RICE UNIVERSITY

Comparative Analysis of Gift Exchange among a Pentecostal Christian Denomination and an Indigenous Religious Tradition in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

BY

Enoch Olújídé Gbádégesin

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE Doctor of Philosophy

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Elias K. Bongmba,
The Harry and Hazel Chavanne Chair in Christian Theology and Professor of Religious Studies

Anthony B. Pinn
Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies

James D. Faubion
Professor of Anthropology

Houston, Texas
January 2014
ABSTRACT

Comparative Analysis of Gift Exchange among a Pentecostal Christian Denomination and an Indigenous Religious Tradition in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

by

Enoch Olújídé Gbádégesin

This dissertation is a comparative analysis of the gift and how it impacts on interpersonal relationship among the Yoruba of Nigeria. The dissertation examines gift exchange as it is practiced among the worshippers of Ògún deity usually commemorated as an annual Olójó festival in comparison with Christ Way Church International a member of Pentecostal Charismatic group in Ilé-Ifè. In particular, the dissertation analyses a) the gift, its definition and the theoretical propositions by the anthropologists and sociologists and the principles that govern its practice; b) ethnographically, the Yoruba experience and expression of the gift, at the social, political, economic and ritual levels of interaction among immediate group and with other group of people; c) the patterns of interpersonal relationship that exists between the Òrisà worshippers and Pentecostal Charismatic Christians using the two focused religious groups in Ilé-Ifè as test case; d) how gift exchange practices can be means of creating and maintaining boundaries, and how that can lead to identity formation between different religious groups; in short how gift and reciprocity can be means of exclusion by bringing Annette Weiner’s Inalienable Possessions in conversation with Marcel Mauss’s The Gift; e) the different senses and contexts in which the religious groups can use gift exchange practices to bring about solidarity and harmony in the Yorùbá society.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation project grew out of many life-long experiences and interests, something I have been ruminating and reflecting upon for many years that I only realize now. I have always wondered why a very interesting and fascinating subject of the gift in the Yorùbá religious, political, economic and social realms has not been given a separate line of inquiry instead of lumping it together with other subjects. I first learned about the importance of gift giving and the lessons from giving as a young boy from my late father, who was fond of saying, “Any kindness shown to anybody would never go in vain; if we showed kindness to Hausa, it might be from Igbo that we are going to be rewarded.” This saying continued to have deeper meaning within me but how to develop and project the thought in a form that could be accessible to the academic audience has been my utmost goal and ambition.

The realization came when I attended Harvard Divinity School (HDS) for my Master of Theological Studies (MTS) between 2006 and 2008. It was precisely in the spring of 2007, when I took a course titled: Personified Objects, Objectified Persons with Professor Michael Jackson who introduced Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift* as part of the readings for the semester. That was my first time of reading a book that specifically addressed the subject of *The Gift*. I approached my mentor Professor Jacob K. Olúpònà through the instrumentality by which I came to Harvard University and my academic advisor Professor David Carrasco about my intention to shift my research focus to the subject of the gift and reciprocity among the Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria. Both enthusiastically agreed with my proposal. I then approached Professor Michael Jackson, who suggested quite a number of literatures on gift to me.
After I finished from Harvard Divinity School and returned to Nigeria in 2009, I began to take my research interest very seriously by actively participating and observing the gift giving practice in marriage, naming, funeral, birthday and graduation (commencement) ceremonies among the Yorùbá, particularly in Ilé-Ifè. I have carefully observed how people gave and received gifts on many occasions such as Easter and Christmas seasons too. My observation shows that gift exchange has the capacity to enhance social solidarity in this society. Within a particular religious group, gift practice seems to be one of the unifying factors. I was also interested however, in how gift practice can be means of reaching out from one religious group to another thereby promoting peace and harmony in the Nigerian society. This means I have to go beyond a specific religious tradition. What I did was to engage in comparison between a Pentecostal Charismatic group (Christ Way Church International) and an indigenous religious group (Ògún worshippers commemorating annual Olójó festival) in Ilé-Ifè.

Apart from my graduate stipend, I was not able to get any external fellowship and grant for my field research, I have to get loans from Financial Aids’ office of Rice University and from Bank of America to be able to travel for my ethnographic field research. But I found it a worthwhile endeavor. Besides, the positive encouragements I received from my advisors continued to keep me going.

The actual manifestation of this dissertation is the product of love and support of many people living in many places. Not many people are that lucky to have had the kind of the rare privilege of support I received from my two understanding and loving mentors. Elias K. Bongmba, my primary advisor, was an amazing source of support and a wonderful and passionate mentor. James D. Faubion, my second advisor, was a man of
understanding; was very thoughtful and highly supportive of this project. He took it upon himself to serve as a good bridge between the Rice Institutional Review Board (IRB) and myself. He was a great mentor. Both Elias and Jim greatly believed in my potential and offered friendships and great cares at every step of the way of this dissertation writing. Their suggestions and interventions were highly invaluable. Professor Anthony B. Pinn was and will always be a very good friend. Pinn has been a great supporter of this project right from the start. Pinn provided a great deal of advice and support right from my proposal defense till the final stage the dissertation.

I want to specially express my profound gratitude to Julius O. Adekunle, Professor of History at Monmouth University, New Jersey, who volunteered to help me read through the whole manuscripts and offered useful and insightful comments on the whole dissertation. I pray that God will reward him and his family for the time spent and detailed attention he gave to this project. Next, I will like to thank Reverend Dr. Steve Turley, for reading through every chapter, provided insightful comments, did the editing and corrected all the grammars. I am truly grateful to the attention he gave and the suggestions he offered that would help prepare the dissertation for the book manuscript.

I especially want to express my gratitude to my brother, Professor Ségun Gbádégesin and his wife Deaconess Adétóún Gbádégesin (Daddy and Mummy) for being there at all times for me before and during my graduate program in Rice University. In spite of his busy schedule, my brother gave all the attention the dissertation deserved by reading through the whole manuscript, editing and correcting my grammars. Next, I want to thank Professor Toyin Fálolá of University of Texas in Austin for reading through the manuscript and offered very insightful suggestions. I want to express my appreciation
and profound gratitude to the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication (CWOVC) in Rice University for organizing writing workshop in the summer of 2013. The workshop has helped me in paying attention to details while writing. I thank my dear friend, Akintunde Akinade for supporting me every time in cash and kinds. I really appreciate you. I say a big thank you to Mark Dittman for his friendship.

I will like to express my profound gratitude to the following colleagues for their help since the beginning of my dissertation writing; Itohan Idumwonyi has played well the role of a sister and colleague. I say thank you for making time in running errands for me. Darren Ogn has not only been my prayer partner since we entered into graduate program in Rice University, he equally offered technical supports whenever needed. I also thank the following people for their encouragement, Rachel Vlachos Schneider and her husband Nathaniel, Nathaniel Homewood and every member of AFAM in the Department of Religious Studies, Rice University and Rice Graduate Christian Fellowship members. Mr. Tunde Babatunde thanks very much.

I express my special thanks to all members of Redeemed Christian Church of God in Boston and Houston, especially Pastor and Pastor Mrs. Samuel and Deborah Sorinmade, Pastor and Pastor Mrs. Olórunwùmí and all their children, who are constantly supporting me financially at all times; Pastor and Pastor Mrs. Sanusi for allowing me to contribute my little quota in the service of the church, Pastor James Fadele, the chairman of the Redeemed Church of God, North America for his care and love and all other Pastors that space will not allow me to mention one by one for their immense supports and cares. I will like to thank especially Dr. Rotimi and Deaconess Ibukun Ojifini, Mr. and Mrs. Bíódún and Busayo Akogun, Mr. and Mrs. David and Tolu Idowu for their care
and support throughout my graduate program in Houston. I say a big thank you to all the families who contributed to give me a gift of car that enabled me to move around in Houston. God will bless you tremendously.

I will like to express my thanks to Professor Matthews Ojo, Dr. David Ògúngbilé, and Dr. Samson Olanisebe for their help and support at all times. I thank every member of the Department of Religious Studies for their encouragements. I want to specially thank the Vice Chancellor and the administrative organ of the Obáfémí Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifé for granting my application for Study Leave that enabled me to complete my PhD program at Rice. The following people made my field research very easy by facilitating my meeting with all the ritual personae of Olójó festival; Pastor Koła Awobifa, Ségun Oládosù, Alhaji Yekini, Emesè Morufu, Olorì Odún Sífúwadé and Mr. Morufu Omígbulé and many other people I cannot mention one by one.

I want to thank all Christ Way Church’s pastors and members who took time to answer my questionnaires. I appreciate you all. I thank my general overseer and his wife Pastors Odún and Dunni Oríòkè for their care, support and gifts to my family when I was away in the United States of America studying for my PhD. I thank all the senior pastors, pastors and their families for their love and care. I say thank you to Professor Niyi and Mrs. Bisi Onàyemí, Professor Mike and Pastor Mrs. Láídé Àjàyí, Pastor Fúnmi Olárìnóyè and her husband, and especially dear friend, Pastor and Deaconess Aderoju and Sola Adeyera for making their car and the driver available to pick me from and to the airport in Nigeria at all times. Canon and Mrs. Odusanya who always made their apartment available for me and my family to stay whenever we are in Lagos. Thank you sir and ma.

This dissertation is not complete if I do not appreciate the kindness and generosity of
Professor and Mrs. Jacob K. and Mrs. Modúpé Olúpònà for taking me like their younger brother, supporting and caring for me at all times. Besides, Jacob Olúpònà has been my mentor since 1987 and has not ceased to be; he was instrumental to my going to Harvard Divinity School and eventually to Rice University. Thank you very much sir.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation to my dear lovely and understanding wife, Esther Modúpé Gbádégesin, for not only supporting me but took it upon herself in ensuring that our children were given adequate attention. I am very grateful to and proud of you my darling. God bless you. I say big thank you to our children, Philip, Doyinfúnmi, and Búsáyò for not seeing my absence as an opportunity to become wayward and delinquent. Thanks very much for cooperating with your mother. God will bless and make you great too. I thank all my siblings and my aged mother Mrs. Deborah Jéjéolá who showed understanding during my absence. This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my late father Joseph Gbádégesin who taught me about the gift and giving while still very young, Sùn ree ò (Rest in Peace) and the late Chief Matthew Akínyemí the Erédùmí of Ife and Chief Osògún for giving me their times during my interview with them.

Now unto the Lord Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. I thank you Lord for helping me to accomplish this feat, for sustaining me and for making this project a reality.
# Table of Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgements i

Table of Contents vii

Introduction
   Definition, Meaning and Literature Review about the Gift 1

Chapter One
   Ifè: the Site of Ethnography 43

Chapter Two
   Christianity in Ifè 96

Chapter Three
   Comparative Analysis of Ògún worshippers and Christ Way Church International in Ilé-Ifè 159

Chapter Four
   Dimensions of the Gift 247

Chapter Five
   The Conceptual Dimension of the Gift 319

Bibliography 355
General Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze comparatively the gift exchange concept among a Pentecostal Christian denomination and an Indigenous Religious tradition, and to show the moral, spiritual, and integrative power of the structure of the gift exchange among the Yorùbá speaking people of Ilé-Ifè, Nigeria. Among the Yorùbá, giving and receiving are not solitary acts but trigger mechanisms for the initiation and consolidation of social relationships in lasting cycles of reciprocity, as also carefully observed by Alvin Gouldner.\(^1\) Ilé-Ifè is the study area because of its cultural and historical position in the Yorùbáland.

Many Yorùbá people consider the ancient city of Ilé-Ifè as the first creation here below; the original home of all things; the place from which the day dawns; the enchanted, holy city; and the home of divinities and mysterious spirits.\(^2\) The research for this dissertation was carried out among the worshippers of Olójó festival, who annually commemorate Ògún the god of iron, in contrast with Christ Way Church, which has its headquarters located in Ilé-Ifè. The two religious groups have been chosen because Olójó festival is the most celebrated annual Yorùbá traditional festival in Ilé-Ifè, while Christ Way Church is the fastest growing church, boasting approximately thirty churches located in this same city. The research concern is about how religious groups could co-exist without any religious violence, thereby allowing peace and harmony to reign in the society.

Here I outline the basic problems as I have done in the proposal, but I expand upon the Maussian theory of the gift. I also examine various strands of the debates on gifts from diverse

---

theoretical and methodological points of view, beginning from the time Marcel Mauss opens up the discussion on the gift until the time when Annette Weiner and Maurice Godelier are responding to his book through literature review. In this respect, I look at various controversies that have been generated by historicizing the concept of gift through the work of anthropologists and other scholars, linking the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and contemporary ideas and practices. Going beyond these theories, I show how the gift exchange creates social relations and a custom of personal and communal networking among the Yorùbá people. I argue following Annette Weiner, that there is a dynamic relationship between gift exchange, inalienable possessions and the creation and reinforcement of different religious identities as demonstrated by Christ Way Church and Ògún worshippers in Ile-Ife.

