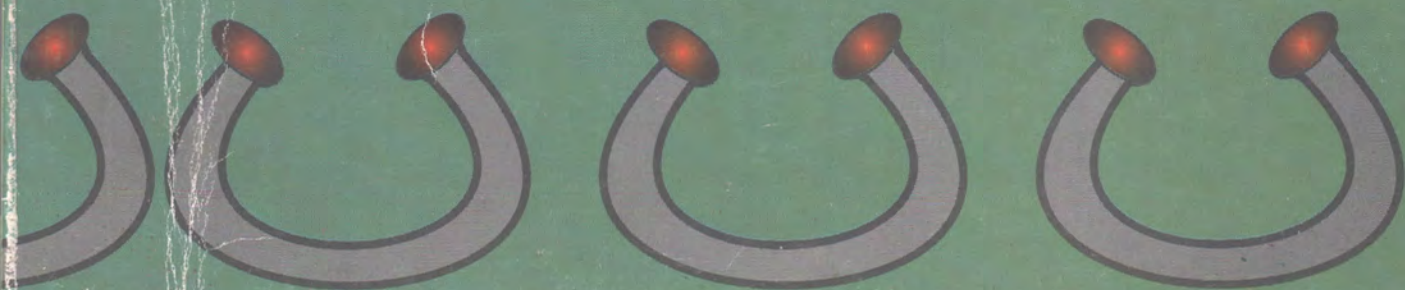


# Journal of RELIGIOUS STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES

University of Uyo, Uyo  
Nigeria

Vol. VII No. 2, December, 2012



# JOURNAL

*of*

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

---

---

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF UYO, UYO  
NIGERIA**

---

---

*Issn 1119-9709*

**Vol. VII. No. 2 December, 2012**

# TABLE OF CONTENT

1.	Climate Change and Environmental Determinism in the context of African Religious Beliefs. <i>By Anthony Z. Apenda</i>	..... 1-8
2.	Child-witch Phenomenon in Akwa Ibom State: Socio- Religious consideration <i>By Anthonia M. Essien &amp; Vincent E. Eyoh</i>	.....9-18
3.	Abortion Debate in Contemporary Christianity. <i>By Manasseh E. Udo Ph.D</i>	.....19-26
4.	Dominant Symbolic Omens and Premonition among the Ikwerre and what they presage. <i>By Olumati Rowland</i>	.....27-33
5.	Ethics in the Nigerian Public Service: Enhancing Role, Professionalism and Ethical Value. <i>By Essien D. Essien Ph.D</i>	.....34-39
6.	The Role of Christianity in social Integration in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State <i>By Umanah, Victor Sunday</i>	.....40-48
7.	Socio-Cultural practices leading to Child Death in Ancient Rome and Ibadan. <i>By Monica O. Aneni</i>	.....49-59
8.	Health care practice in Orthodox and Tiv Religious Cultures: A comparative Analysis. <i>By Terna Afella</i>	.....60-65
9.	Religious Factors in the Electoral Process and the quest for an Enduring Democracy: ..... in Nigeria. <i>By Olumuyiwa O. Familusi.</i>	.....66-78
10.	Ohafia as a Matrilineal society: Issues, Relevance and challenges: A Socio-Religious Study. <i>By Kalu, Chukwuma Amogu</i>	.....79-87
11.	The Practice of Sacrifice among the Benue People <i>By Andrew, Philip Adeg</i>	.....88-97
12.	A survey of History and Cultural Practices of some Ethnic Groups of North Central Nigeria before the advent of Christianity. <i>By Mapaiyeda, Solomon Makanjuola Ph.D</i>	.....98-112
13.	Understanding aspects of Tiv Religion and Marriage customs: A Retrospective view. <i>By A. Z. Apenda.</i>	.....113-120
14.	Environment And Housing: A Theological Analysis of Right to Shelter in Akwa Ibom State <i>By Donatus Pius Ukpong</i>	.....121-132

# 12

## A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY AND CULTURAL PRACTICES OF SOME ETHNIC GROUPS OF NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA IN PRE-CHRISTIANITY ERA

By

**MEPAIYEDA, SOLOMON MAKANJUOLA (Ph.D)**

### ABSTRACT

Any attempt to embark on writing the history of peoples and their cultural norms and practices is designed with a view to make readers have deeper understanding of the peoples, culture and politics of a particular geographical entity. Nigeria as heterogeneous state has over 250 ethnic groups with powerful ones exercising undue domination over the weaker ethnic groups.

Three significant factors necessitated the need to embark on this project. The first is the monumental and historical misplacement of Kogi and Kwara States in the North Central Nigeria, a product of colonialism and military rule in Nigeria. This argument is premised on the presence of a large population of the Yoruba in the two states which used to be part of Old Oyo kingdom.

Secondly, most scholars seem not to have taken adequate cognizance of the Yoruba stock in the two states under review. Attention had been centred on the Yoruba people and culture in south western Nigeria. Therefore, there is the need to fill the gap by documenting the history and culture of these peoples.

Furthermore, the paper articulates the implication of cultural contact with foreign religions. To an extent, moral laxity in the country is traceable to foreign influence on Nigerian peoples who abandoned their cultural heritage and fail to teach them to the succeeding generation.

The paper concludes by advocating a new orientation towards inculcating the good morals and values into the younger generation.

### 1. Introduction

In commencing discussion on the history of the peoples of the States under review, it might be important to state briefly the geographical spread of the areas occupied by the groups of people under review. Secondly, it may equally be necessary to mention that although there was no Kogi or Kwara State in Pre-Christian Era, discussion on the geographical spread would definitely account for the reason why some areas within the States have to be controlled by either the Northern or Southern regions in both the political terrain as well as religious circle.

The Ilorin Emirate which emerged in 1823 (Hogben and Kirk-Green, 1966:283-290) prior to the British Colonial rule was the only known constituted political authority in Pre-Christian era. Until 1817 Ilorin itself was part of old Oyo Empire in the Western province. However the palace coup staged by Afonja, Are-Ona Kakanfo (Commander-in-Chief) against his suzerain, the Alaafin of Oyo led to the carving out of Ilorin from Oyo Empire. (Adeleye 1971:36). Unfortunately, Afonja's rule in Ilorin was short-lived owing to the declaration of Jihad by Abd-al Salam, Alimi's son who overthrew him and established the Emirate system of government under the direct control of the Sokoto Caliphate (Adeleye 1971:36).

