According to *Adewale(1986)*, *Ifa* theology states that the creation of humankind arose in the sacred city of Ile-Ife where Oduduwa created dry land from water. Much later on, an unknown number of Africans migrated from Mecca to Ile-Ife (*Fadipe, 1970*). At this point the East Africans and West Africans synergised. Ile-Ife was the

first of all Yoruba cities, Oyo and Benin came later and grew and expanded as a consequence of their strategic locations at a time when trading became prosperous (*Akogun, 2011*). Ile-Ife, unlike Benin and Oyo, never developed onto a true kingdom; but though it remained a city-state, it had paramount importance to Yorubas as the original sacred city and the dispenser of basic religious thoughts (*CIA World, 2012*). Until relatively recent times, the Yorubas did not consider themselves a single people, but rather as citizens of Oyo, Benin, Yaba and other cities, regions or kingdoms (*Babatunde, 1992*). The old Yoruba cities typically were urban centers with surrounding farmlands that extended outward as much as a dozen miles or more. Both Benin and Oyo are said to have been founded by Ife rulers or descendants of Ife rulers. Benin derived its knowledge of brass casting directly from Ife (*Babatunde, 1992*), and the religious system of divining called *Ifaspread* from Ife not only throughout the Yoruba country but to other West African cultures as well (*Bascom, 1969*).

A common Yoruba belief system dominated the region from the Niger, where it flows in an easterly direction, all the way to the Gulf of Guinea in the south. It is no accident that the Yoruba cultural influences spread across the Atlantic to the Americas. Yoruba slaves were sent to British, French, Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the New World, and in a number of these places (Eades, 1980). Yoruba traditions survived strongly in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago. Yoruba religious rites, beliefs, music and myths are evident even at this late day. In Haiti the Yoruba's were generally called Anagos. Afro-Haitian religious activities give Yoruba rites and beliefs an honored place, and the pantheon includes numerous deities of Yoruba origin. Also, more than one third of Afro-Brazilians claim Yoruba ancestry (Fadipe, 1970). Yoruba culture is famously visible in Bahia, Brazil, manifesting in everything from its religion to its music; in Brazil, Yoruba religious activities are called Anago or Shango, and in Cuba they are designated Lucumi (*Babatunde, 1983; Akintoye, 2010*).

On the origin and location, *Adepeju Oti & Oyebola Ayeni (2013)* opined that, oral history of the Yoruba recounts Oduduwa to be the progenitor of the Yoruba and the reigning ancestor of their crowned kings. Upon the disappearance of Oduduwa, there was a dispersal of his children from Ile-Ife to found other kingdoms. Each making their mark in the subsequent urbanisation and consolidation of Yoruba confederacy of kingdoms, with each kingdom tracing its origin to Ile-Ife (*Babatunde, 1992*). After the dispersal, the aborigines became difficult, and constituted a serious threat to the survival of Ile-Ife. Thought to be survivors of the old occupants of the land before the arrival of Oduduwa, these people now turned themselves into marauders. They would come to town in costumes made of raffia with terrible and fearsome

appearances, and burn down houses and loot the markets. Then came Moremi on the scene; she was said to have played a significant role in the quelling of the marauders' advancements (*Babatunde, 1983*). But this was at a great price; having to give up her only son Oluorogbo. The reward for her patriotism and selflessness was not to be reaped in one life time as she later passed on and was thereafter immortalised. The Edi festival celebrates this feat till date (*Fadipe, 1970*).

Furthermore, they assert that the Yoruba people lived mostly in Southwestern Nigeria. Traditionally, the Yorubasorganised themselves into networks of related villages, towns and kingdoms; with most of them headed by an *Oba* (King) or *Baale*(a nobleman or mayor). The chief Yoruba cities/towns are Ilesa, Ibadan, Fiditi, OrileIgbon, Eko (Lagos), Oto-Awori, Ejigbo, Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Akure, Ilorin, Ijebu-Igbo, Ijebu-Oru, Ijebu-Awa, Ijebu-Ife, Odogbolu, Ogbomoso, Ondo, Ota, Ado-Ekiti, Ikare, Ayere, Kabba, Omuo, Omu-Aran, Egbe, Isanlu, Mopa, Aiyetoro - Gbedde, Sagamu, Iperu, Ikenn, Ogere, Ilisan, Osogbo, Offa, Iwo, Ilesa, Esa-Oke, Oyo, Ile-Ife, Iree, Owo, Ede, Badagry, Owu-Oyo, Owu-Egba, Ife-Olukotun, Ilaro, Oko, Esie, Ago-Iwoye, Iragbiji, Aagba, Ororuwo, Aada, Akungba-Akoko(*Johnson, 1921; Fadipe 1970*). There are other towns and cities with historical affiliation with the Yoruba people because they share one or more similarities together. Some of these cities and towns are Benin-city, Warri, Auchi and Okene. They have developed a variety of different artistic forms including pottery, weaving, beadwork, metalwork, and mask making. Most artwork is made to honour the gods and ancestors and since there are more than 401 known gods to the Yoruba there is much sculpture and artwork made in their honour(*Babatunde, 1983; Akintoye*).