My interest in gift exchange practice has spanned more than two decades, first as a young child when my late father used to teach that “whatever kindness shown or gift given to someone is never lost; if we gave a gift to Hausa, it might be Ìgbò who would pay it back.” Second, there is the upsurge of Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations’ teachings about the concept of gift and gift exchange. These churches believe that their teachings will have a revolutionizing material and financial positive effect on their members who would be willing to cultivate the habit of giving, especially to God first and then to fellow human beings. These Pentecostal denominations also think that giving should be sacrificial, if it must command God’s attention; this made the idea of sacrifice continue to draw my attention and academic curiosity. Hence, I decided that a comparative analysis of gift and sacrifice would be a worthwhile academic

---

3 My late father, Joseph Gbádégesin was a man who loved to give gifts to people and always taught his children to do the same to anybody they meet. He was a giver to a fault. As part of his passionate interest in the gift giving, a bad incidence occurred one day in 1973. My father gave hospitality to one Hausa man, who apparently was a little sick. Within few days, the Hausa man died. I challenged my father as to why he should accept a stranger that he did not know where he was from in order to die in our house. It was at this point that my father responded and said; no matter any good done to anybody regardless of where they are from, there are rewards for doing good deeds. That wise words have made a lasting impression on me even till today.
adventure. I believe that comparing the gift exchange practices among members within a chosen Pentecostal Christian group and gift as sacrifice among a Yorùbá traditional religious group should help us to understand the Yorùbá socio-religious life.

In this dissertation, the term “gift giving” is used to mean exchange practice between moral individuals who have entered into morally obligated but not coerced practice with the aim of maintaining mutual relationship between each other for as long as they both want. Paul F. Camenisch puts it succinctly this way:

The paradigmatic case of a gift therefore will be understood as: (1) some value (2) intentionally bestowed by a donor who gives it primarily to benefit the recipient upon (3) a recipient who (a) accepts it knowing that it is given as a gift, (b) agreeing with the donor that it is a benefit, (c) who has no right to or claim upon it and (d) who is not expected to pay for it in the future in any usual way (i.e., in no specific way in which roughly equivalent value is returned); and (4) which brings into being a new moral relationship between recipient and donor, part of which consists of recipient obligations to the donor and the acceptance of limits upon the use of the gift.4

This dissertation assumes also that exchange can be understood in two distinct ways: as gift economy and as market economy. While market exchange logic is founded on the notion of contract, the logic of the gift is quite different; it is not strict, not immediate, and not unintentional. The gift economy is an act that is carried out willingly albeit with vested interests and motives, whereas the market economy is a condition that may involve two or more people who are interested only in profiting from one another. As Antoon Vandevelde remarks, “A gift is worth nothing if it does not reflect an authentic appreciation of our personal qualities and of the value of our friendship or our social bond.”5 Vandevelde’s claims may be true sometimes, but if one follows Mauss’s argument very closely, gift-exchange need not reflect the value of

---

5 Antoon Vandevelde, Gifts and Interests: Morality and Meaning of Life, (Peeters Publishers, 2000), 3
friendship most often. Helmut Berking thinks that “Today the gift lies almost entirely within the sphere of personal relations; it mainly designates a cultural practice which, if transposed into the realm of politics or economics, would immediately be cause for scandal.”

The contemporary world is characterized by individualistic and materialistic thinking; to give voluntarily without going about calculating economic profit is very unthinkable and the practice of profitless exchange is also inconceivable. It is a given, that the fundamental characteristic of a developed society is a complex and dynamic economy; it is a situation whereby a reasonable logic, according to Cyril Belshaw, is that “economic individualism is a necessary condition for economic progress; since individualism provides the motivations upon which determined effort can be.” In the Western world, economic individualism seems an appropriate base for economic growth, when compared with many African and Asian countries, where the extended kinship systems have robbed them of such economic advantage.

Should we then be thinking about gift economy with the state of things in Africa? Is this thesis justified at this very stage where the world has reached and especially with the consideration that African economy is at its lowest ebb, which makes the continent to be classified as developing and perhaps poor? These and various other relevant questions are put into consideration in examining the concept of gift exchange in the Nigerian socio-economic sphere.

---


8 Among the Yorùbá, there is a saying, “one rich man in the midst of six poor people, all of them have become poor.” The meaning of this proverb is that because of the communitarian practice in the traditional Yorùbá society, a rich man cannot be enjoying his money with his immediate family at the expense of his poor relatives. Because he must take the needs of his relatives (immediate and remote) into considerations while spending his money, he is not likely to be as very rich as rich people in the capitalist economy, where the logic is how to make more money and not how to lose it. See my article Re-Examination of the Traditional Yorùbá Cultural Traditions of Morality and their Implications for abundant Life, in *Lagos Notes and Records: Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, University of Lagos, Vol. 17, 2011, 127-142.
I received some inspiration on why to pursue further the subject of gift and reciprocity from Belshaw. Belshaw argues that “economic individualism is an inaccurate over-simplification of one complex social factor which must be analyzed before an adequate picture of social, cultural and economic interrelations can be achieved.”

What are those other factors that Belshaw would want us to consider being socially acceptable? I want to believe that the answer will be politics, market forces and perhaps systems of reciprocity in the society. One such exchange system of a given society is the gift and reciprocity or simply the gift exchange. It must be pointed out here though, that Belshaw was concerned primarily with market exchange system. The gift exchange opens up a space for thinking about other alternative ways by which inter-communal or intercultural relationships can be maintained. Maurice Godelier thinks that “in a rapidly changing society where ‘Everything is for sale,’ it is urgent that historians and anthropologists begin to reexamine the place of nonmarket relations in market societies, and seek to determine whether there are realities essential to the life of societies that lie beyond the market and that will continue to do so.”

Not only is this alternative way of thinking possible but also the study of the gift exchange provides us with the means of understanding and interpreting various cultural rules and the structure of social relations in a given society.

Conceptually, the gift exchange practice has been in existence for a very long time before scholars from different fields of study began to subject it to rigorous theoretical academic study. The gift exchange theory has received heated debates among academics from different fields of studies such as sociology, anthropology, literature, philosophy, economics, and comparative

9 Belshaw, Traditional Exchange, 1
religious studies, so much that many books and journal articles have been published on the subject since the beginning of the twentieth century. Exchange of different and diverse scholarly ideas on the gift theory all began after the provocative publication of Marcel Mauss’s controversial sociological, historical and religious *Essai sur le don*.

While it is very obvious that anthropologists have never stopped focusing on gift-exchange, Alan D. Schrift, opines that the tendency in contemporary discourse to focus on questions of gifts, gift giving, reciprocity, and exchange can be traced to two important recent developments.\(^1\) According to him, the first is the appearance of Jacques Derrida’s *Donner le temps. 1. La fausse monnaie* translated into English as *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*.\(^1\) Second, the question of gender is another development within contemporary critical theory that has brought the problematic of the gift to the center of critical attention. In all these writings, there is a consensus among scholars, with the exception of some skeptics that gift and reciprocity exist in all societies of the world, although it is practiced differently from one society to another.

The debate about gift exchange seems to be circular and endless. Mauss believes that the practice of the gift and reciprocity could serve to reduce violence or war. For him, exchange is the very basis of social solidarity, not merely an aid to it; it is the opposite of war. Some scholars argue that gift exchange is crucial to understanding alliance and conflict in family life, economic relations, politics, and religion.\(^1\) Some argue that the gift exchange actually reinforces structural

---

differences and power. Others argue that a disinterested gift is no gift at all; a gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction. Mauss's conception of the gift, however, is a rather fascinating one. It is fascinating in the sense that, Mauss argues that there is no gift that does not call for reciprocation. In his conception, gift exchange should not be conceived only as an expression of friendship or fellow feeling. Crucial to his theorization is that gift exchange can also express and manifest hostility and competition. Its opposite is not friendship but war.

According to Mary Douglas, “The striking dimension of this practice called potlatch among the Haida and Tlingit of the Northwest coast is the extreme rivalry expressed by the rule always to return more than was received; failure to return means losing the competition for honor.”

Important information one gets from all these scholarly debates is that gift is different from charity and the claim that charity is often misunderstood. Mary Douglas shows the ambiguity involved in the act of charity by addressing two questions: Is it meant to be a free gift that requires no obligation to return? Is it without any benefit on the part of the giver? Douglas claims that in the West, people engage in every kind of charity to be exempt from tax. Godelier corroborates this point by arguing that “in a secularized world, charity may be back in fashion, it is no longer seen as a theological virtue, a religious act.” For Godelier “charity is wounding for him/her who has accepted it.” And according to him, instead of people to accost passers-by or strangers for money or material substance, “people prefer the pretence of earning a


15 Mauss, *The Gift*, vii

16 Mary Douglas, ‘Foreword’ to *The Gift*, ix

17 Douglas, ‘Foreword,’ vii

18 Godelier, *The Enigma*, 3
living by selling papers in the street, newspapers which are printed for the purpose and rarely read.”<sup>19</sup> Helmuth Berking opines that “Giving (Gabe) and the gift (Geschenk), though interwoven with each other through the most diverse attributions of meaning, do not denote the same structures of action.”<sup>20</sup> So, it will be appropriate to know what is/are the meaning(s) of the gift and motives behind its practice.

*Gift: Its Meaning and Motives*

The gift means different things to different people and is practiced in diverse ways in all the societies of the world. The concern in this dissertation is to examine the meaning of the gift and the motives behind giving of the gift. Gift, according to Merriam Webster, is “something voluntarily transferred by one person to another without compensation or the act, right, or power of giving.” This definition looks very great, but something very important that anthropologists have argued is missing - at once the obligatory and the interested dimensions of gift-giving. Webster does not see any power relation inherent in the gift-giving. But Berking helps to summarize different meanings of the gift as already being used by scholars. According to him:

To give a gift means to acquire power, to carry out a symbolic exchange, to initiate relationships and alliances, to attribute rights and duties, to objectify subjective meanings and systematically to classify alter egos. It means to dress up strategic orientations in altruistic motives, to make social challenges look like simple acts of charity, to honor and shame, to hierarchize and stratify, to solidarize, to knit forms of mutual recognition, to become equal and intimate.<sup>21</sup>

All these various meanings are as quite interesting as they are thought provoking. There is no society in the world where all these definitions of the gifts do not fit, even though different motives may be given as reasons for exchange of the gift.

---

<sup>19</sup> Godelier, *The Enigma*, 3  
<sup>20</sup> Berking, *Sociology of Giving*, 3  
<sup>21</sup> Berking, *Sociology of*, viii
What is most important is that the gift is a "total social phenomenon" that builds not just wealth and alliances but social solidarity because “the gift” involves all the institutional orders of society at once: politics, economics, religion, law, morality, and aesthetics. This only shows that symbolic character of the gift can be a way of looking at the world and our different understandings of our places in it. People from diverse cultural or societal backgrounds have different ways of explaining why they practice the gift exchange. A study of gift exchange provides us with a means of understanding and interpreting various cultural rules and the structure of social relations, yet the study focuses on the way that the exchange of objects between groups builds relationships between humans in a given society.

The peculiar and unique gift practice of the potlatch (‘to feed’, ‘to consume’, agonistic) ceremony of the indigenous peoples of the Northwest coast of North America and to the gift giving practices of some Polynesian and Melanesian peoples is a case in point. In these various places, the practice of potlatch is quite different from our normative understanding and explanation of the gift practice in many societies, especially among the Yorùbá people on whom this dissertation is focused. Mauss is interested in all types of gifts, but his examples of Polynesian and Native American gift-giving are particularly telling, because the participants in exchange do not like one another (or in any event are formally hostile to one another). I will define the gift as transfer of goods or services that, although regarded as voluntary by those involved, is part of expected social behavior within a given society and surrounded with sanctions and calculations involving prestige and the maintenance of social relations. This dissertation will consider further the general meaning of the gift; this will help to present some ideas of what meaning(s) people give to the practice of gift in different societies of the world.
General Meanings of Gift Practices

The first question addressed in this section is, why will one particular gift have more important meaning than another, or why would a particular gift be more desirable than another? For example, a gift is quite different from payment and it is not to be seen as bribery. Gifts, according to Aafke Komter, that are coerced or used to alter judgments and actions, to obtain more of them become bribery and corruption.\(^{22}\) Gifts used as bribery in order to corrupt abound in the Yorùbá society, but these kinds of gifts fall outside the traditional exchange among the Yorùbá people that this dissertation addresses. Gift and reciprocity should introduce certain emotive qualities into a relationship as Mauss brilliantly shows. Gift creates social networking among a given society and might promote affinal or kinship relationship. According to Belshaw, “Market places are sites, with social, economic, cultural, political, and other referents, where buyers and sellers (or perhaps exchangers of goods) meet for the purpose of (economic gain, emphasis mine) exchange.”\(^{23}\) The implication of this is that gift is very personal as against the market exchange, which is impersonal; even though in market exchange people can still meet with one another, yet with absolutely contract-based logic of economic interest.