The Emirate covered Ilorin, Kaiama, Bussa and Pategi to the North. To the West and South, it shared boundaries with Oyo and Ondo Provinces. In the East, it covered areas populated by the Ibolos, Igbominas, Yagbas, down to Lokoja. This eastern part seems to be the most conducive area due to the presence of rivers and luxuriant grass favourable to cattle-rearing and farming. This attracted the Fulani and Hausa immigrants to settle there.

Two events towards the end of the nineteenth century undermined and seriously weakened the emirate system of government in Ilorin. The first was the attempt by Old Oyo to regain Ilorin which degenerated into frequent clashes (Hogben and Kirk-Green, 1966: 296-297). Secondly, the persistent Colonial interest in Ilorin spurred the Royal Niger Company to undertake military action against the emirate. (Garvin, 1977:16-17) And so through military invasion that swept Bida, Jebba and Ilorin in 1897, the British took control of administration by subjugating the Emir and his Baloguns and establishing a province in Ilorin in the place of emirate. (Hogben, 1967:294) The consequential effect of the establishment of the province was the demarcation and re-demarcation of boundaries which continued to be a recurrent feature in the administrative system of the province.

Kogi State is in the heartland of Nigeria. (Akamisoko, 2002:88) within the North Central geopolitical zone of the country. Though relatively a young State, its capital city, Lokoja, between 1899 and 1901 served as the administrative headquarters of Northern Nigeria and the Royal Niger Company. It shares common boundaries with Niger, Nassarawa, and the Federal Capital Territory to the North. To the East it is bounded by Benue State; to the South by Anambra and Enugu States and to the West by Edo, Ondo, Ekiti and Kwara State. (<http://www.kogistateofnigeria.org/otherpages/history.htm>). This strategic position has made it easy for people to see Kogi State as the most centrally located of all the States of the federation. The major towns of the State include Ajaokuta, Kabba, Okene, Idah, Isanlu, Koton-Farfe, Dekina and Lokoja. For the purpose of this thesis, the history of the people of Kabba, Igbira and Lokoja would be considered.

## II. The Okun People of Kabba

Kabba people, can be referred to as an ethnic or cultural group in Yorubaland which share similar historical origin with other peoples like the Egba, Ijebu, Ife, Ijesa and Ekiti (<http://www.kogistateofnigeria.org/otherpages/history.htm>), in Yoruba nation.

Kabba people are known as "Okun" for several decades owing to their style of greeting "O-kun o" meaning "well done". Other areas identified as Okun people are the Yagba living in Mopa, Isanlu Ponyan, Ife-Olukotun, Ayetoro-Gbede in Kogi State and part of Ekiti Local Government area of Kwara State. Kabba is the principal town in Oweland. The term "Owe" describes the people who reside in the town of Kabba as well as in the surrounding villages such as Ogbagba, Iduge, Gbeleko, Bolorunduro, Okedayo, Ayedun Egbeda,<sup>12</sup> Okeofa, Iyah, Ayongon, Adesuwa, Gbehin Kakun, Odo Baba, Obele and Ohakiti. (Fadipe, 1976:29). Kabba is about 247 Kilometers South-east of Ilorin, 78 Kilometers South-West of Lokoja and 14 Kilometers wide running south to Kabba-Ebira boundary. On the origin of Kabba or Owe which are used interchangeably, we have two notable versions. The most popular tradition among the people state that Oweland was founded by three brothers; Aro, Reka and Balaja (interview with Chief T. T Tolorunju). They were said to be hunters who migrated from Ile-Ife. In their course of hunting expedition, they came to the foot of three hills popularly known as Okemeta where Aro; the eldest instructed that they should observe some rest. Aro was said to have commanded thus, "Katu Eru kia mu akara je" meaning untie the load and lets eat the loaves there in" (Interview with Dr. S. Adekunle). This hill under which the three brothers had a long rest later became Katu hill. From there, they extended their hunting and farming to the foot of the fork-tree which was abundant in the region at the time. They used to climb the tree to have some rest. Information from H.S Bridel had it that Kabba derived its name from "the fork-tree which means "Igi-aba, Oke-Aba or Oka aba" (Bridel, 1931).

From that spot, further exploration of the region continued until the discovery of the third hill. This is the location of Odo-Ilu., a fertile area, prominent for its lofty grass where "Eregba" fruits and the large flowing rives (Ohe and Arelu) are situated. Thus the three brothers from Ile-Ife founded the three settlement Katu, Kabba and Odolu and gave them a common name "Owe"

Another version stated that one Obadiode, an hero, whose origin was not known, rather than the fact that he was from the Southern part of Nigeria, founded Oweland. He was said to have lived with his wives and sons on top of the hill above Kabba about thirteen generations ago. Having decided to move to the plain below, he divided the area into three wards known as Katu, Okaba and Odolu. Subsequently, he handed over these wards to his sons to rule.

This version although looks vague, yet shows one significant point which is absent in the earlier one. It traced the institution of Obaship to Obadiode, and this point is generally acknowledged by all sections of Oweland. On the origin of Kabba therefore, P.C. Bloyd asserts that little significance should be attached to these traditions, beyond the desire of the present day Kabba to be associated with other Yoruba (Biobaku, 1973:708) Nevertheless, the fact that Owe people believe that their leaders especially Obaro, Oba-dofin and Obajemu were descendants of Obadiode, make the traditions worthy of note.

### **Cultural Norms and Practices**

As regards the culture of the people, the practices were many. Discussing all of them would definitely be too wide for the purpose of this research. Therefore, discussion on the socio-cultural life of Owe people would be limited to some traditional festivals and cultural practices.

Firstly, there are three main traditional festivals in Owe: Eiyé, Oka and Ekiho festivals. The celebration of these festivals, otherwise known as Oro, dates back to antiquity. Oro Eiyé (Atanda, 1980:24.) which is the least of the festivals in Owe marks the arrival of new yam around July. Usually before its celebration, no one was allowed to bring new yam home. During the observance of the festival, sacrifices are offered to the ancestors whom the people through have been generous to have spared their lives throughout the period famine.