Empirical Review

An Examination of the Role of Religion in Shaping Society

Religion occupies an important place in human society. It is believed by many thinkers that religion is instinctive in men. Almost all the aspects of society including economic and political regions are guided and controlled by it. It formulates human conduct, behaviour, social sense, morality, etc. Ideally, these are the roles of religion to society such that if these tenets are strictly kept, the society would be a decent place to live in. But in spite of all these, there are some dark sides of it, for which some thinkers are of the opinion that if religion is eradicated from the society, many bad things will vanish and people would live peacefully (*ShanjenduNath, 2015*).

As religion so its institutions also play an important role in social life. None can deny the fact that the different kinds of social institutions such as, domestic, economic and political have influences on religious institutions. But it is also true that these institutions are sometimes influenced by religious institutions. An important aspect of religion is prayer and different classes of people belonging to different castes of

society assemble in religious institutions for performing prayer and worship. By these activities, common feelings which thereby further generate common sentiments and fellowship amongst the worshipers of a particular religion are induced. Sometimes it is found that the members of a particular religion unite together, and for the greater interest of the society they perform different humanitarian activities. It is evident from the above that religious institutions perform not only their religious activities, they also discharge different types of activities related to social welfare such as, charitable hospitals, schools, homes for the homeless, etc.,. These institutions also run orphanages and collect money for the poor. It cannot be denied that religion has an external form of social control. The different activities of the people and their different spheres of social life are still influenced by religious rites and ceremonies. People generally express their religious feelings through rituals and ceremonies. It is also true that almost all the aspects of lives of primitive people were covered by religious practices, although these were crude in nature and did not have any precise organisation.

We find that there are different important occasions in our social life such as, birth, marriage, harvesting, hunting, death etc. and in all these activities, religious rites were performed in primitive societies. By doing these activities there developed common feelings and actions which are very much other than religious functions. Not only in primitive societies but also in modern societies religious activities occupy an important place. The different occasions of social life, such as birth, death, marriage, etc., religious rites are performed. Similar activities are found in the events related with economic life also. Moreover, it is found that, in almost all communities religious rites are common practices during various occasions in social life such as, inauguration of a new building, oath taking, etc. From the above description of the role of religion in social life, it is evident that a regular order of procedure is developed by religion in society and thus it helps to control the society.

Religion helps to shape the character of an individual and thereby it molds social life. It brings forth the sense of social value in the mind of people. In obeying the social laws or to respect the elders and to show sympathy towards the feelings of others, or to discharge the social obligations faithfully, the role of religion is immense. In those cases, it acts as a teacher. Not only this, a sense of fellow feeling amongst the people belonging to different communities is also taught by religion. Moreover, religion teaches that man's love and services to God will be real only if he loves and serves humanity. In developing moral consciousness amongst people, religion acts as an inspiring factor. Religion enforces uniformity of behaviour and it strengthens social solidarity and thereby acts as an instrument in stabilizing social order.

In the primitive age, the influence of religion was very great in controlling society and this feature is not totally lost even today. Social life of primitive people was

controlled by inspiring godly-fear in their minds but in the modern age, people are inspired not by fear but by the hope for the attainment of a virtuous and noble life. Thus, by fostering patriotic sentiments in men, religion helps to maintain social integration. In describing the role of religion, *Dr. S. Radhakrishnan* says that religion has innumerable effects. Religion not only guarantees values but it also gives meaning to life. Moreover, the confidence to go on adventures is also inculcated in our mind by religion. Thus, narrating the role of religion, he says, "Religion is the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evil and sordidness, saves us from greed, lust and hatred, releases moral power and imparts courage in the enterprise of saving the world". People live in the third world countries such as, India, Africa, Brazil etc. derive their sense of life from religion and as such religion is very important to them. They get the answers of many questions that appear in their minds. Questions such as, who are we? What is the purpose of life? What is life and what is death? Is there anything after this life? - are very common for human beings and they are curious to have answers to these questions. But in the third world countries science is not so developed to answer these questions.