Gift exchange such as Kula, practiced in the Oceania, and the Pacific Northwest takes a form of ceremonial exchange in which permanent contractual partners trade traditional valuables following an established ceremonial pattern and trade route. In this system, described by Bronislaw Malinowski, only two kinds of articles, traveling in opposite directions around a rough geographic ring several hundred miles in circumference, were exchanged. These were red shell necklaces and white shell bracelets, which were not producers’ capital, being neither consumable nor media of exchange outside the ceremonial system. Kula objects, which

\(^{22}\) Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift*, 48-49
\(^{23}\) Belshaw, *Traditional Exchange*, 8
sometimes had names and histories attached, were not owned in order to be used but rather to acquire prestige and rank. But there is something very unique about this practice that we should not gloss over. Mauss says it is of obligatory type, since it is more or less of grand potlatch. Kula according to him is of a noble kind because it is reserved for the chiefs. These chiefs are the leaders of fleets of ships and boats. They are the traders, and also the recipients of gifts from their vassals, who are in fact also their children and brothers-in-law, their subjects, and at the same time the chiefs of various vassal villages.

It has been argued as well that the social meanings of things is characterized by sharing, ranking, matching, and pricing behaviors as contrasted with homo economicus assumptions predominant in many social science theories. According to A.P. Fiske, sharing, ranking, matching, and pricing behaviours are universal and they are the “the basis for social relations among all people in all cultures and the essential foundation for cross-cultural understanding and intercultural engagement.” Some people might think that many people would endorse Fiske’s assertion. The first three in particular, sharing, ranking, and matching are part of the gifting culture in all societies of the world. Natalie Davis supports this idea of sharing strongly by claiming that:

Among villages in France, of the same status, it was primarily food that passed from house to house—fruit or vegetables from the women’s gardens, cakes, honey, extra fish from the catch, or a rabbit—to express appreciation for the help at the harvest, for remedies and soups brought over during illness, for the loan of a harness, or simply as a sign of courtesy and communality.

26 Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century*, 34
Komter also shows how George Simmel’s notion of the “exchange of sacrifice,” reflects in every (gift) exchange act that something is sacrificed, and the value of what is exchanged is determined by the participants’ beliefs of what represents a fair and reasonable exchange….the concept of sacrifice will prove to be crucial one for the gift as well as for solidarity.”

Komter believes that human beings may sacrifice their own self by giving away abundantly, whether in material or nonmaterial form. This thinking about sacrifice as exchange is also reflected in Georges Bataille’s notion in his “The Accursed Share,” where he argues that the victims (human) that were usually sacrificed in Mexico’s ritual to the Sun god were well-taken care of before they sacrificed them as gift exchange. The Sun is even personified in this context and the pronoun “he” is appropriate use to describe the Sun. The Sun in the eyes of the Aztecs in Mexico is the expression of sacrifice. I will deal more extensively with this issue of sacrifice as gift in the latter part of this dissertation. But it is good to look at the gift in historical perspectives.

*The Gift in Historical Perspectives*

There is no doubt that the gift exchange practice has been a common phenomenon in every culture of the world. It is equally true that the practice of the gift varies from one culture to another, as scholarly theories of gift have shown, yet there is a general consensus among scholars in the social sciences and humanities that Marcel Mauss’s theory of gift was the first to generate and provoke discussions cross-culturally. Through his ground breaking book: *The Gift: The Forms and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Society*, Mauss has inspired generations of

---

27 Komter, *Social Solidarity*, 33
anthropologists, sociologists, historians of religion, and cultural theories to explore further clarifications in the social systems of exchange. Lewis Hyde claims that “Almost every anthropologist who has addressed him/herself to the question of exchange in the last half century has taken Mauss’s essay as his/her point of departure.” Although Davis, contends that the practice of vital gift economy in the sixteenth-century France ought to have been a likely setting for Mauss’s work. Godbout, actually thinks it was not Mauss but Aristotle was probably the first, and for 2,500 years the greatest, theoretician of the gift.

There is a hint that Mauss’s theory has also influenced folklorists in a way that one has never thought of. Amy Shuman, a folklorist, says that, “Gift exchanges offer one of the most documentable and yet complex events for folklorist study.” She claims that “her work reflects on earlier work on gift giving as a performance of social relationships and addresses the problem of how gift giving operates both as a system of rules, obligations, and constraints and as a process of creating surplus, an excess of meaning produced by an excess of rules, social obligations, or material goods.”

Levi-Strauss says that the essay on the gift prefigured his own structuralism, and claimed that exchange is a basis of kinship relationships. Annette Weiner grounds the study of exchange on the “paradox of keeping-while-giving’ into the social and political relations between women and men with foremost attention to their involvement in human and cultural

---

31 Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century*, 4
34 Shuman, “Ritual Exchange and Production of Excess Meaning”, 495
production.”36 Lewis Hyde adapts Mauss’s theory of gift to the understanding of creative arts, but claims that Marshall Sahlins’s theory of Stone Age economics was very crucial to his inspiration on the gift.37 While it could be accepted that Marcel Mauss’s theory of gift has influenced these scholars, Douglas in her foreword to the translation of Mauss’s book shows that Mauss’s idea of gift did not spring out of a vacuum. Mauss’s theory was an aversion to political philosophy’s principle of utilitarianism of the English empiricism.38 According to Douglas, Mauss was largely influenced in this area by his uncle, Emile Durkheim, while Durkheim’s idea would have been influenced in a similar way.39

The reason for Mauss’s aversion is because the principle of utilitarianism is the making of individualism; the essence of the French critique of utilitarianism. Godelier provides us with a brief history to explain the reason why Mauss takes interest in the theory of gift-exchange. According to Godelier:

…Mauss and the “Essai sur le don,” in which we see a man, a socialist who has just lost half of his friends in the First World War, take a stand at the same time against Bolshevism, contending that the market must be maintained, and against laissez-faire capitalism, asking the state to intervene and expressing the hope that the rich might rediscover the generosity of the ancient Celtic or German noblemen, so that society might not fall prisoner to the “cold reasoning of the merchant, the banker, and the capitalist.40

Before Mauss wrote his book, Malinowski had earlier carried out a detailed study on the exchange of Kula among the natives of New Guinea, which Mauss’s ethnographic research also focuses on.41

36 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions,
37 Hyde, The Gift: Imagination, xii-xv
38 Douglas, ‘Foreword’, iii
39 Douglas, ibid., xi
40 Godelier, The Enigma, 4
**Gift in Comparative Theoretical Perspectives**

Mauss’s theory of the *gift* “sprung from the fusty debates of library researchers on comparative religion; yet according to Douglass, his interest was not primarily religion, but about politics and economics.” Douglass goes further: “Following Durkheim, Mauss considered that every serious philosophical work should bear on public policy.” Mauss’s theory of the *gift* takes not so much serious interest in economic markets and, not too much interest in individual self-interest. On the basis of empirical examples from a wide range of societies, Mauss describes the obligations attendant on gift-giving: the obligation to give gifts (by giving, one shows oneself as generous, and thus as deserving of respect), the obligation to receive them (by receiving the gift, one shows respect to the giver, and concomitantly proves one's own generosity), and the obligation to return the gift (thus demonstrating that one's honor is at least equivalent to that of the original giver).

Levi-Strauss argues that structures are universal; realization of universal structures is culturally specific, and that exchange is the universal basis of kinship systems, the structures of which would depend on the type of marriage rules that apply. His *Elementary Structures* is based on positive marriage rules that specify whom a person must marry, while complex systems specify negative marriage rules (whom one must not marry), thus leaving a certain amount of room for choice based on preference. Levi-Strauss thinks that marriage is the primary means by which social alliance can be forged ignoring other means by which this could be made to happen. He actually believes that when other forms of gifts diminish in value, “as far as women are concerned, reciprocity has on the contrary maintained its fundamental function, on the one hand because women are the most precious possession, but above all because women are not primarily

---

42 Douglas, ‘Foreword’, x
a sign of social value, but a natural stimulant; and the stimulant of the only instinct the satisfaction of which can be deferred...”\(^{44}\)

In many African societies especially the Yorùbá society, descent and genealogical ties and not alliance through marriage per se are means by which primary organizational principle rests. Another important point is the advent of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity as many people who belong to this group continue to interpret their alliance with respect to the group they belong instead of with the family they come from. That is why the idea of rule will continue to fail to account for how people organize their lives.

With respect to Hau, Levi Strauss rejects Mauss’s assertion that the essence of the gift resides in the object given. Basing his interpretation upon the words of a Maori sage named Ranaipiri; Mauss holds that a spirit – named hau by the Maori – within the objects given causes them to be passed on. Levi-Strauss rejects this assertion as an uncritical acceptance of the native (indigenous) explanations, and further argues that the definition is actually circular. In his book, *Introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss*, Levi-Strauss argues that the ethnological problem is a problem of communication; and that realization must be all that is required to show the radical separation of the path Mauss follows when he identifies the unconscious with the collective, from the path of Jung, which one might be tempted to follow the same way.\(^{45}\) For Levi-Strauss, whom I will quote at length:

> Empirical observation finds not exchange, but only, as Mauss himself says, ‘three obligations: giving, receiving, and returning.’ So the whole theory calls for the existence of a structure, only fragments of which are delivered by experience – just its scattered members, or rather its elements. If exchange is necessary, but not given, then it must be constructed. How? (It is) by applying to the isolated parts, which, are the only present elements a source of energy which synthesizes them.

\(^{44}\) Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kingship*, 62-63

\(^{45}\) Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, 36
‘One can... prove that in exchange objects ... there is a property which forces the gifts to circulate, to be given and returned’.  

The contention of Levi-Strauss here, it seems to me is about the structural application of Mauss’s conception of the gift. Levi-Strauss would want what is passed as an object to either have an equivalent capacity as the subject who gives the object or at best to be more important than the subject who gives the object.

In characterizing Mauss’s procedure, which he eventually proceeds to reject, Levi-Strauss writes:

Here as elsewhere – but here above all – it was necessary to apply a precept Mauss himself had already formulated in the *Essai sur la magie*: ‘The unity of the whole is even more real than each of the parts.’ But instead, in the *Essai sur le don*, Mauss strives to reconstruct a whole out of parts; and as that is manifestly not possible, he has to add to the mixture an additional quantity which gives him the illusion of squaring his account. The quantity is hau.

Levi-Strauss asks, are we not dealing with mystification, an effect quite often produced in the minds of ethnographers by indigenous people? He contends that hau is not the ultimate explanation for exchange; it is the conscious form whereby men of a given society, in which the problem had particular importance, apprehended an unconscious necessity whose explanation lies elsewhere. For Levi-Strauss, the objective critique of the indigenous theory is needed to be able to reach the underlying reality. In other to get at that objective reality, Levi-Strauss countered Mauss by saying that hau, is nothing but an *empty signifier* (emphasis mine) that reveals the true nature of the gift to be a consequence of a surplus of signifiers without signifieds.

---

46 Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the work*, 46
47 Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the work*, 47
48 Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to*, 55-56
As a result of this position of Levi-Strauss, Bourdieu responded by showing how wrong Levi-Strauss is. Bourdieu criticizes Levi-Strauss for not stepping back from the native’s point of view and hence makes native’s point of view be-all-in-all. Bourdieu’s approach to the ritual practice, critiques not only Geertzian thick description of a symbolic system, but also the “objectivist” reductionism of the practice into “fuzzy abstractions” (i.e. Durkheimian theory of “moral integration” and Levi-Straussian theory of “logical integration”). Bourdieu attacks the logical methodology of Levi-Strauss which fails to account for “the incoherent coherence of a discourse which…has the capacity to survive every reductio ad absurdum.”

For Bourdieu, people who are engaged in logic of practice do not go about following rules, but logic of practice that is cultivated disposition, inculcated in the body schema and the scheme of thought, which enables each agent to engender all practices consistent with the logic of challenge and riposte, and only such practices, by means of countless inventions, which the stereotyped unfolding of a ritual would in no way demand. Bourdieu further criticizes objectivist approach to gift-exchange, on the ground that the proponents generate conflicting analysis of gift exchange, positing that it is exchange as a constructed object which “constitutes the primary phenomenon, and not the individual operations into which social life breaks it down.” Bourdieu thinks that phenomenological analysis and objective analysis bring light to antagonistic principles of gift exchange: the gift as experienced, or at least, meant to be experienced, and the gift as seen from outside.