In case of Oka festival, its celebration is centered on the worship of Eborá Deity. It is the most prominent traditional festival in Oweland. The purpose is to seek peace, blessing and prosperity of the people and to avert any wrath of the gods.

The Ekiho festival is observed in the month of December which naturally ushers in famine seasons. The chief purpose of the celebration is to propitiate the ancestors to spare their lives throughout the people of famine and also to protect them from being infected by contaminated diseases. A dimension to the events is the wrestling contest organized around a camp-fire known as "Agura (Atanda, 1980:24) at night, and at dawn, flutes made from "Ighé" grass are blown to praise the gods of harvest.

Another important cultural phenomenon is the institution of the indigenous marriage system in Owe. In the past, marriage is considered to be the affair of the extended family, and not just the concern of the two individuals. This is so because Owe people like other Yorubas regarded marriage as a cohesive force. For this reason, the background of the family to which their sons or daughters would be married was usually investigated. Owe people would like to be convinced that there was no dangerous disease like leprosy, epilepsy, insanity or tuberculosis in such family. Again, they would make sure that the family was not notorious for debt, murder, evil magic, or any other societal vice. In addition, parents would also find out whether or not their families were in any way related. Due consultation with Ifa Oracle (Idowu, 1973:39) would have been made before betrothal. Today, this custom is not considered as relevant. Most young men and women settle the issue of marriage without reference first to their parents. Top on the priority list today is beauty and status rather than other considerations that would make their marriage long lasting. In our modern world, it seems that one of the reasons for breakages in marriage is the emphasis on individualism, a product of Christianity through civilization.

The concept of an intermediary known as "Alarino" which is almost phased out today was prominent in the past. Traditional marriage which took place in the night was an occasion of joy in both the bride's and bridegroom's houses. After praying for her happiness, peaceful union, fruitfulness and long life, the bride's parents handed her over to the eldest woman from the husband's family. She was then accompanied to her new home by some women and young girls,

where her chastity would be tested. It was a source of pride if the bride was discovered to be a virgin. In the case of a bride who had been proved unchaste, a symbolic message was invariably sent to her parents the following morning. Consequent upon this shameful message, the bride would have to face some measure of discipline both from her husband and also her own parents.

Another cultural norm and practice prevalent among Kabba people was the initiation rite. The first initiation into the Ebor deity was in 1913 (Fashagba, 1970: 24).. It was recorded that young men at the attainment of maturity were so initiated so as to enable them participate in the phenomenon of secrecy. Hence Onaiyekan quoted John as saying:

Only the males who have been initiated into the cult of the local titular divinity called Ebor could go up the wooded hill (Owoke) for worship during the festival. Children and women and strictly excluded(Onaiyekan, 1980:74).

Furthermore, initiation was also a necessary requirement for taking any chieftaincy title in Kabba. In addition, there was an initiation rite that is strictly performed by the women. This is known as "Ofosi religious cult" Women so initiated were considered as the wives of the Ebor deity hence they performed significant role at the installation of a new chief and burial ceremonies of titled holders in Kabba.

Moreover, Kabba people observed certain taboos. These taboos were the unwritten laws binding on all and sundry. In the past, no one was allowed to plant "Jokolo" (a kind of bean whiter and bigger than the Soya beans) because Ebor deity does not eat cake made of it. Two, rearing of pigs as domestic animals was disallowed because of certain diseases associated with it. Three, planting groundnut and beni seed were prohibited because of the hotness of the ground associated with it. Four, to clap hands at night was considered a disturbance to the gods, and to whistle in the night was to provoke the spirit. The taboos were veritable means of preventing health hazards and environmental pollution

Atanda observed that cultural norms were a product of Yoruba Traditional religion. They served the purpose of regulating people's social life which gave them a high standard of morality (Atanda, 1980: 28).

### **III. The People of Ebiraland (Anebira)**

The Ebira commonly known as 'Ebira-Tao' inhabit the land of Okene, Okehi, Adavi and Ajaokuta Local Government areas of Kogi State. They are considered to have settled in their present locations by the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Yakubu, 1994:9).

Yakubu quoted Dr. J.R Adiva as saying that "Ebiraland covers an area of about 9.000 Kilometers. The latter also tried to correct the misconception that the language that is spoken by them is called Ebira and the people refer to themselves as "Anebira" meaning people of Ebira. The pronunciation and the wrong spelling of Ebira as "Igbirra" came as a result of the Yoruba's influence which happened to be a dominant neighboring language and the influence of the early Mission School teachers most of whom, Adiva asserted were Yoruba. In his sub-mission, Yakuba Noah observed that the use of Igbirra instead of Ebira may have come as a result of the Yoruba' interpreter to the District officer during the British occupation of the area, who documented the mistaken acronym (Yakubu, 2002:24). Ebira people lived with this wrong identity for long time until 1957 when Dr. Onipe discovered that since 'gb' is not an alphabet in Ebira language but in Yoruba, the name should rather sound 'Eb' and not "Igb"

Historical facts available reveal that Ebira people originally came from Jukuns; passed through Idoma land and eventually Migrated en masse from there to Ebira Opete southward of the present Ajaokuta. From there, they spread to Igara (Etuno); a town in Akoko Edo area of Edo State. Those who settle at Okehi hills founded the districts known as Okengwe, Adavi, Ihima, and Okene in the then Kabba province of Kogi State.

The occupation of Ebira people is mainly farming. But one needs to mention that poor agricultural location resulting from rocky terrain and infertile soil compelled some Ebiras to further migrate to areas like Ekiti, Owo, Auchi, and Iseve among others. This situation has led most Ebiras to maintain two homes a permanent residence at home and a temporary one at farm centers. While Ebira men engage themselves in farming, the major economic activity of the women is weaving of cloth of different designs and texture of domestic used as well as export purposes.

### **Traditional Beliefs and Cultural Practices**

Traditional Religion in Ebiraland is not different from other world religions. This is evident in the fact that the Ebiras are notoriously religious. Their religion permeates all the departments of life to the extent that it has become part and parcel of their daily lives. Their traditional religion referred to as "Aheke Ozi Ete" mean "the religion of their forefathers". The Ebiras are not left out of the belief in the Supreme Deity' yet evidences abound the He could be approached through different means.