Methodology

The paper utilised both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Questionnaires were administered to a plethora of respondents who, in one way or another, are stakeholders on the issue of culture and religion within the Yoruba nation of Nigeria. These include especially the known custodians of the Yoruba native religion and culture, Christian and Islamic leaders, and of course government officials in the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The total population considered for this study was Three thousand, two hundred (3,200). 30% of this figure, Nine hundred and sixty (960), which invariably is the sample size, was the number of questionnaires that was administered. Personal interviews were carried out on thirty-two (32) respondents purposively selected in thirty (30) locations within the southwestern states of Nigeria. This was done in order to complement information obtained from questionnaire administration. Data was also collected through secondary sources such as books, journal articles, internet sources and other documents. It should be stated here that the bulk of the information obtained for this study were from the above-mentioned secondary sources. The study adopted descriptive and content analysis as its methodological orientation to measure the role of culture and religion on a multi ethnic society like Nigeria with special emphasis on the culture and religion of the Yoruba of the southwestern Nigeria.

Discussion on Findings

The study findings revealed that, modern civilisation has adversely affected the efficacy of culture and religion in the Yoruba nation. The study here viewed the effect

of Western civilisation on the culture and religion of the Yoruba people. A good number of respondents agreed that a major effect of colonisation in Nigeria, and the Yoruba nation in particular, was the erosion of native culture and religion. Colonisation brought about the imposition of Western culture and religion on the people. The Western powers succeeded in convincing the natives into believing that the traditional religion in particular was fetish, evil and as such should be rejected. Education was a potent instrument that was used by the West to wipe off the people's culture and religion.

Then later came Islam. The Islamic religion brought Eastern civilisation, having the same effect as that of the West. From this standpoint, it could be said that the effectiveness of the traditional culture and religion was weakened by the introduction of the Western and Eastern cultures and religions. These two foreign influences gained upper hand because the native authorities, namely: the traditional rulers received them with open arms. They traded their cultural heritage and religion for such things as bottle of whiskey, mirror, bails of western fabrics, tobacco (cigarettes), etc. The popular slave trade further reduced the respect and dignity of the African people, the Yoruba inclusive, thereby giving a general impression that anything Africa was evil and whatever comes from it should be renounced and rejected.

However, the role of the different religions which, generally is to institutionalise godliness, encourage people to establish and maintain a cordial relationship with the Almighty God, instill in people the fear of God and ensure a consistent followership through a set of doctrines, has the ability to shape society on the part of descent moral etiquette and respect for lives. If the different religions keep to these tenets, Nigeria and Nigerians would indeed receive quick and spontaneous responses to matters affecting it and them.

But these different religions have all left their first estates. They have all compromised such that genuine results are rarely obtained these days. Religious centres are increasing by the day, yet their impacts are rarely felt as criminality, violence, banditry, terrorism, lawlessness, disrespect for constituted authorities, and government insensitivity to the plights and yearnings of the people has been increasing by the day in geometrical progression. In spite of the increasing number of worships centres, worshippers, prophets, priests, pastors, alfas and imams, evil had remained in the land. But as for whether this state of affairs could in any way be linked to the nation's multi-ethnic nature, reasonable number of respondents agreed that it does, as different ethnic groups structured their worship pattern based on their different ethnic setting. For instance, there are noticeable differences in the way Christians in the southeastern Nigeria worship from that of the southwest. This is because there are some things which their culture permits but that are not permissible

among Yoruba Christians of the southwest. This equally apply in the different religions. This difference is partly responsible for the weakness and inability of religions and cultures to effectively play their roles in society. It thus appears as if the purpose of religion and culture are not known by majority of people across ethnic groups; and when the purpose of a thing is not known, abuse is said to be inevitable. Respondents in their numbers identified abuses in the religious beliefs and general behavioural pattern of worshippers across ethnic divides in Nigeria. First, the different religions have been observed to have made money and the craving for worldly riches and wealth as the main focus of their services. Though they may give lip service to some other essential matters, from the body language of most religious leaders and actors, the issue of money is the denominator. The different religions have gone worldly, hence the craze and pursuit after worldly riches. For instance, research has it that Nigerian pastors rank highest among the richest all over the world. Secondly, most religious heads have dropped their different leaders' agenda and are busy pursuing their personal, usually selfish addenda. Furthermore, the study revealed that, some religious leaders across the ethnic settings often give in to biases or sentiments and water down messages they are asked by God to deliver to the nation. Some do so because of the fear of either losing their prestige, recognition, acceptance, pecuniary gains or of death. Respondents identified more dangerous violations such as religious leaders being fetish, diabolical, ritualistic, occultic and generally deceptive. Others are more title conscious than their fundamental role of improving righteousness and godliness in society. By and large, most of them are no good influences to follow as they have vastly deviated from following the precepts of the different progenitors.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that, the present abuses even in the socio-political and economic life of the nation is a function of an abused culture and religion. The present crop of leaders are products of one form of religion or another. Among the political elites too, there are Christians, Muslims as well as traditional religionists. Thus, they are expected, with their different religious backgrounds, to shape society to a vantage position of political stability, economic recovery, social justice and general moral and descent and egalitarian society. But as this research revealed, they are the ones actually pulling society apart in terms of dubiously cornering the nation's wealth to their personal pockets.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, and especially the responses elicited from the vast majority of respondents, the following recommendations are brought to the fore both to correct the anomalies in the country's religious practices and bring the Nigerian society to the level of good governance and an egalitarian society, the various ethnic