50 Bourdieu, *Outline of Practice*, 158
51 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of the Logic of Practice*, 15
Bourdieu believes that play with the temporal structure on the recipient’s part carries a special significance. He thinks that “the lapse of time interposed is what enables the gift or counter-gift to be seen and experienced as an inaugural act of generosity, i.e. without any calculation, then it is clear that in reducing the polythetic to the monothetic, objectivism destroys the specificity of all practices which, like gift exchange, tend or pretend to put the law of self-interest into abeyance.”\textsuperscript{54} Thus, immediate reciprocation negates the gift-giving form of interaction, by directly discharging the sense of obligation that is, its specific intention; while failure to reciprocate at all makes the other’s uncertainty a source of personal pleasure.\textsuperscript{55} Bourdieu further argues that the basis of the gift exchange and all symbolic labor is “the condition making possible \textit{institutionally organized and guaranteed misrecognition}.”\textsuperscript{56} Meaning that the natives often misrecognize what they are doing. The fact that Bourdieu argues that there is the need to dialectically develop social theory from social practice makes his work great.

Yet, I find Bourdieu irrelevant to this dissertation, not only because his idea is not very generative but also he seems to be too much on the side of the objectivism. His theory lacks the diverse faces of real people who are engaged in the dialectics, and also that his theory is oversocialized, deterministic, functionalist, and that his formulation of generative scheme is oversimplistic which not only ignores the potential deviances but also bypasses the fractions of the procedure. The fact that he thinks that people that engage in gift practice misrecognize the real logic of the practice of what they are doing seems to me very reductive. He seems to be advocating a break with the native point of view in favor of objectivist point of view, although without falling into the trap of formalism in the end. Yet, he is very dismissive of the native’s

\textsuperscript{54} Bourdieu, \textit{Outline of Logic of Practice}, 171.
\textsuperscript{55} Bourdieu, \textit{Outline of Logic of Practice}, 171
\textsuperscript{56} Bourdieu, \textit{Outline of Logic of Practice}, 171.
practice of the gift. This dissertation basically takes the native point of view very seriously just like Weiner does. Weiner takes seriously the native point of view especially with respect to the difference that exists between the gift and the practice of *Heirlooms* (A valued possession passed down in a family through succeeding generations) among the Maori.

Approaching the concept of the gift from the ritual dimension, Mircea Eliade posits that ritual of gift has been practiced in the realm of the gods; it is only being replicated by humans. According to Eliade, “The curious system of ritual commerce--*the potlatch*--which is found in the American Northwest, and to which Mauss has devoted a well-known study, is only the repetition of a practice introduced by the ancestors in mythical times.” Eliade’s ritual rigidity fails to account for the continued strategy that is involved in ritual of gift exchange between humans and the deities. Catherine Bell points our attention to the religiously-motivated gift, by showing that the best known examples of religious rituals are those in which people make offerings to a god or gods with the practical and straightforward expectation of receiving something which may be concrete or abstract in return. Bell further claims that Edward B. Tylor’s theory of ritual sacrifice implies a kind of “the gift theory,” as the logic of human-divine transactions. Tylor proposes that sacrifice was originally a gift to the gods to secure their favor or minimize their hostility, then as homage (with no expectation of a return on one’s sacrificial investment), and finally as renunciation (in which the sacrificer more fully offered him or herself).

---

59 Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 78-79
The implication of Tylor’s assumption is that sacrifice by people to the gods does not involve reciprocity. But this dissertation is more concerned about a situation where there is mutual give and take between humans and the gods. What the traditional Yorùbá people would think they stand to benefit from their sacrifice to the deities need not be concrete things as carefully explained by Bell; abstract things such as gift of life or what the Yorùbá call immortality (ire àìkú) and peace (àlàáfià) are equally part of what they expect in return as I argue in chapter four as well. While Godbout’s position is in alignment with Bell’s position, he links the idea of a gift to both spiritual and social life. He balances two positions on the idea of a gift – utility theory, which is based on market demands or operations and the gift economy theory, which derives from communal existence and thereby enhances trust and solidarity.  

While all these theories and others not mentioned here look very fascinating and informative, they seem to have excluded the importance of women from the practice of gift-exchange. Annette Weiner’s, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping – While Giving*, challenges this posture as her theory turns our attention to the importance of women in the practice of gift-exchange. Her theory is on the importance of women in preserving and protecting *Inalienable objects* that should not be totally given out. Unfortunately, while we cannot deny that Malinowski recognizes women and shows that women have a prominent role in certain ceremonial actions, it seems that he does not recognize any active female part in gift exchange; all his examples are from men.  

Interestingly, Levi-Strauss also alludes to an inevitable fact of the importance of women in the practice of gift-exchange by claiming that by including “women … a whole volume would not be sufficient to enumerate the instances of it.”  

---

61 Godbout, *The World of Gift*, 118-121  
62 Malinowski, *Argonauts of Western Pacific*, 78-80  
63 Levi-Strauss, *Elementary Structure of Kingship*, 63
Hyde has observed, that one of the justifiable reasons why women have not been part of conversation on gift-exchange is that certain theorists have discovered that some cultures as does Levi-Strauss have made women parts of the “objects or things” to be exchanged as in marriage and not agencies in their own right. The important issue or question to be addressed is whether Yorùbá women are undermined in socio-economic, religious and political arrangement of the Yorùbá society. If they are not undermined, to what extent are they allowed to function within the society?

*Literature Review of Gift Exchange in Comparative Theoretical Approaches*

*The Legacy of Mauss*

Aside from Mauss’s claim that there is nothing like “pure gift” or “free gift,” as mentioned, he also believes that there is a power inherent in a particular gift that is given, which makes it obligatory for the receiver of such gift to return it to the initial owner. Mauss attempts to demonstrate how that “things create bonds between souls, for thing itself has a soul, is part of the soul,” and describes the power as laying hold of both persons and things. Godelier observes that Mauss is actually making reference to societies where there seemed to be no absolute boundary between the two (the gift and the giver), and therefore no radical separation. In this situation, things are extension of persons, and people identified with the things they possessed and exchanged; it is a situation where objects themselves are personified or are ontologized. Even though Mauss lays the stress on this spiritual essence but the social reality is the essence of exchange for him. The spiritual element is only one dimension of this “total social fact.”

In explaining how people exchange goods or objects, Mauss turns to the *potlatch* (which essentially means ‘to feed’, ‘to consume’, agonistic) ceremony of the indigenous peoples of the

---

64 Hyde, *The Gift*, 93-108
65 Godelier, *The Enigma of Gift*, 10-11
Northwest coast of North America and to the gift giving practices of some Polynesian and Melanesian peoples.\textsuperscript{66} Mauss is interested in all types of gifts, but his examples of Polynesian and Native American are particularly telling because the participants in exchange do not like one another (or in any event are formally hostile to one another). Practices such as this according to Mauss, are not individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each other.\textsuperscript{67} The contracting parties according to him are legal entities: clans, tribes, and families who confront and oppose one another either in groups who meet face to face in one spot, or through their chiefs, or both these ways at once. But this “obligatory give-and-take maintains, strengthens, and creates various social bonds – be they cooperative, competitive, or agonistic.” It is agonistic in the sense that the aim is to crush a rival with obligations he cannot repay, to give so much that eventually reciprocation becomes impossible, of breaking it to one’s advantage, or at least this is the hope of each competitor.\textsuperscript{68}

Another important aspect of Mauss’s claim, which I found quite relevant to my dissertation, is that, there are presents made to humans, and presents made to the gods. He calls this dimension a mythological element, which according to him, though scarcely comprehended; its importance seemed “too strong for us to leave it out of account”.\textsuperscript{69} Mauss returns to the potlatch to show how it produces an effect not only upon men, who vie with one another in generosity, not only upon things they pass on to one another or consume at it, not only upon the souls of the dead who are present and take part in it, and whose names have been assumed by men, but even upon nature.\textsuperscript{70} Mauss goes further to suggest that the exchange of presents

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 4-5
\item \textsuperscript{67} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 5
\item \textsuperscript{68} Godelier, \textit{The Enigma of Gift}, 58
\item \textsuperscript{69} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 14
\item \textsuperscript{70} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 14
\end{itemize}
between men, the ‘namesakes’ – the homonyms of the spirits, incite the spirits of the dead, the
gods, things, animals, and nature to be ‘generous towards them.’ In his opinion, ‘the relationship
that exists between these contracts and exchanges among humans and those between men and the
gods throw light on a whole aspect of the theory of sacrifice. Mauss believes that both the dead
and the gods are the true owners of the things and possessions of this world, with them it is most
necessary to exchange and in fact the easiest and safest to exchange.\textsuperscript{71}

Mauss’s conception of the gift and sacrifice generate a host of debates. With respect to
the gift exchange practice, Bourdieu criticizes Mauss for his objectivist and formalist position
with respect to the native practice of the gift. Bourdieu thinks that gift exchange need not follow
formalist’s rules of the endless give-take-give as wrongly construed by Mauss. With respect to
sacrifice, Mauss was criticized by some scholars, especially Maurice Bloch. First, Mauss and
Hubert’s initially rejected sacrifice as a form of gift exchange but the same idea was later
incorporated by Mauss into his theory of gift, thus showing inconsistency in Mauss’s work.\textsuperscript{72}
Second, Bloch, claims that Hubert’s and Mauss’s notion of sacrifice have been fundamentally
criticized by a number of writers; and their main thrust of the criticism is that Hubert and Mauss
were unjustifiably influenced by the prominence they gave to Vedic sacrifice and sacrifice as
understood in the Judaeo-Christian tradition; an attempt to use what are in reality quite specific
models, derived from particular places and periods, to build a universal theory.\textsuperscript{73} There seems to
be some consensus among few anthropologists though, that Mauss’s concept of sacrifice as gift
is perfectly in order.

\textsuperscript{71} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 16
\textsuperscript{72} Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, \textit{Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1981), 1-10
\textsuperscript{73} Maurice Bloch, \textit{Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1992), 28-30
In spite of these criticisms, I should point out the areas where Mauss’s theoretical and methodological frameworks are relevant to this dissertation. In writing about social phenomena, Mauss correctly proposes that all kinds of institutions such as religious, moral, legal and economic find simultaneous expression in gift-giving. This is equally true about the Yorùbá society, where every aspect of life is a means through which gift-exchange can be practiced and expressed. He also correctly avers that gift-exchange is a means by which structural/hierarchical differences can be maintained. The only difference in Mauss’s observation of the societies to which he limits his study is that it has to do with the groups and not individuals which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations. This means that certain persons have to represent the clans, tribes, and families, and are regarded as moral persons. However, without being unnecessarily dismissive of representative practice of the gift, it is also possible for kings, chiefs, and heads of families in Yoruba society to present gifts on behalf of the city, or families to important personalities. For example, where a king or chief from another tribe pays a visit, a king of the host Yorùbá society would present a gift on behalf of the whole community. This can also happen in the case of a visiting governor of a state, president of a nation or an ambassador from other country. I show an example of that in chapter four.

What is absent is the potlatch with its agonistic practice; and properties are not destroyed either, probably because the Yorùbá do not find any basis for such wanton destruction in the guise of promoting one’s family and putting down the rival family. The reason for this is very simple; the Yorùbá people do not look kindly on wasters of goods and properties. My careful observation shows that the Yoruba consider it honorable to transfer an object one is no longer in need of instead of destroying it, except the object has already outlasted its value. In chapter four, I give an example of where, a marriage ceremony can be an occasion for the groom’s family to
promote itself before the family of the bride by giving excessive gifts, yet the bride’s family occupies a strategically hierarchical position because of the bride it gave. In this case, however, the bride’s family does not consider itself as competing with the groom’s family; it does not destroy such excessive gifts.

What is generally the basic pattern of gift and reciprocity among the Yorùbá is that individuals give gifts whenever they want and how they want them. There is no doubt though, that Mauss is aware of individuals’ practice of the gift exchange, laying too much emphasis on *Potlatch* exposes his work to criticisms of later theorists. In spite of this extreme attention to *Potlatch*, Mauss’s analysis is very important because of its relevance to the overall aim of this dissertation. That is, how the practice of gift-exchange can be means by which violence is minimized or completely eradicated between religious groups in the Yorùbá society. He extensively demonstrates how this could be achieved in his conclusion of *The Gift*. Instead of logically following the steps of arguments generated by theorists against Mauss’s *The Gift*, in the next paragraph, I will consider Annette Weiner because of her relevance to this dissertation as I have mentioned above.

*The Concept of Inalienability of Objects*

While it is reasonable to make a claim that it was not Annette Weiner who first uses the word inalienable, Mauss has used the word in his book, yet one is also correct in saying that it was Weiner, who first elaborates the word with respect to gift exchange. The argument of Weiner is forceful and straightforward enough. For her, inalienable possessions reveal that exchange is predicated upon a universal paradox: how to *keep-while-giving*. Weiner notes that in many societies discussed by Mauss such as Maori, the Kwakiutl, the Trobriand Islanders, the

---

74 Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*, 5
most famous heirlooms do indeed have their own names and “biographies,” which includes their origins, past owners, people who had tried or succeeded to win or recover them. What Weiner is trying to demonstrate is that those heirlooms and a host of other objects are inalienable possessions, which have existence of “transcendent” or “absolute” value; they are jealously guarded against loss and they never enter into gift economy. They cannot be given away but instead be bequeathed.75

According to her, these objects function as a “force against change” by authenticating origins and kinship histories, hence these objects are not fully dissociated from their original owners.76 Weiner also shows that these possessions are not part of everyday use (even though they are of the same kind) but are possessions with prestigious origins, successions, or an edifying authority connected to the past like gods, divine right, ancestors, or high status. This is where the concept of hierarchy comes in for Weiner; “these things that are kept – valuables, talismans, knowledge, rites – affirm deep-seated identities and their continuity over time.”77 They in fact, affirm the existence of differences of identity between individuals, between groups which make up a society or which want to situate themselves respectively within a set of neighboring societies linked by various kinds of exchanges.