Their concept of the Supreme Being (God) is similar to that of Ashanti people of Ghana. While Ebira people call God "Ohomorihi" meaning "the giver of rain", G. Parrinder asserted that the Ashantis believe that God is in the sky, hence the necessity for daily offerings in pots which are put on the roofs of their huts for the great God of the sky.(Parrinder, 1974:57). The Ebiras identify God with rain judging from their sole dependence on rain for their agricultural activities. For the fact that water is needful for life, they have the view that the 'king' who gives rain is the Great creator.

Apart from this concept of the Supreme Being, The Ebiras believe in environmental and ancestral spirits as means through which sacrifices are offered to appease the Supreme Deity. These spirits called 'Oris' are often believed to be in the forests, streams, rivers and hills.

An interesting aspect of their tradition is the doctrine of reincarnation which surfaces everywhere in Ebiraland. Yakubu stated the when a baby is born, the question on the lips of Ebira Relatives is "Ene Ve" meaning "Who has come. By this they would want to know whether it is the old father or mother who died recently that has come back to life again. Hence we have names that are evidences of this belief such as "Adava" meaning "Father has come back", and "Onootu" (Oni Ozutu) meaning "the one sent by Ozu generally refers to the dead relation whose spirit is believed to be incarnate in the living. Ehusani posited that "Ozu" is also used to mean one's guardian angle.

Discussing marriage in Ebira land is like discussing the African marriage system. Ebira, native law and custom give room for polygamy. It reads, "There shall be no limit to the number of wives a man may have at any time" (Yakubu, 2002:62).The imposition of monogamy at the inception of Christianity on Ebira people is viewed as Whiteman's oppressive measures and a sign of white supremacy. The preparation to marriage in Ebiraland is very similar to that of Kabba people.

In conclusion, a prominent custom among Ebiras in the olden days was slavery. High level of poverty has been given as a factor responsible for the practice. It is said that most parents sold their children in exchange for food. Another reason advanced for the prevalence of slavery was the coming of the Arabs who invaded the area in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. During this period, some Ebiras were captured as slaves.

### **IV The People of Lokoja,**

Lokoja, the headquarters of Kogi State is in the middle belt of Nigeria. The city is sandwiched between a range of intimidating hills called "Mount Patti" and the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue. Lokoja lies on the right side of the Okene-Abuja road at kilometer seventy-six. It has been observed that this strategic location and the safety provided by Mount Patti contributed to the peopling of the city.



Historically, Lokoja came to the limelight in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when European explorers like Mungo Park, McGregor Laird, the Lander Brothers, Captain Troller, Williams B. Allen and Balfour Baikie among many others ventured to explore of the Niger and its territories at various times. (Akamisoko, 2002:88). The motive of their exploration was to find market for European industries.

By 1860, there was already a British settlement in Lokoja. warehouses, stores and factories were already established along the River Niger.(Akamisoko, 2002:88). Ezebube observed that most of the structures are still standing today. Apart from these structures, Lokoja is inundated with relics of its past as well as natural landmarks of tourist importance such as Holy Trinity Primary School (established by Bishop Crowther) in 1867, Lugard's summer House on Mount Patti; the iron of liberty, a reminder of abolition of slaves set free in 1860's; a concrete cenotaph in the heart of the city where the flags of the Royal Niger Company and the Union Jack exchanged positions on January 1,1900; the World War cenotaph which carries the names of fallen heroes in the first and Second world wars; and the European Cemetery for government officials, white missionaries and Sierra Leonean Missionaries and officials who died in Lokoja. The city boasts of the relics of the first prison and the first bank vault in Nigeria. Lokoja served as the first administrative headquarters of Nigeria after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria by the British Colonial Government under Sir Fredrick Lugard in 1901-1902

Therefore, it is no gainsaying to assert that Lokoja belongs to the class of cities which embraced political, commercial and religious prominence. A striking feature of the city is the diversity of ethnic heterogeneity. Prominent among the ethnic groups are the Nupe, Yoruba, Hausa, Igala, Ebira, Oworo, Bassa-nge and Kakanda. The presence of these tribes has led to the use of many languages in the area. Hence, Akamisoko observed that "the highest concentration of the multi-lingualism in Nigeria is to be found in Lokoja". (<http://www.kogistateofnigeria.org/otherpages/history.htm>).

Before the penetration of the Europeans around 1830, the first settlers were said to be the Bassa-nge and the Oworo.(Akamisoko, 2002:90). The Bassa-nge were of Nupe stock. Originally they were inhabitants of Gbara in the Nupe Kingdom. Quoting Nadel, Akamisoko asserted that the Bassa-nge migrated to Lokaja from Nupe kingdom in 1759 following a dynastic Feud.

The Oworo were of Yoruba stock. They were said to have migrated to Lokoja area from Ile-Ife around 1801. (Akamisoko, 2002:90). Inter-tribal disputes as well as the love for adventure and hunting are factors that accounted for their migration. The Hausa migrated from Kano, Sokoto, Katsina and Kebbi for trading, fishing and farming.

At this juncture, it would be difficult to discuss various traditions, religious beliefs and cultures of the ethnic nationalities of Lokoja. But it could be sufficient to asset that each ethnic group is a reflection of its place of origin. While the Nupe emphasized more on Ifa oracle, the Oworo (Yoruba) worshipped the Supreme Being (Olodumare) as well as other divinities that they worshiped in Ile-Ife. So also are the other ethnic groups who worship what they believe in.

## **V The People of Ilorin**

Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State is located on the fringes of the Savannah region to the South and North of the forest Zone. It is bounded to the South by Oyo and Osun States, in the North by Niger State with Abuja to the East.( <http://www.kwarastategov.com/about.htm>).

Omotoye asserted that local traditions associate the name of Ilorin with some of its occupational activities such as hunting elephant where they were commonly found (ilu-erin, place of elephants) or where people engage in iron work (ilu-rin, place of iron) or ilo-irin- Sharpening of iron(Omotoye, 1998:106). Despite the fact that there is no precise evidence at our disposal concerning the establishment of Ilorin, we have the record to show that three generations of the family of Afonja had lived in Ilorin village before Afonja brought it to limelight about the last decade of eighteenth century. Following his appointment as "Are Ona-

Kakanfo" the commander-in-chief of Oyo Empire's provincial army by Alaaḥin Awole about 1796, Afonja tried to assert his independence from the Alaaḥin of Oyo. To achieve and maintain this, he joined forces with Solagberu, the leading Yoruba Muslim of Ilorin, and the Fulani and Hausa mercenaries (Omotoye, 1998:172).