settings notwithstanding;

- v There should be an independent body to sanitise and correct the ills in the different religious groupings.
- v Certain standard requirements should be set by the same independent body on who should be a religious leader.
- v Mushroom religious centres should be closed down.
- v The issue of money should be deemphasised. The account of religious bodies and leaders should be audited periodically.
- v Religious leaders should be placed on the minimum wage of the country.
- v Religious leaders should have their personal businesses and means of livelihood aside from their religious duties.
- v Political leaders should be given targets of performance especially to promote decency and morality in society
- v The oath of allegiance of government functionaries should be followed up and periodically reviewed to measure compliance.

References

- Adepeju, Oti & Oyebola, Ayeni (2013) *Yoruba Culture of Nigeria: Creating Space for an Endangered Species*. Ibadan. Cross cultural communication Vol.9 No. 4 2013 pp.23- 29
- Adewale, S. A. (1986). Ethics in Ifa. In Abogunrin, S. O. (Ed.), *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria* (pp. 60-71). Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press.
- Akintoye (2010). *A History of the Yoruba people*. Dakar.
- Akogun, T. A. (2011). *Culture, identity and emancipation: Challenge to the Yoruba race. A key note address delivered at the Olokun Festival*.
- Babatunde, E. D. (1983). Kinshind behaviour and patrilineal ideology: A case study of ketu, Yoruba. *The Journal of business and Social studies* (n.s), 6, 51-65.
- Babatunde, E. D. (1992). *Culture, religion and the self: a Critical Study of Bini and Yoruba value systems in change*. Lewiton, N Y: Edwin Mallen Press.
- Bascom, W. A. (1969). Ifa Divination; Communication between gods and men in west Africa (pp. 493-497). Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Bascom, William (1969). *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, New York. Caderell, B. M., & Bradley, R. Hh. (1984) *Home observation for Measurement of the environment*. Little rock, or: University of Arkansas.
- CIA World Fact book. (2012). “Yoruba 22%” out of a population of 170.1 million

- (2012 estimate).Eades, J. S. (1980) *The Yoruba today*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.
- Fadipe, N. A. (1970) *The sociology of the Yoruba*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press. Fafunwa, B. A. (1971) *History of Nigerian higher education*. Lagos: Macmillan & Co (Nigeria) Ltd.
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. (1987). *Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hofstede, G. (1997) *Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw Hill. Holm, A., & Holm, W. (1995). Navajo language education: Retrospect and prospects. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 19(1), 141-167).
- Johnson, Samuel (1921). *History of the Yorubas*. London.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. (2010). Towards an African Cultural Renaissance. *Professor Bassey Andah Journal of Cultural Studies*. Volume 3, pp. 146-155.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. (2011). African and Western Perspectives on Being in Metaphysics. *AMAMIHE: Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol. 9. No. 1. pp. 149-165.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. (2012). The family, Justice and the Culture of Life: Afro-Christian Perspectives. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities (AFRREV IJAH)*, May 2012, Vol.1. No.2. pp.28-40.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. (2012). Inculturation and Christianity in Africa. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Vol. 2. No. 17, September, pp. 236-244.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. (2020). African Culture as an Ancient Landmark: Culture versus Identity. *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 6. No. 3. pp. 49-54.
- Ogunyemi, Yemi D. (Yemi D. Prince). (2010). *The Oral Traditions in Ile-Ife (The Yoruba People and their Book of Enlightenment)*. Palo Alto, USA: Academica Press.
- Reyhner, J., & Tennant, E. (1995). Maintaining and renewing native languages. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 19, 279-304.
- Wong Fillmore, L. (1991). When learning a second language means losing the first. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 6, 323-346.