Weiner argues that inalienable possessions are the markers of difference and hierarchy.78 What I did here is relating the idea of inalienable to the theory of gift exchange in a social context. In other words, how does the economy of gift work in a context where some objects cannot be transferred or exchanged, even if one were to expect an object of similar or higher value? Another question that I tackled is that: Could it be that one of the reasons the indigenous

75 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 37
76 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 9, 23
77 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 47
78 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 48
religious people among Yorùbá are fighting against Christian modernity or are syncretistic is to preserve their religious identity and authenticate their historical difference? To my first question, Weiner has already provided a very good answer; her point is that all gift economies involve the presence of inalienable possessions, and that is precisely because they do that, gift exchange itself can serve to sustain solidarity rather than disrupt it.

In this context, the symbolic materials such as Christian Bible and indigenous ritual materials such as Ògún’s weapons could be said to be playing this role among the two groups respectively. To my second question the answer is obviously yes, the indigenous religious people among Yorùbá are not only re-enacting the tradition they inherited but are also making all efforts to vitalize and perpetuate it using even political connection to preserve their religious traditions. The reason is because, Pentecostal Christians have not only been contending against the Yorùbá religious practice and beliefs, they have also determined to stamp these religious practices and beliefs out of the Yorùbá community. In what follows I will address Weiner’s two important arguments one by one.

With respect to inalienable objects, most of her examples from Polynesia show that a large part of the valuables such as cloaks held as clan treasures, symbols of a rank or title, or circulating in the gifts and counter-gifts associated with birth, marriage, and death rituals are women’s goods, goods produced by women and over which they have individual rights. She argues that “even small groups expend enormous efforts and resources, for example, to convince a younger generation to beware of loss, to preserve relationships, and to guard sacred possessions.”

79 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 8
Weiner weighs heavily on her idea of cosmological authentication so much that she poses challenge against earlier scholars such as Malinowski, Marshall Sahlins, and Levi-Strauss who thought that Mauss over-intellectualized the Maori text, by mystifying the economic reality of reciprocity.\footnote{Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions}, 46} With respect to Malinowski, Weiner thinks that he was not sensitive enough by excluding Mauss’s “spirit of the gift”, by claiming that “custom alone provided the legal force that motivated reciprocal returns.”\footnote{Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions}, 27} With respect to Sahlins, Weiner criticizes Sahlins for reducing Maori’s hau to economic advantage. Sahlins asserts that Maori hau, like all gifts, represents nothing other than the material “yield” of the gift, that is, the gain received through the transaction of gift and counter gift.\footnote{Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions}, 46 cf. Marshall Sahlins, \textit{Stone Age Economics}, (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2004), 160}

Weiner criticizes Levi-Strauss for his commitment to the structural view, which shows that “behind diverse ethnographic facts, the same reciprocal logic exists in peoples’ “passion for the gift.” Such passion for Levi-Strauss is over women’s sexuality—the external motivation in the creation of elementary structures of kinship.”\footnote{Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions}, 27} Weiner does not create any artificial bifurcation between the imaginary and the symbolic. She agrees with both Mauss and George Simmel who recognized that the boundaries between persons and things are not rigidly separate reinforcing how ownership of certain things both reveals and expands a person’s status and personality. Weiner’s attempts to pursue Mauss’s interest in the \textit{hau}, makes her to trace the way \textit{hau} is embedded in a special class of valuables called \textit{taonga} that are ranked according to their historical and cosmological antecedents.

\footnote{Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions}, 46}
Weiner shows where Mauss misses his ethnographic interpretation with respect to hau and taonga. Mauss claims that “Indeed the taonga seems to be endowed with individuality, even beyond the hau that is conferred upon them through their relationship with their owner”. 84 She asserts that “there are prestigious origins, successions, or an edifying authority connected to the past like gods, divine right, ancestors, or high status make these particular possessions different from other things even of the same kind.” 85 According to Weiner, having access to the original Maori text that Mauss misunderstood and hence misinterpreted would give us a clue to what Tamati Ranaipiri actually told the ethnographer; the hau was not to be found in all gifts, it is only in those classified as taonga.

One other aim of Weiner is to show the importance of women in the production and reproduction of society; her analysis of hau and taonga “brings women’s production as well as human and cultural reproduction into prominence”. 86 Weiner contends that the mistake that all later scholarly readings of the text made was to make a big deal of hau “thereby totally eclipsing the significance of taonga, the cloaks that women weave”. 87 Weiner’s re-interpretation of gift exchange is also an attempt to factor women’s significant roles in it, that is, the unique roles which are usually being unnecessarily overshadowed by the patriarchal narrative stories. Apart from the Christian Bible and symbolic objects which are inalienable to Christ Way Church and Ògún worshippers respectively, I also took notice of the unique role of women especially with respect to memorializing mythical account of the deities (Ôrisàs) in Ilé-Ìfè through their poetic and traditional songs’ renditions.

84 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 63 cf. Mauss, The Gift, 91
85 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 36-37
86 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 48
87 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 49
Women played and continued to play significant roles in contributing to the development and growth of Christ Way Church in Ilé-Ife. At the helm of affairs of the church are the women leaders who through their God-given special spiritual skills and abilities are leading and planting churches all over Ilé-Ife city and some other big cities in Nigeria. Overall, Weiner’s theory and methodology are adopted throughout in this dissertation except in chapter five, where I addressed gift exchange using normative ethics as against Weiner’s analytical and anthropological method that recognizes differences in a given society and would want it maintained like that. My proposition in the last chapter is that while differences can be recognized, gift exchange outside “in-group” should be encouraged, which I hope would contribute to communal peace and harmony.

Sahlins’s Concept of the Gift

A brief consideration is given to Marshall Sahlins’s examination of the gift exchange because his analysis is relevant to the concluding part of this dissertation. In his book, *Stone Age Economics* he criticizes Mauss for preoccupying himself with the spiritual significance of the *hau*, thus neglecting its economic significance. Sahlins contends that “the meaning of *hau* that one disengages from the exchange practice of *taonga* is as secular as the exchange itself. If the second gift is the *hau* of the first, then the *hau* of a good is its yield, just as the *hau* of the forest is its productiveness”. Sahlins’s attempt is to demystify the spirit of the gift, with the aim of reinforcing the accountability of the principle of reciprocity. Alan D. Schrift claims that Sahlins reads Mauss’s conception of reciprocity in the light of Hobbes’s political philosophy and claims

---

88 Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 160
that” for the war of every man against every man, Mauss substitutes the exchange of everything between everybody.”

According to Schrift, the parallels Sahlins brings out between Mauss’s essay and Hobbes *Leviathan* are striking. Sahlins even calls their theories practical aspects of gift exchange. He claims that both Hobbes and Mauss show society choosing reason over war; for Hobbes, the rational motivation is the fear of violence; for Mauss, it is the choice of economic over military competition, a choice that also opts for a mode of opposition other than violence. For Sahlins therefore, Mauss’s importance resides in his moving the alternatives of war and trade from the periphery to the center of social life as he demonstrates that exchange, as a material transaction, is always already a social relation. It seems that what Sahlins is suggesting can be faulted on the ground that even though both Hobbes and Mauss might be canvassing for social peaceability, it is not the case that there is anything like Hobbesian-Maussian theory of the sociality that both share. Hobbes’s position is grounded in philosophical abstraction, while Mauss believes that his proposition could be tested empirically. In spite of this difference, I am inclined to believe as does Sahlins, that both Hobbes and Mauss could be used to argue for religious understanding and tolerance in the Yorùbá society, especially with respect to the issue of the gift both talk about.

*Impossibility of Gift according to Derrida*

The anti-temporal character of the gift as expenditure of excess cannot be understated for it is the support of the escape from utility. And yet, this must be coordinated with Derrida's conception of the gift in his work, *Given Time* (1992). Derrida found the gift a most paradoxical, perhaps impossible idea (indeed, "the Impossible"). According to Derrida, vernacular usage of

---

the term indicates the gift is a giving without expectation of return. He thinks that the impossibility of the gift is already evident the moment we think that, “These conditions of the possibility of the gift (that some “one” gives some “thing” to some “one other”) designate simultaneously the conditions of the impossibility of the gift.” For Derrida “…these conditions of possibility define or produce the annulment, the annihilation, the destruction of the gift.” Yet, some kind of return seems inevitable. If one gives a gift normally one expects to get one back.

Derrida thinks “Even a kind of symbolic return would seem to eliminate the possibility of gift.” According to this thinking, therefore, “For there to be a gift, it is necessary [il faut] that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt.” To say that “it is necessary” to pay back a gift has already implied a debt being owed, a duty, a restitution etc. Therefore, in Derrida's view, if a gift exists at all, it must not be recognized as such, either by the giver or the receiver. The parties involved must forget the giving ever occurred, even before it is given. However, it would have to be a forgetting more complete than even the normal modes of forgetting of psychoanalysis. It must not be repressed and be part of the subconscious. It must, rather, be apparently obliterated, without obliterating the gift itself. To be a gift the gift must not be a gift; i.e. it is the impossible.

It is important to note that Derrida is a Post-structuralist and deconstructionist; his aim here is to deconstruct the concept of the gift as Mauss applies it especially to the concept of the North American or Polynesian potlatch and to the concept of time. Derrida attempts to demonstrate that in potlatch, there is no such thing as gift but an economic enterprise. And as per

---

90 Derrida, *Given Time*, 14
91 Derrida, *Given Time*, 15
92 Derrida is usually cast as a post-structuralist, because of his insistence that systems of meaning are inherently historically fluctuating systems and, as a consequence, never even in any instance historically stable, as (he claims) Lévi-Strauss (the figurehead of structuralism) thought some of them to be.
his denial of the possibility of general gift practice; he believes that gift should not be recognized by both the donor and the donee. This is made possible, according to him, when none of the parties involved in gift exchange perceives gift as gift as such. He thinks that “the temporalization of time (memory, present, anticipation; retention, protention, imminence of the future; “ecstases,” and so forth) always set in motion the process of a destruction of the gift: through keeping, restitution, reproduction, the anticipatory expectation or apprehension that grasps or comprehends in advance”. 93

With respect to the insertion of the concept of time, the issue here is the irreversibility of time in gift exchange. Derrida is criticizing Mauss here for leaving the linear (non-circular) aspect of exchange out of his account. I completely disagree and also reject Derrida’s argument of the gift exchange on two counts. One, to say that there is no possibility of gift is to completely deny the native practice of the gift which looks very awkward to me. My ethnographic experience proves this to be wrong; there is the movement of gifts among the people. Two, it does not matter to me whether or not the people are metaphysically confused, as far as I am concerned there is the dynamic of the gift exchange. This work is not a philosophical metaphysical abstraction but a work grounded in real engagement in the life world of the Yorùbá people.

Sacralizing the Gift

Maurice Godelier’s The Enigma of the Gift (1999) not only takes Annette Weiner’s argument on inalienability to the level of a reinterpretation of Mauss’s but equally challenges Claude Levi-Strauss’s notion of the gift. Godelier is revising and critiquing Levi-Strauss’s interpretation of the notions of hau or mana, which he (Levi-Strauss) interpreted as “signifiers in

93 Derrida, Given Time, 14
their pure state” or “floating signifiers.” Levi-Strauss thinks that the logic of exchange is logic of communication. According to this logic, when human mind is confronted with something it cannot explain, it invents empty concepts that directly manifest the unconscious structures of the mind and at the same time attest to the symbolic origin of the society.

In short, for Levi-Strauss, the notions of *mana*, *hau*, and *manitou* demonstrate the primacy of language and, on a deeper level, the primacy of the symbolic over the imaginary. In short the gift has no meaning. Hence, for Levi-Strauss, symbols are ultimately even more real than the reality they symbolize. Godelier reverses this arrangement by assigning primacy to the imaginary. Godelier believes that Levi-Strauss is approaching gift exchange too much from the sociological perspective. It is crucial to note that Godelier is taking the distinction between the two (symbolic and imaginary) from Jacques Lacan, and that in privileging the imaginary over symbolic in his theorization of the gift, he is privileging desire over symbolic coherence.