Unfortunately for Afonja, Alimi (a Fulani Muslim) and his descendants regarded him as a traditionalist, hence Abd-al-Salam (son of Alimi) Murdered Afonja and made Ilorin the Southern outpost of the Jihad. Omotoye opined that the event was the genesis of the suppression of the Yoruba traditional religion in preference for Islam in Ilorin. With the growth of Islam in Ilorin and after the consolidation of the Emirate, it was observed that attempts were made to stop the practice of the traditional Yoruba religion.

### **Traditional Religious Beliefs**

Contrary to reports that suggest the non-existence of Traditional Religion in the city, Ilorin like any other Yoruba society believed in Olodumare, the Supreme Being. They worshipped him through divinities like-Ogun, Obatala and Sango among others. The most prominent traditional festival in Ilorin before the establishment of the Emirate system was Egungun and Ifa. The festivals are among the commonest festival in any Yoruba community.

Festivals serve as religious and social phenomenon in Yoruba Society. According to Emile Durkherm:

Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community... to those who adhered to them. (Durkhein, 1915:47)

The domination of the political administration of Ilorin by the Fulani/Hausa necessitated the policy of making Islam the official religion in the Emirate. Traditional Religion and celebration of Traditional festivals are regarded as "idolatry" in the Emirate. This negative attitude to the celebration of traditional festivals has earned the community a derogatory appellation among other Yoruba people represented by expression such as

Ilutobi to yii ko leegun  
Esin leegun won  
Oko loro won.

A city as big as this without masquerade  
Horse is their masquerade  
Spear is the festival there (Jawondo, 2002:163).

From research, it is observed that Ilorin community celebrates traditional festival such as Egungun (Masquerade), Ifa worship and other rituals as against the view of Danmole and some Islamic fundamentalists who claim that Ilorin is void of traditional rituals. Danmole posited that there is no evidence for the existence of important traditional Yoruba shrines in Ilorin before 19<sup>th</sup> century. But Ibrahim Jawondo said,

Adherents of Traditional African Religion largely populated Ilorin up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. This could be substantiated by the assertion that Shaikh Alimi could not stay in Ilorin at the first visit because it was a land full of idolators (Jawondo, 2002:163).

Some took to worshipping nature like the Asa river, Sobi hill, mountains and rocks, Baobab tress, land and forest and other physical phenomena. There was the ancestral worshippers who venerated the tombs of the ancestors and deified them. There were the Egungun

and Igunnu Masquerades too. Some professional worshipped gods that were spiritually conceived as having connection with their Jobs. For instance, most farmers worshipped the goddess of land and fertility (ORisa Oko), the hunters worshipped the god of Iron (Ogun), so also were the blacksmiths. There were also spirit (Oro) worshippers. They worshipped the spirit of twins (Ibeji) and triplets.

Some taboos were woven around the gods and goddesses to inculcate the spirit oneness and more importantly, instill moral codes and respect for cultural values into the minds of the youths. It is astonishing to note that some of these practices still exist today though secretly. Sacrifices of all kinds are seen at popular road junctions, extreme outskirts of the town, along farm routes and on farmlands. This implies that the drastic steps taken by the Emirs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to stamp out African Traditional religious practices in Ilorin only succeeded in suppressing it (Jawondo,2002:164).

At times, in order to rid the land of traditional religions, adherents were sponsored to Mecca. For instance, the house of Anafi Ajala, a renowned Babalawo of immense repute, was ransacked and all the paraphernalia of the Ifa oracle and charms were burnt. He is now an "Alhaji". Oludare Olajubu has done an excellent study on *Who is Who* in Ilorin Babalawo (Olajubu, 1992:2). This is a clear indication that there are many believers in traditional religion in Ilorin. But they entertain the fear of being intimidated, if they should practice their faith in public.

There is also the constitutional rights and provision for an individual to adhere to any religion of his or her choice. The constitution of Nigeria (1979) sections 37 and 39 guarantees freedom of worship. Equally, Nigeria is regarded as a secular State, whereby no religion is officially superior to the other. In Yoruba society in particular, the issue of religious liberty and religious pluralism are recognized and tolerated; it is possible to find people of different faiths in the same household living peacefully. Hence, religion is seen as unifying phenomenon.

### Cultural Norms and Practices

The people of Ilorin are lovers of music. During ceremonies like marriage, naming, burial and religious events, musicians were always present at the occasions. The musicians were at first comedians who entertained the public. They later turned praise-singers who eulogized families, lineages, clans and individuals (Jawondo,2002:164). The musicians up to the 1823 were fed and given farm produce. By 1910, valuable personal belongings were added. Such ceremonies and festivals were characterized by pomp and pageantry. All sorts of locally made alcoholic drinks as well as palm wine were served to people. Yoruba, the lingua franca, was the language of business and of the musicians mostly Yoruba. The performing musicians were usually from the lower class of the community. The society saw them as lazy individuals who could not sweat for their earnings (Jawondo,2002:164).

Another aspect of the cultural life of the people of Ilorin is the Fulani/Hausa culture that dominated the Yoruba/Ilorin community. This dominance could be seen in the naming of a child. The naming of a child is one of the social ceremonies among the Yoruba. In Yorubaland, names are not given to children without genuine reason. There is a saying that "Ile la n wo so omo I'oruko", meaning we consider the state of affairs in the house before we name a child. In other words the parents would look at the circumstances surrounding the family when the child is born before a name is given to him.

Even though Ilorin is a Muslim dominated community, the Yoruba Muslim still give, at least, a Yoruba name to their children apart from the Muslim names. This results in names like Yusuf Lanre Badmus, Abubakar Olusola Saraki, Abdulahi Olusola Mohammed, and so on. These are a demonstration of an attachment to their Yoruba roots. But recently, the present Emir jettisoned and rejected his Yoruba name *Kolapo*. According to him, he should henceforth be addressed, as Alhaji Ibrahim Zulu-Gambari (*Tribune*, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1995, P.1). This is an indication that the Emir is merely influenced by the Fulani/Hausa, affinity, in spite of the fact that he bore the name *Kolapo* for about fifty-six years.