Godelier’s desire takes the place of Levi-Strauss’s empty signifier. Godelier’s fundamental principle of exchange is that people desire things, which explains why they engage in gift exchange. For him, sacred objects and valuables are first and foremost objects of belief; and their nature is imaginary before it is symbolic, because these beliefs concern the nature and the sources of power and wealth, whose content has always been, in part, imaginary.\(^\text{94}\)

*Justification of the Research*

A very important and thought provoking question to ask is: Why another research on gift at this time, when tons of books are already being written on the same subject? This is a legitimate question provided there is nothing new to say about the concept of gift. However, apart from the fact that no book has been written specifically addressing the notion of gift

---

exchange among the Yorùbá people, even though it is very central to its long history, the following reasons motivate this research: One, the study is to show how pervasive the gift exchange practice is among the Yorùbá people. Two, the study is to address questions through comparative approach, such as; what gift and reciprocity symbolize for the two selected opposing religious denominations? And three, to show that there is a dynamic relationship between gift exchange and inalienable possessions that can be means by which different identities are created and reinforced.

Finally, this study hypothesizes that religious differences can be a strong basis for maintaining boundaries and formation of separate identity, leading to the exclusion of people of different religious beliefs system from within one religious circle. In order to test this hypothesis, I have selected Christ Way Church, the fastest growing Pentecostal church in Ilé-Ifè to compare it with a popular indigenous religious denomination, the worshippers of Ògún (god of iron and war) who yearly commemorate the popular Olójó festival.

Method of Investigation

I did two things. The first was to determine through quantitative library research, to what extent scholars are describing and interpreting gift and reciprocity (how, in other words, their projects are similar or different from Mauss’s and their relevance to the indigenous gift exchange practice in Ilé-Ifè). The second was to engage in a qualitative research methodology, i.e. ethnographic field work, through participant-observation, interview method, archival materials, and questionnaire where possible, and analyzed my findings. This I did by going to the site of my ethnographic research, which is ancient Ilé-Ifè city in Nigeria, where the two religious communities selected for my research work are based.
They are: Yorùbá traditional worshippers who commemorate the Olójó festival annually through the ritual sacrifice to Ògún the god of iron and Christ Way (Pentecostal) Church, which has up to thirty churches in Ilé-Ibè alone. I distributed about two hundred questionnaires among Christ Way Churches in Ilé-Ibè, but approached the ritual specialists of the Olójó festival. The reason why is that Christ Way Church is an organized group, which makes it possible to use questionnaire methods, whereas the ritual personae of Olójó could only be effectively approached by visiting them and engaging them in oral conversation. To complement the questionnaires and oral conversation, I was personally present in a few ritual occasions of both Christ Way Church and Ògún (Olójó) worshippers. I found these approaches very necessary because Clifford Geertz, in particular, has advocated for a ‘holistic’ approach to the study of religion.

According to Max Gluckman and Fred Eggan in their introduction, Geertz was not only critical of his own work but that of his colleagues’ work, in order to plead for a much wider treatment of the general ‘cultural dimension of religious analysis.’

I strongly believe that Geertz’s critical appraisal of his and his colleagues’ works comes from the fact that he was able to engage in ethnographic field work, which exposed him to different modes of thinking than that of the earlier Western theorists’ dependence on library research and literary analysis of religion and other people’s culture. Gluckman and Eggan claim that “any set of phenomena as complicated as religion – indeed any social phenomenon needs explicit discourse. This is why Geertz appeals for an explicit discourse that reflects on the doing and writing of ethnography

96 Good examples of scholars that readily come to mind are Edward Tylor and James Frazer who are regarded as Arm chair researchers because of their total reliance on the Missionaries’ reports, which influenced their writings. See E.B. Tylor’s Primitive Culture and also James Frazer’s The Golden Bough
itself, a process he calls interpretive anthropology.\textsuperscript{97} But the interpretive anthropology, unfortunately, has its own shortcoming.

A brief comment on interpretive anthropology is in order. It is a perspective that was developed by Geertz as a response to the established objectivized ethnographic stance prevalent in anthropology at the time, and that calls for an epistemology (“culture as text”) and a writing methodology (“thick description”) that will allow an anthropologist to interpret a culture by understanding how the people within that culture are interpreting themselves and their own experiences. Geertz, following Paul Ricouer, suggested that “a” culture—any culture—is a complex assemblage of texts that constitutes a web of meanings. For him, culture must be treated holistically and should not be restricted to examining culture with emphasis on custom, rite, and belief which has not taken into consideration other aspects of social relations.\textsuperscript{98}

He not only agreed with Bronislaw Malinowski’s methodology, Geertz also appeals for a return to Franz Boas’ approach of deep participation in the native life world. Interpretive anthropology however, also gets its own dose of criticisms. First, Geertz asserted that “the essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given.”\textsuperscript{99} Second, Marcus and Fischer argue that as brilliant as interpretive anthropology is, especially with respect to representing meaning and symbol systems, it can only remain relevant if it can come to terms with the penetrations of large-scale political and economic systems that have...
affected, and even shaped, the cultures of ethnographic subjects almost anywhere in the world. Other critiques come from Marxists and Feminists.

Marxists think that symbolic anthropologists put too much thought into cultural concepts instead of focusing on the social reality. There is not enough emphasis on explaining how the symbols affect social systems and people; instead they focus on the symbols themselves too much. Talad Asad believes that Geertz's weakness lies in the interruption between external symbols and internal dispositions. The feminist argues that, in the majority of cultures men dominate symbolism and the interpretations of them. In Geertz's study of the Balinese cockfighting, he overlooks the roles of women in society and focuses too much on male dominance. The exact error Malinowski committed was to overlook the importance of women in exchange practices in the Western Pacific.

Bourdieu also completely disagreed with Geertz's phenomenological approach; he proposed instead that there is more to doing serious ethnography. He outlined three stages in the transformation of empirical experience to anthropological theory. At the first stage, we have the rules and theories of the people being studied, which is phenomenological method. At the next stage there are rules and theories of the ethnographer (objectivist method), which by implication go about constructing the objective relations (e.g. economic or linguistic), which structure practice and representation of practice, i.e., in particular, primary knowledge, practical and tacit, of the familiar world, and third, the rules and methods governing the discipline as a

---

100 Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 44
102 'Savage Minds’ Anthrop Classics Online: Geertz’s Notes on the Balinese Cockfight, http://savageminds.org/2006/05/27/anthro-classics-online-geertz-notes-on-the-balinese-cockfight/, (accessed on October 11, 2010).
103 Bourdieu’s argument has already been part of the literature review above; this context only provides a brief summary of his arguments. See his *Outline of Theory of Practice*, 3ff
whole. I find Bourdieu’s insightful approach very stimulating. All the three stages I have carefully put into consideration as I was at the site of my ethnographic research in Ilé-Ifè.

My earlier assumptions about the practice of rituals were challenged by my active participation in the ritual festival of Olójó and not merely bringing my own outsider’s experience to analyzing the contents of the rituals. Take for example, in virtually all the Yorùbá society where Ògún is being worshipped, a dog’s head is usually severed by a stroke of the sword, the head is left dangling at the Ògún’s shrine, while the body is taken away by the worshippers. In Ilé-Ifè, the situation is different; the dog is clubbed to death before the dog is dissected while hung vertically on the Ògún’s tree. Again, if I had not paid close attention to Bourdieu’s three stages, I would have stated some situations encountered out of context. Despite this fact, there is a limit to where I was allowed to go as an outsider, especially by the ritual priests of Olójó. For example, I was not allowed to see for myself how the Arè is ritually maintained and put on the king’s head before the king comes to the public space.

Outline of the Chapters

Each of the succeeding chapters of this dissertation is aimed at providing adequate information about the Yorùbá people and how gift and reciprocity is being conceived and practiced among the two denominations selected for this dissertation. In chapter one, I consider Ilé-Ifè, which is the site of my ethnography. This chapter traces the history of Ilé-Ifè from the beginning, and how that history has impacted the way the Yorùbá people interpret and trace their historic and mythic origin to this city. I look at the different interpretations of the mythic origin of Ilé-Ifè and the controversies that surround these mythic interpretations. I also examine the

\[104\]

I examine this practice in detail in chapter three of this work.
symbolic practice of gift exchange in the ancient times and see how that practice has either been changed or modified by the culture of modernity.

In chapter two, I critically examine how the people in Ilé-Ifé are maintaining and transforming boundaries and how that has impacted the politics of their religious identity. The first task of this chapter is to trace historiographically from the colonial era, the missionary impact in Nigeria at large and Ilé-Ifé in particular by looking into the works of the historians and church historians. I look at those dimensions of religious expression such as the conceptual, the ritualistic, the social and the personal. All these dimensions help me to know how religious groups are symbolically organized, patterns of their interpersonal relationships within and without their religious boundaries, their basis of association and how they are being governed.

In chapter three, the first part focuses on the mythic story of Ògún and the controversies surrounding his person and his activities. I then use Ògún’s myth to narrate a comprehensive story of how the Olójó festival began to be commemorated in Ilé-Ifé and how that festival has continued to become more popular than other festivals. I also engage some hermeneutic interpretations of Olójó, and the cultural expressions involved in memorializing it. In the second part, I trace the history of Christ Way Church (Ministries Int.), its growth and development and its programmes, diversities and its pattern of interactions within and with other Christian groups and how that has further impacted the (re)Christianization of Ilé-Ifé. I finally examined the politics of religious identities between these two religious groups.

In chapter four, I examine the conceptual, social and ritual dimensions of the Gift among the Christ Way Pentecostal Christian group and the Ògún worshippers. The study includes a consideration of the symbolic or meaning-giving process, an analysis of the main features of ritual implication of the gift, and a discussion of different types of gifts that are being practiced
by these two communities of faith. This chapter concludes with the analysis and description of sacred rites.

Chapter five concludes by returning to the conceptual dimension by shifting from the practice of gift exchange among these two religious denominations to the question of suspicion or a consideration of belief or disbelief in the acceptance of or privileging one particular gift to God over the other. This question is addressed by examining different senses and contexts in which humans might maintain social solidarity by re-introducing Hobbesian and Maussian ideas of privileging common humanity over religious differences through the mutual reciprocal gift exchange. In essence, the study argues that moral imperatives and ethical reflections are crucial to the recognition that all religious belief systems provide ultimate meaning and values as guide for the conduct of life.
Chapter One

Ilé-Ifé: The Site of Ethnography

Introduction

This chapter traces the mythical story of Ilé-Ifé from the beginning, and how that mythical story has impacted the way the Yorùbá people interpret their reality. It looks at the different interpretations of the mythic origin of Ilé-Ifé and the controversies that surround these mythic interpretations. The chapter also considers the sacred and political roles Ilé-Ifé is playing both in the ancient and modern periods for all the Yorùbá at home and in the diaspora. The chapter discusses the roles of women in Ilé-Ifé sacred and social arrangements and how that has impacted the Yorùbá socio-economic and political life. It closely examines the history of Islam and how it has engaged Yorùbá traditional religion and how that engagement has either changed or modified some traditional Yorùbá people’s religious orientation.

It examines the symbolic practice of the gift exchange in the ancient times and sees how that practice has either been changed or modified by contact with either Islam or Christianity. A very interesting thing about the history and myth of the Yorùbá generally and that of Ilé-Ifé in particular is that both are as very diverse as they are complex. Ilé-Ifé history and its myth could not be clearly understood without first telling the history of the Yorùbá. The difficulty and complexity lie in the inability by various scholars to trace Yorùbá origin to a particular place.

History of the Yorùbá

According to the Yorùbá historians, not too much is known of the early history of the Yorùbá-speaking peoples, except what can be gleaned from missionaries’ notes, African and
Yorùbá historians. Peter McKenzie claims that the “accounts of the missionaries were fleeting impressions, colored by strong preconceptions and obtained by people ‘passing through’—rather like the tourists of today, though not in quite such haste.” According to E.B. Ellis, it appeared that, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, all the different ethnic groups were united, and were ruled by a king who resided at Old Òyó, sometimes called Katunga. The complexity of the Yorùbá history lies, first, on the fact that scholars rely very much on oral rather than written history.

This poses a great deal of problem for historians and anthropologists, who initially seemed to rely on the written records rather than mere oral history that are often overlooked because they can be very unreliable. Recently, in ethnographic study, however, emphasis has been placed on the importance of the collection of oral history/narrativity; story and folktales of the people, and this approach works well if the right people are approached and local voices are not marginalized. Toyin Fálolá, argues that, “there is no longer any need to demonstrate the value of archeology, oral tradition, written sources, and language as valuable source material...” What I think Fálolá is saying is that all these important resources are already part

---

108 Oral source is good insofar the right people are contacted.
110 Toyin Fálolá, *Yorùbá Historiography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 1
of the methodological apparatuses in writing reliable history. He later says, “Hundreds of works have been produced to justify the use and abuse of these sources.”