The Afonja descendants in Ilorin and some prominent Yoruba leaders like Chief Joshua Olawoyin have spoken against the denunciation and rejection of the Yoruba name by the Emir. A group of Kwara State solidarity group, Lagos branch, has equally condemned the act of the Emir. According to the release, "the Ilorin Fulanis are not full blooded Fulanis, the late Alhaji Sulu Gambari bore the appellation "Alabi Opo Omo Laife" which is not a Fulani appellation. The Emir was advised not to sever his blood relationship with his Yoruba brothers.

## **VI. The Ibolu People of Offa**

Samuel Johnson described Offa people as "Yoruba of Ibolu extraction in Old Oyo Empire (Johnson, 1921:79). He alluded to the fact that among the notable rulers of the Old Oyo Empire was the Olofa of Offa who was the head of all Obas in Ibolu country. This shows that Offa held an important position in the Old Oyo Empire. Tracing the origin of Offa is like discovering that of the history of Yoruba race, which is a difficult task to undertake. Since it could not be stated with absolute certainty when Offa was founded, most of what we know of its origin is from oral traditions carefully preserved and handed down from generation to generation. However, majority of the historians believed that Offa town was founded by Olalomi popularly known as Olofa-gangan-meaning "one whose spear straightly attacks objects". He was said to be a prince from Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba race. Samuel Johnson maintained that Olalomi's first port of call after leaving Ile-Ife was Oyo-Ile where hostility from the people as well as unfavourable climate forced him to leave and journeyed through River Naika, on the way to Irra town (Johnson, 1921:79). Also stiff opposition from the Nupes around the place led to further migration to Iloffa, Offa-Oro, Offa-Irese where he finally settled and evolved chieftaincy institution.

That the people of Offa are from Ile-Ife is supported by Hermon's record of 1929 (Hermon, 1929), where he asserted that the progenitor or founder (Olalomi) brought "Ipon" and the "Iaris" (Servants and crowns) from Ile-Ife. The "Ipon" is known as "Edi" in Ile-Ife. It is on record that the coming of the Fulani Jihadists from Ilorin put an end to the wearing of the crowns in Offa. Yet these antiquities are still kept in the palace of the Oloffa till date.

According to Abodunrin, geographically, Offa is a gap town situated between the Yoruba and Kukuru hills with a fine and conducive weather all the year round. The climatic condition is the basis of occupation of Offa people, which is farming (Abodunrin 15). Apart from this, hunting which was traceable to Olalomi was the game of the people in the past. Other economic ventures commonly found among the Yoruba, like weaving, goatry and so on occupy offa people.

Similar to this was the worship of Omoka Moremi whose shrine is frequented by Kings, Queen (oloris), Princes and Princesses. Moremi was a native of Offa but married to an Ile-Ife warrior. She was deified in Ile-Ife for her bravery in preventing the Igbo warriors from carrying Ife into slavery. Dopamu likened her to the Jewish Deborah, a political and military leader.

## **Cultural Norms and Practices**

A prominent cultural practice in Offa was the observance of a taboo that surrounded child-birth. For seven or nine days depending on the sex of the baby, the mother was forced to eat only Ate soup. Ate is a kind of Okro soup devoid of oil or salt in that condition. People traced this practice to the maltreatment given to slaves married by Offa kings. The kings wives (who were indigenes) would only cook Ate for the foreigner after the delivery of babies under the pretence that some palace deities forbade the consumption of oil or salt. When the slaves later discovered the hypocrisy, they were said to have cursed the entire community that any woman in Offa who refused to eat Ate, would not have her baby survived. Hence it became a general norm for all women to observe.

## VII. The People of Igbomina

An answer to the question 'who are the Igbominas? Has been attempted by various authors from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. W.H Clarke (1854-1858) did not regard them as Yoruba even though he knew that they spoke the Yoruba language. He said 'we were no longer in Yoruba land, though the Yoruba language is spoken... we had entered the country of the Igbomina which as to number of towns, is scarcely second to either Yoruba proper or Ijesha' (Clarke, 1972:49). Samuel Johnson in 1897 regarded them as "Oyos with Ekiti sympathies"(Johnson, 1921:109). P.A Talbot in 1926 regarded them as true Yoruba under the sovereignty of the Alaafin but under the direct leadership of Orangun of Ila (Talbot, 1969:288). H .B Hermon-Hodge in 1926 said that they were "another branch of Yoruba stock whose exact origin in as doubtful as that of the Ekiti"(Hermon-Horde, 1929: 37). C.W. Michie saw them as heterogeneous people who, although mainly Yoruba, arrived from different places and at different times in various groups to settle in Igbominaland between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Michie, 1959:115-119).

The Igbominas are no doubt Yorubas and their language is easily understandable by any Yoruba man. They are found mainly in present day kwara State in Irepodun and Ifelodun Local Government Areas with headquarters at Omu-Aran and Share respectively. However, Ila the town which most early writers regarded as the land of all Igbomina, is in Osun State.

On the etymology of the term 'Igbomina', Olasehinde stated that it was derived from 'Ogbon', a short cutlass which the people believed their progenitors used in clearing the thick forests from Ile-Ife to their present location. He concluded that, we have Igbomina from "Ogbonmona" meaning "cutlass knew the way"(Olasehinde, 2003:1).

The popular account of the etymology of the word Igbomina from oral tradition was linked with Esinkin Olomu who was reputed to be a prince and great warrior at Ile-Ife. He was believed to have possessed "Ogbo (a cult object in form of a club) with which he led the way because with the help of "Ogbo' the way was always clear to him. Hence, his appellation 'Ologomona' from which Igbomina was derieved.

Igbomina is located to the South-east of Ilorin within longitude 8<sup>o</sup> and 9<sup>o</sup> North, and latitude 4<sup>o</sup> and 6<sup>o</sup> East. It is bounded on the West by Ilorin on the North-east by Yagba, on the South-east by Ekiti, on the North by the Nupe, on the South-east by the Ibolos and on the South by the Yoruba of Oyo State. Share is located on the strip of land which stretches a little further into the north and so Share has closer links with the Nupe than other Igbomina towns.