Second, the sheer variableness of the Yorùbá number and geographical spread also present a great caution on the part of the scholars to attempt any generalization. Yorùbá people are neither monolithic nor homogenous but are heterogeneous, particularly with regards to their linguistic variations; even though all of these groups are usually lumped together as a tribe. The third barrier is that Yorùbá culture is so complex that William Bascom cautions, “One needs to be very careful in selecting, eliminating and condensing the material resources collected about them.” Saburi Biobaku, in his introduction, points out that “The name ‘Yorùbá’ is applied to a linguistic group, numbering several millions, which occupies a large area extending through Kwara, Lagos, and Western States of Nigeria and the Republics of Dahomey and Togo.”

His argument implies that the Yorùbá have a common language. While this is correct, he does not follow his arguments through; he did not include the clause that they actually have different dialects. Biobaku later added that the word Yorùbá was only first used with respect to the Ōyó people before it became applied to other Yorùbá groups of people. The omission notwithstanding, Biobaku’s book seems to be very important to our understanding of some important facts about the Yorùbá. Fálolá believes that Biobaku’s work is “the logical first step in the unfolding of the history of such non-literate societies.”

With respect to language, Robert Smith claims that “their language, despite its many dialects, provides the main evidence of a common origin and cultural heritage; the name
sometimes applied to this language, ànàgó, has been used by their neighbors, especially the Dahomeans to describe the people…"\(^{117}\) The word ànàgó is very problematic; ànàgó could not have been used for the whole of the Yorùbá at the time; only the sectional part of the Yorùbá world that was living close to the Dahomeans could have been bearing such a name. It is one of those diverse Yorùbá dialects. Some Yorùbá are still being referred to as ànàgó just like the ònkò dialect is still being used for people who occupied the northern part of the present Òyó city; Smith is equally wrong in this area. Fourth, and this seems critical to the understanding of the modern period in which we are living, many contemporary Yorùbá Christians and Muslims reject the often taken-for-granted old canon of the source of the Yorùbá people.\(^{118}\)

This makes the matter rather more complicated than one could ever imagine. For example, many early Yorùbá Muslims claimed that the Yorùbá migrated from Mecca through the instrumentality of Lámúrúdu the father of Odùduwà, the acclaimed progenitor of the Yorùbá race on the one hand; and on the other hand, early Yorùbá converted Christians developed a story, which traced Yorùbá origin to one of the lost tribes of Israel. The Yorùbá traditional mythical account contradicts both. Samuel Johnson’s account that subsequent writers depended upon rejected such beliefs.\(^{119}\) According to Smith, “The past of the Yorùbá of West Africa, who form the population of the Western State of Nigeria, must be reconstructed, so far as the period preceding the penetration of their country by Europeans from about the mid-nineteenth century is concerned, almost wholly from tradition, or ‘oral evidence’ in the cumbersome phrase, a method which is only now achieving respectability among historians.”\(^{120}\) Smith agrees with Michael

---

\(^{117}\) Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yorùbá*, 10

\(^{118}\) Many Yorùbá radical Muslims would prefer that Yorùbá history is understood against that of the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia or Mecca, while the Pentecostal Christians are now rejecting any direct lineage with Odùduwà. What they are claiming is that Odùduwà could not have given rise to the Yorùbá race but God of heaven.

\(^{119}\) Johnson, *History of the Yorùbá*, 1960

\(^{120}\) Smith, *Kingdoms of*, ix
Crowder that Yorùbá and Benin (Bini) kingdoms were 'purely African states whose growth was stimulated neither by contact with Islam nor Europe.'

This chapter will re-examine the history of the Yorùbá and later show how Ilé-Ifè is central to understanding Yorùbá religious, economic, social, political, and cultural life.

**History of the Yorùbá**

Many scholars have written extensively about the history of the Yorùbá, so much so that they even contradict one another, which necessitates that, there is a need to carefully select the most accurate historical account of this people; perhaps through an indigenous form of knowledge, which Andrew Apter calls hermeneutics of power.

According to William Bascom, “The Yorùbá of West Africa are one of the largest ethnic groups south of the Sahara, and in several ways one of the most interesting and important peoples of Africa.” Ellis and Smith both agree on this point raised by Bascom, but Smith adds that the Yorùbá are neighbors of the Bini or Edo of Benin. Here is where a close attention should be paid to what eventually led to a controversy beginning from the end of the twentieth century between some Benin and Ilé-Ifè elites who disagree on the connection of Benin with Ilé-Ifè and vice-versa.

It is claimed by certain scholars that the Yorùbá tradition of urban life gives them a unique place not only among African societies, but among non-literate peoples of the world.

For example, according to Frank A. Salamone, “the Yorùbá have long been the most urbanized of all sub-Saharan people (Africa) and among the most urbanized people in the

---

121 Smith, *Kingdoms of*, 4
123 Bascom, *The Yoruba of*, 1
124 Flora Kaplan disagrees with Jacob Egharevba, the author of “A short History of Benin,” who initially argues that Benin originated from Ilé-Ifè. Kaplan argument is based on a fresh insight she got from the present Oba of Benin Omonoba Erediuwa. Kaplan’s disagreement against Egharevba is that the latter only interviewed old people who perhaps were not elites, hence his history was distorted. See details in Flora Kaplan, ‘Understanding Sacrifice and Sanctity in Benin Indigenous Religion, Nigeria’ in Jacob K. Olúpònà (ed.) *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 181-199.
Bascom claims that “Yorùbá cities are large, and even the traditional ones are dense.” Within pre-colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, the Yorùbá are one of the three largest and most important ethnic groups. The Hausa, Igbo, and the Yorùbá constitute more than half of Africa’s most populous nation, and are found in the Northern, Eastern, and Western Regions of Nigeria respectively. Smith claims that there is Yorùbá “irredenta in Dahomey and Togo, cut off from their brethren by the European frontier makers in the Scramble for Africa at the end of nineteenth century.” What most of the historians such as Akínjógbìn, Olómólà, and Smith, agree upon is that Yorùbá have undoubtedly occupied their homeland for many centuries before the incursion of the Europeans.

When the Portuguese first arrived on the coast in the fifteenth century, the Yorùbá political organization (divided into a number of major and minor states) had already evolved and may well have been in existence for several hundred years. Oyin Ògunbà argues that “the Yorùbá political history is that of history of migrations, conquests, settlements, and significant episodes in the life of communities.” A similar claim like Ògunbà’s was made earlier by the Reverend Johnson, who contends that his interlocutors told him that “the Yorùbás are said to have sprung from Lámúrúdu, one of the kings of Mecca whose offspring were: Odùduwà, the ancestor of the Yorùbás, the kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country.” The problem with this historical account, as mentioned earlier, is that the Yorùbá people would only have become an entity in the eleventh century on the one hand and on the other hand.

126 Bascom, The Yorùbá,
127 Smith, Kingdoms of, 9
128 Smith, Kingdoms of, 9-10
129 Oyin Ògunbà, “Ceremonies” in Bíòbákú, Sources of Yorùbá History, 91
130 Johnson, History of the Yorùbá, 3; Andrew Apter’s account of migration also shows the connection of the Yorùbá with the East, meaning Mecca, which he believes could not be substantiated with any concrete evidence. See Apter, Black Critics and Kings, 15
other, and were also related to some of the Hausa people who live in the Northern part of Nigeria and in Niger. There is very little concrete evidence to substantiate any kinship relations of the Yorùbá with the said two Hausa ethnic groups. Other accounts of the Yorùbá do not link them to the Hausa people in any way. Interestingly enough, Johnson points out that there are errors in this historical account. He contends that “the Yorùbá are certainly not from Arabia, and could not have come from Mecca.”

If the Yorùbá have the same political and perhaps cultural history, where did they originate? This important question has not been adequately addressed by the historians. Though archaeological accounts have shown evidence of occupation of their present place since the fourth century BCE, they have not yet settled the problems connected with the origin of the Yorùbá. One of the narratives used to propose the beginning of the Yorùbá is the sacred mythical story of the coming into the existence of the Yorùbá people. Unfortunately, sacred myth is not without its own peculiar problems just like any other myths all over the world. It has been argued that myths, as a type of story, deal with cosmic and exemplary time rather than historical time. Myths usually include fabulous and bizarre phenomena that are very difficult to harmonize with the scientific ways of knowing and understanding our world. And yet, because of the givenness of the sacred myths, it normally validates their authority and makes them true rather than simply entertaining Schmidt. Claude Levi-Strauss had earlier argued that “On one hand, mythical stories are fantastic and unpredictable: the content of myth seems completely arbitrary, on the other hand, the myths of different cultures are surprisingly similar.” This last phrase is quite true; myths of how the world was created are common to every known religious tradition of the

131 Johnson, *History of the Yorùbá*, 3-4
133 Schmidt, *Exploring Religion*, 129
world. In many of the myths, the divine being or beings is/are always mentioned so as to validate those cultural stories. Different versions of the Yorùbá myth of creation have been told but only few of them shall be analyzed in this work.

According to one of these myths, especially the one recorded by Smith¹³⁵, Odùduwà, sent from heaven by the creator Olódùmarè (called also Olórun, ‘owner of the sky’) to establish land upon the surface of the waters was both first ruler of Ifè and ancestor of the royal dynasties in the other principal kingdoms of the Yorùbá. Odùduwà descended from heaven upon Òra hill with sixteen companions to share his task of colonizing the earth. From the Òkè-Òra the party moved a short distance to settle on the place where the Ààfin (palace) Ifè still stands at the center of the town. Dissension soon broke out between Odùduwà and Obàtálá (Órisà-Nlá—the arch divinity), one of the foremost of his (Odùduwà) followers. To Obàtálá, as to Odùduwà, both divine and material functions are attributed. On the one hand, it was he to whom Olódùmarè entrusted the fashioning of men out of clay, into which models the Creator (Olódùmarè or Olórun) breathed life, and on the other, he is described as one of the Odùduwà’s subordinate rulers of Ifè.

In this latter capacity he rebelled against the authority of Odùduwà, who with the help of Obameri (sometimes described as the first among the sixteen and sometimes as Odùduwà’s eldest son) drove him away from the town. The quarrel was composed, but Obàtálá retained the leadership of the people whom he had met in the surrounding forest. These people, known as the Ìgbò (possibly after a variety of bird), have been held to be indigenous people whom Odùduwà and his followers had found already dwelling in Ifè. After his death, Obàtálá was venerated as ‘the great god’ (Órisà-Nlá), and his festival is one of the most important events in the Ifè year. Geoffrey Parrinder’s account does not include Odùduwà in the creation story at all.

¹³⁵ Smith, Kingdoms of the Yorùbá, 11
According to him, the world was initially marshy and watery. The sky was the throne of the gods. The principal or supreme deity, Olórun, (Olódùmarè) directed Great God, Òrìsà-Nlá (Obàtálá), to make firm ground. Nlá was given a snail shell that contained loose earth, a pigeon, and a five-toed hen to facilitate his task. He threw the dirt down upon the marshy surface, whereupon the hen scratched the dirt until dry land was formed. The creation of the earth was accomplished in four days and the fifth day was given over as a day of worship to its creator, Òrìsà-Nlá. Bascom’s account agrees with Parrinder but with a little modification; Odùduwà was involved in this creative work also.

Òrìsà-Nlá was said to have come through a chain that Olódùmarè gave to him and all the materials for creation, as already mentioned by Parrinder. Bascom, however, claims that Ifè people who narrated the story to him said that, while Òrìsà Nlá was on his way to the earth, as he approached the gate of heaven, he saw some deities having a party, and he stopped to greet them. They offered him palm wine and he drank too much to the extent that he fell asleep, intoxicated. Odùduwà, his younger brother, had overheard Olórun’s (Olódùmarè’s) instructions, and when he saw Òrìsà Nlá sleeping, he took the materials and went to the edge of heaven, accompanied by Chameleon. Here he let down the chain and they climbed down upon it. The chicken began to scratch the earth, spreading it in all directions, and as far as the ends of the earth. After Chameleon had tested the firmness of the earth, Odùduwà stepped into it at Idió where he made his home, and where his sacred grove in Ifè is located until today.

When Òrìsà Nlá awoke and found that the work had been completed, he put a taboo on wine from the palm tree, which his worshippers observe until today. He came down to earth and claimed it as his own, because he had been sent by Olórun (Olódùmarè) to create and rule it and,

---

137 Bascom, The Yorùbá of South Western Nigeria, 9-10
as Odùduwà’s elder brother, by right of seniority. Odùduwà insisted that he was the owner of the earth because he had made it. The two brothers began to fight and the other deities who followed them to earth took sides with them. When Olórun heard of the fighting, he called Òrisà Nlá and Odùduwà to appear before him in heaven, and each told his version of what happened. Olórun said that the fighting should stop. To Odùduwà, creator of the earth, he gave the right to own the earth and rule it, and he became the first king of Ifè. To Òrisà Nlá, he gave a special title and the power to mould human bodies, and he became the Creator of mankind. Olórun then sent them back to earth with Òràmfè, the Ifè God of Thunder, to keep peace between them, and with Ifá, the God of Divination, and Elésije, the Ifè God of Medicine, as their companions.¹³⁸

There are at least three important things we can bring out from all these mythical stories, notwithstanding their inconsistencies. First, when a story such as this is told, apart from the ability, the interest of the story teller also plays a major role in the telling of it. This is what we can term the politics of storytelling. What do I mean by this? In the two mythical stories told above, the first claims that Odùduwà was the real leader of the heavenly party, while Obàtálá was just one of his followers. The other one implies that Odùduwà was in fact a younger brother to Obàtálá (Órisà-Nlá). Of course, one can easily see that an ethnographer will face a lot of problems if he or she collects information from certain set of people while neglecting others. Obviously, one can be very certain that if Odùduwà’s followers wanted to narrate a story, everything they would say would definitely be in Odùduwà’s and his followers’ favor.