### Cultural Norms and Practices

Discussing the customs of Igbomina people is like discussing the customs and practices in Yorubaland because of their similarities. As a matter of fact, marriage, naming and funeral ceremonies, dressing and greetings in Igbominaland are very similar to what obtains in other Yorubaland.

The only cultural practice well celebrated in Igbominaland in the past is the institution of Igbo Song, which served as a guardian of morality and a catalyst of social cohesion when it comes to preservation of moral values. Ayantayo observed that "Igbo Song was not just a medium of expression or entertainment, it assessed ethical standard that cuts across social, political, economic, business and religious life of the Igbomina (Ayantayo, 2002:50). Few of the ethical contents of Igbo Song would be discussed in details.

The first ethics is social justice. In Igbomina society, high premium is placed on the virtue of social, justice, which according to Braham entails giving to individuals in the society their dues accordingly. Justice also embraces equality and freedom of all persons. In other words, social justice is the application of general principle of justice to the social order, such as distributive justice and retributive justice. To claim that social injustice exists is to claim that a future or practice of social order violates a general principle of justice. On this note, an Igbo Song, which tends to ensure justice and to move social injustice, says:

Eeyan e yato  
 Oruko lo yato  
 Eeyan e yato  
 B'inaki se je l'obo se je  
 Oruko lo yato  
 Eeyan e yato  
 Ni idi eyi ohun ti se ti Taiye file lowo  
 Ohun ti se ti kehinde e file lowo  
 Kaye le r'orun fun gbogbo wa  
 Eeyan e yato

There is no difference among persons  
 Only names differ  
 There is no difference among persons  
 Chimpanzee's head does not differ from that of monkey  
 Only names differ  
 There is no difference among persons  
 For this reason  
 Give Tayo his due  
 Give Kehinde his due  
 In order to make the world habitable for all of us  
 There is no difference among persons (Ayantayo, 2002:55).

Through the above, Igbo singers are trying to emphasize the equality of all men in the society and perhaps before God who created all things. This understanding forms the religious argument in favour of equality of human beings. Arising from this, the Igbo singer is concerned about fair play in the society. In other words, there is no room for discrimination among members of Igbomina society irrespective of gender, political or religious difference. In this sense, the Igbo singer sees justice as a condition for a peaceful and happy society. This thought is rooted in Igbomina religious mythology. To the strong person who attempted to use his/her position in society to oppress the weak person, an Igbo song warns.

Esu s'omo asa  
 Ko f'owo kan omo adiye  
 Esu s'omo asa  
 Ko f'owo kan omo adiye

Should hawk be bedeviled!  
 To harm chicken  
 Should hawk be bedeviled!  
 To harm chicken (Ayantayo, 2002:56).

The song warns powerful people to refrain from oppressing weak ones. The relationship between a powerful person and a weak person is likened to the relationship between a hawk and a chicken. The masses are ready to defend the weak. That is why they dare the powerful to oppress the weak. The powerful people, in the context of the song comprise the rich, the people in power, the affluent, the kings, princes, and princesses, while the weak consists of the pauper, slaves, beggars, destitutes, the disadvantaged, and handicapped people.

Another ethics focuses on sexual morality. It is important to note that the Igbomina people like other African nations, place high premium on fidelity in marriage. Therefore, extra-marital sex for female and incest are denounced. Wives are to be loyal and faithful to their husbands. Anything short of this is interpreted as violation of marriage morality. A woman who violates this ethics by committing adultery is not only condemned privately, but the Igbo sings

sing her misdeed publicly. An example is in this song:

Ewure d'oko losan an  
Ilu e mu  
Aguntan d'oko losan  
Ilu mu o  
Jiyegbe d'oko losan an  
Ilu e mu  
Ti e lele o

Goats had sex publicly in the afternoon  
The public people did not arrest them  
Sheep had sex publicly in the afternoon  
The public did not arrest them  
Jiyegbe (name of a person) had sex in the afternoon  
The public arrested her  
This case is abnormal

Ojukan lada a ni  
Eyin dokodoko  
E e ma gbo o  
Agbere sise ti je?  
Oro e suwon  
E ma san se  
Eyin dokodoko.  
E maa gbo o

Nitori pe  
Ojukan lada a n ni

Cutlass has only one sharp face  
Listen you adulteress  
Why adultery?  
It is not a good act  
Please desist from it  
You adulterers  
Listen, cutlass has only a face (Ayantayo, 2002:57).

The song expresses the mind and the attitude of Igbomina to sexual intercourse regarding when and where it takes place. While animals are allowed to have sexual affairs in daylight, it is a taboo for human beings to do the same thing in the afternoon. The Igbomina like other Yoruba society believe that sex is a secret and private affair, which should be done privately for an important reason. Having sexual affair during the daylight perhaps when the children are yet to sleep is considered a bad act because it is a way of exposing the youth to sexual matters at a wrong time. Therefore, sex is considered a nocturnal activity. To enforce discipline on the sexual matter, the Igbomina make sexual affairs in the afternoon a taboo. Within this understanding, Juyegbe's sexual activity in the afternoon with another man is considered abnormal because it violates the Igbomina sexual ethics.

The second song however extols the virtue of faithfulness in marital life by emphasizing that like a cutlass with one sharp-face; a woman should have one husband. This is a way of reiterating that husband and wife must be faithful to each other. This song is a means of promoting fidelity in marriage. This message is relevant today as various advertisements are being sponsored by United National, family support movements, and WHO to promote fidelity

in marriage in order to stem the spread of HIV/AIDs in African. Though we have no statistics of HIV/AIDs victims among the Igbomina people, but we believe this song will be relevant as a way of preventing illicit sex, which could lead to the spread of HIV/AIDs in our society. The whole issue points to the sanctity and sacredness of sex in marriage. The fact being buttressed here is that adultery is an immoral acts, which violates African sexual ethics.

Furthermore, an ethical song addresses religious tolerance. Arising from the fact that the Nigerian society is religiously pluralistic, Igbo singers emphasize a need for religious tolerance. This is an atmosphere in which adherents of traditional religion are tolerant of Muslims and Christians who are members of the society. In the same manner, Muslims are expected to be tolerant of Christians and vice versa. Tolerance, in broader perspective, is conceived as making room for other people's beliefs, opinion, customs, behaviour, tastes, choices and so forth. It is also the recognition of genuine difference in people's intelligence, physical structure, wealth, social position, and relations, merits, opportunities and achievements. Recognizing the fact that there can never be uniformity in a religiously pluralistic community an Igbo song reiterates:

Esin e yato  
Olorun kan ni gbogbo wa n bo  
Ni dudu ni, ni funfun ni  
Ni idi eyi, eyin eeyan a maa gbo  
Esin e f;aja  
Ninu Olorun  
Ke si yato o  
Esin e faja.

There is no difference in religions  
We all worship the same God  
Both white and black  
For this reason, listen my people  
There is no reason for religious conflicts;  
In God, there is no disparity;  
There is no reason for religious conflict (Ayantayo, 2002:59)

It is deducible from the above that cases of religious bigotry, fanaticism crises and conflicts which pervade the contemporary religious world are uncalled for; they have no room in the social morality of the Igbomina. The issue of religious tolerance in Nigeria as explored by the Igbo singer is opposite today as a few religious leaders are using religion as a tool to perpetuate division and rancor at national and international levels. In spite of proliferation of religious groups in Igbomina, we are not aware of any case of religious conflict among people of living faiths. However, the message here, if well popularized outside Igbomina society could help stem the tide of religious conflict in Nigeria and abroad. This is important because we are cognizant of how religion was used negatively in the Middle East to cause conflict that has led to loss of lives and properties. From the above, there is need for religious tolerance in order to bring about peace in the world. Apart from the issue of religious tolerance, Igbo song is also concerned about cooperation in social relations and the virtues of good character.

## VIII Conclusion

The richness of the culture of the peoples discussed above can not be over-emphasized, given their roles in the regulation of morality, prevention of health and environmental disasters, promotion of gender equality, peaceful co-existence among adherents of different faiths in the society, protection of human rights and of course maintaining long lasting marriage, among others. Though colonialism brought all ethnic groups under one administrative system, yet Nigeria has failed in enhancing the socio-economic development of the country. This is



attributable among other factors to its inability to harness the developmental potentials in cultural pluralism. On the contrary, it allows contacts with Christianity and Islam to becloud the cultural potentials which leads the various ethnic groups to adversarial relationships capable of causing disintegration. This research, therefore, suggests that, irrespective of modern civilization, the progressive aspects of Nigerian culture should be upheld and incorporated in the education curriculum of the nation for the purpose of teaching both the present and future generations.

Secondly, this work recommends that the dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria should desist from using their political power and influence in oppressing the subgroups who by fate found themselves where they now live in.

In conclusion, the factors of linguistic homogeneity, common tradition and common ancestry are enough to accord the Yoruba stock in Kogi and Kwara States due recognition most especially by historians of Yoruba descent. The former have suffered generational neglect in the history of Nigeria

## REFERENCES

- Abodunrin, D (No date), *History of Kwara Diocese of the African church*, Offa, Dee Root.
- Abogunrin, S.O (1989), 'Ethics in Yoruba Religion Traditions, in world Religions and Global Ethics,' New York: A New Era Book.
- Adeleye, R.A (1971), 'Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906', Faculty of History University of London.
- Akamisoko, D (2002), *Samuel Ajayi Crowther in the Lokoja Area*, Ibadan, Sefer Books.
- Atanda, J.A (1980), *An introduction to Yoruba History*, Ibadan, University Press.
- Awolalu, J.O & Dopamu, P.A (1979), *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan, Onibonoje Press.
- Awoniyi, T.A (1975) 'The fundamental Basis of Yoruba Traditional Education in Yoruba Oral Traditions', Ife Languages and Literature Series, No 1.
- Ayantayo, J.K (2002) 'The Religious and Ethical significance of Igbo song to the Contemporary Igbomina in Osun State' JARS, Unilorin, Department of Religions, Vol. 16.
- Biobaku, S.O (1973), *Source of Yoruba History*, London, Oxford Press.
- Bowen, C (1963) 'Hill Settlements and their Abandonment in Western Yoruba', Africa, Vol 35.
- Braham, R.L (1981), *Social Justice*, London, Martinus Nijhoff Publisher.
- Bridel, H.S (1931), 'Note on Owe History'. Kaduna, National Archive.
- Brown, L (1987), *Conservation and Practical Morality: Challenges to Education and Reform*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Clarke, W (1972), *Travels and Exploration in Yoruba land*, Ibadan, University Press.
- Durkheim, E (1915), *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, London, Allen and Unwin.

- Ezebube, Chukwurah (2002). George Bako: *The Controversial Fool For Christ*, Lagos, CSS Ltd.
- Fadipe, N (1976). *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan, University Press.
- Fashagba, S.O (1970) 'The Evolution of Kabba Settlement' ABU Zaria.
- Garvin, P.J (1977). 'The impact of Colonial Rule on the Ilorin Economy 1897-1930', *Central Point*, Vol.1. No.1.
- Gella, Y.T (1977). 'The Cities of the Confluence' *Nigeria Magazine*.
- Hermon-Horde, (1929), *Cazetter of Ilorin Province*, London.
- Hogben, C.J and Kirk-Greene, A.H.M (1966). *The Emirate of Northern Nigeria*, London, OUP.
- Ibrahim, Y.A (1985), 'Politics in Ebiraland, the centre and the Peripheries', EPA Lecture Series.
- Idowu, E.B (1973), *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, Ibadan, Longman.
- Iluromi, D.O (No date), *Itan Ibere ati Idagbasoke Kristi ni Kabba ati Agbegbe re*, Ikare, Adebambo Press.
- Jawondo, I.A (2002). 'The impact of Islam of Christianity on Ilorin Community', Alore. *Ilorin Journal of the Humanities*, University Press, Vol. 12.
- Johnson, S (1921), *History of the Yoruba*, Lagos, CMS.
- Mbiti, J.S (1976), *African Religion and Philosophy*, New York, Anchor Books.
- Michie, C (1959), *Memoranda to the Minority Commission from the Government of Northern Nigeria*, Kaduna, Government Printer.
- Omotoye, R (1998). "Christianity and Educational Development in Ilorin Metropolis, 1855-1955", *University of Uyo, Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol 1, No 1.
- Parrinder, E.G (1974), *African Traditional Religion*, London, Sheldon Press.
- Yakubu, N.R (2002). *Christianity in Nigeria: Ebiraland in Focus*, Lagos, Majab Publisher.