The same thing will happen if the Obàtálá’s followers are asked about the same story, there is bound to be a twist in the telling of the story to favor Obàtálá and his followers. This is exactly what is going on here. Andrew Apter suggests that, in order to have a reliable Yorùbá

¹³⁸ Bascom, *The Yorùbá of Southwestern Nigeria*, 9-10
history, the historicist and functionalist approaches to the interpretation of the Yorùbá myth and ritual are needed. Historicist approach according to Apter regards myth as testimony of the past in oral societies, incorporating history into narrative which resists revision and remains historically valid through fixed chains of oral transmission. A functionalist approach, on the other hand, defines myth as a charter of political and ceremonial relations and interprets variant traditions as rival political claims.¹³⁹

Second, because of this fact, there have been constant reinterpretations of these diverse mythical stories. For instance, the story was once-taken-for-granted that Odùduwà is the progenitor of all Yorùbá and Benin has been challenged because of new and fresh evidences that have been shown to the contrary.¹⁴⁰ Some Benin elites have rejected the story that makes Benin to be either part of the Yorùbá or under Ifè. Again, all the Yorùbá historians and European explorers/writers have agreed that there have been aboriginal people living in Ile-Ifè even before Odùduwà arrived there.¹⁴¹ Third, in Ile-Ifè, due to the reason given in number one, the Odùduwà’s faction and Obàtálá’s have not been in any mutual agreement as to who is the real leader and creator from the beginning of time till the present due to the politicized way the mythical stories have been told. The usurpation of creation by Odùduwà has given rise to the everlasting conflict between him and his supposed elder brother Obàtálá, which is still re-enacted in the modern day Ifè by the cult groups of the two clans during the Ìtàpá New Year festival.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Andrew Apter, *Black Critics and King*, 13
Fourth, different sub-ethnic Yorùbá groups are contesting the supremacy of Ifè and that of Oòni. For example, on the one hand, Ìjèṣà people and their king Owá Obòkusì are claiming that Oòni was actually a slave to Odùduwà, who was charged with maintaining the Òrìsà shrine; while on the other hand, Benin people are claiming that Benin has never been subject to Oòni and never has belonged to the Yorùbá tribe. The question that should be addressed is: Could this new way of thinking be as a result of the political climate in Nigeria today? Indeed, oral history can be frustratingly daunting and very complex! Historians and archaeologists might still need to revisit the Yorùbá mythico-historical account so as to know what the true picture of the story is. Let me turn to the history/mythical story of Ifè and how the city is regarded as both centrifugal and centripetal forces to the understanding of the whole Yorùbá race.

The Gender of Odùduwà

The gender of Odùduwà is shrouded in mystery and highly enigmatic; one mythical account believes Odùduwà was a male figure when alive, while another account claims that Odùduwà was actually a female deity when compared with other deities such as Òrànmmìyàn, Òrisà-Nlá, Ògún, Sàngó, and others. Obáyemí agrees with Farrow, who states that Odùduwà is also called Ìyá Agbe; and that she is the chief goddess and wife of Obàtálá (Òrìsà-Nlá) who fled from Ile-Ifè Adó some 15 miles (25km) from Badagry. Olúmídé Lucas presents a similar picture of Odùduwà.¹⁴³ According to him:

Odùduwà is one of the most important deities. She is the chief female Òrìsà, just as Obàtálá is the chief male Òrìsà. She is reputed as the progenitor of the Yorùbá race...Some depicts the deity as a male Òrìsà and others as a female Òrìsà. The former myths are of late origin...The myths depicting the deity as a female Òrìsà

are more original in character; and more widely accepted. There is hardly any doubt that Odùduwà was originally a female deity.\textsuperscript{144}

In fact, Ìdòwú also refers to the traditions in Adó-Èkitì and Igbó-Orà where Odùduwà is still referred to as the female goddess till today.\textsuperscript{145} In Igbó-Orà in particular, according to Ìdòwú, part of the liturgy in the worship of this Òrìsà (Odùduwà) begins with:

\begin{verbatim}
Èyá dákun gbà wá o;
Kí o tó 'ni, tó 'mo;
Ògbégi l'Àdó
\end{verbatim}

O mother, we beseech thee to deliver us;
Look after us; look after (our) children;
Thou who are being established at Ado\textsuperscript{146}

In Ìdòwú’s opinion, there is a hint of the androgynous nature of Odùduwà wherever there has been hybridization between her cult and that of Òrìsà Nlá, either by superimposition or through compromise. Ìdòwú argues that it is only in Ilé-Ifè that Odùduwà is particularly regarded as a deity; in many other Yorùbá societies, Odùduwà is just an ancestor. It is very difficult to fix the correct sexual identity of Odùduwà. It could be argued that Odùduwà was an important figure either as a deity or an ancestor/ancestress to the collective memory and imagination of all the Yorùbá kingdoms.\textsuperscript{147}

\textit{Primacy of Ifè}

Many Yorùbá consider the ancient city of Ilé-Ifè as the first creation here below; the original home of all things; the place from which the day dawns; the enchanted, holy city; the home of divinities and mysterious spirits. Virtually all the European explorers and African scholars agree with the Yorùbá assertion that Ilé-Ifè is the sacred and political center of all the Yorùbá

\textsuperscript{144} Olúmídé Lucas, \textit{The Religion of the Yorùbá}, (Lagos: C.M.S., 1948), 93-94
\textsuperscript{145} Ìdòwú, \textit{Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief}, 25-27
\textsuperscript{146} Ìdòwú, \textit{Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief}, 26
\textsuperscript{147} There is no way this dissertation can solve this problem. The truth is that Odùduwà is regarded as the founder of the Yorùbá society.
kingdoms. Bólájí Òdòwù says that “until comparatively recently, when easy communication has made it possible to travel almost all over the country safely and quickly, Ilé-Ifè used to be the sacred lodestone which filled the Yorùbá people everywhere with a deep yearning for pilgrimage.”

Recently, Olúpònà claims that:

In Ifè-Yorùbá imagination, the cosmos is often described and explained in metaphors of place, structure, spatial dimensions, and orientation. Ilé-Ifè, the city where creation took place, means literally “an expansive land.” It is also described as “the place where the day dawns” (núbí ojú ti mó wá): Ilé-Ifè is the center from which the inhabitants of the world first viewed daylight. The earth was conceived as highly expansive, in no way spatially confined.

Ifè people, as a result of their claim that the world began in Ilé-Ifè, always show a sense of arrogance and pride. They always almost assume that there is no other place in all of Nigeria that has better artifacts than Ifè.

Cordelia O. Òsásònà, Lee O. Ògúnshakin and David A. Òjóyè do not only agree with Olúpònà’s argument, they show how important Ifè is to the history of the whole Yorùbá in particular and Nigeria in general. According to them (I will quote them at length):

Histo-culturally, Ifè’s prominence hinges on two significant phenomena: the first is that for the Yoruba (at home and in the diaspora) it symbolizes the genesis of the totality of their ethnicity. (The town is popularly referred to as orisun – the source of – Yoruba). As such – particularly in matters of traditional belief systems and mode of worship – the town is a reference-cum-rallying-point. Secondly, with art historians and archaeologists (like Frobenius and Willett) spotlighting the ancient city’s exquisite artworks (in bronze and terracotta), the potential for authentic ethnological studies of Yoruba culture – and by extension, Negro culture – has heightened the town’s socio-cultural value.

---

148 Òdòwù, Olódùmarè, 3-4
149 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 30
According to Bíòbákú, the town was probably founded between the seventh and tenth centuries AD. Jeffrey opines that it had become a flourishing civilization by the eleventh century. Òsásonà et al agree with Willet who demonstrates that “Carbon-dating appears to endorse these views, as it establishes that Ifẹ “was a settlement of substantial size between the 9th and 12th centuries”. As already pointed out above, controversy surrounds the actual founding of the town, as the two popular viewpoints are diametrically opposed: one school of thought recognizes the existence of settlements before the rise to prominence of Odùduwà, who was thought to have migrated from Saudi Arabia, the legendary warrior and founding father of the Yorùbá.

The other, a creation myth, is anchored on viewing Odùduwà as the progenitor of the whole human race, sent by his father Olódùmarè (the Creator God), to a hitherto formless earth. Ilé-Ifẹ was where he started carrying out the mandate to establish settlements. Ìsòlá Olómólà, attempts to solve the impasse in his detailed study, “Ifẹ before Odùduwà;” where he claims that, “Though Ifẹ is incontestably the source and the ancient city where all Yorùbá groups have spread to found different Yorùbá cities as they are known today, yet there were inhabitants of the land before Odùduwà and his entourage arrived.” In this study, a host of arguments are raised to support this fact. First, Olómólà, in his earlier study, claimed that parts of Ifẹ, Ijesa, Èkìti and Ijebu, etc, were inhabited by people with some measure of sophisticated political culture before the advent of Odùduwà.

Second, Ulli Beier in his article, “Before Odùduwà” also pointed out that there is enough evidence, in the various creation stories and stories of wars and conquests associated with

---

152 M.D. Jeffrey, “When was Ifẹ Founded?” in The Nigerian Field, vol. 23, no.1.,(1958) 21-23, see page 21
153 Òsásonà, Ogúnshakin and Jibóyè, “Ilé-Ifẹ, 2009; Willet, African Art, 367
155 Olómólà, “Ifẹ Before Odùduwà”, 51
156 See Olómólà, “Ifẹ Before Odùduwà”, 51
Odùduwà, to show that parts of Yorùbáland were inhabited before this episode by the people who were either conquered, driven out or absorbed by the new dynamic group.\(^{157}\) This important historical evidence shown by Olómólà and Beier is supported by both Smith and Bascom. Smith claims that during the fight that ensued between Odùduwà and Obàtálá, the former succeeded in chasing the latter away with the support of his group, and while Obàtálá left Ifè, he went to settle among the people who had predated both Odùduwà and Obàtálá in the nearby settlement.\(^{158}\)

There, he was made their ruler. Meanwhile, back in Ifè, Odùduwà became the ruler. Olómólà mentions one Ikedu, described by Akínjógbìn as an “archaic school for teaching (Ifè) history to the initiates.”\(^{159}\) It was through the information gathered from Ikedu, that we have an idea of how Odùduwà came to overrun the people that were living in Ifè before his and his followers’ arrival. This story is similar to how the United States of America as we know it today subdued the American Indians, the former inhabitants of the land presently occupied by the North Americans (see Carlisle & Colson 2007: 238).\(^{160}\) It is good to look briefly at the geography of Ifè as recorded by some scholars.

**Physical Geography of Ifè**

According to L.K. Jéjé, “Ifè division lies between latitude 7 degree N and 7 degree 35’ N, longitudes 4 degree 20’ E and 4 degree 45’E, covering an area of 1846 km square. Its western boundary joins the course of River Shasha, and its south-eastern boundary to the north-east or to the south.”\(^{161}\) The traditional Ifè city, schematically, could be described as a wheel, with the

---

157 Ulli Beier, “Before Odùduwà”, in Odù, no.3,1956, 25-32, see 25
158 Smith, Kingdoms of, 90
159 Olómólà, “Ife Before Odùduwà”, 52
160 P. Rodney Carlisle, and J. Geoffrey, Golson, Manifest Destiny and the Expansion of America (Turning Points in History Series, 2007), 238
oba’s palace as the hub, from which roads radiated like spokes, and in relation to which the en-
framing town wall represented the rim.\(^{162}\) Obátérù says that, “Still in conformity with classical
morphology, the Ifè palace’s frontage also accommodated a community square. Cosmological
considerations also demanded that the major routes had an orientation to the palace such that
they coincided with the cardinal points, with the east-facing one associated with Sàngó, the west
one, Èsù, the one to the north, Obátálá, and the southward one, Ògún— all local deities”.\(^{163}\)

Johnson, claims that “Market squares as a rule mark out the frontage of a chief or a distinguished
man, and the principal entrance to his compound is marked out by its having verandah added to it
right and left, and if a King, two or more kobis (elevated pillars) are added to the street
verandah.”\(^{164}\)

According to Òsásonà et al “the classical Yorùbá town was invariably characterized by
the principal market being centrally-located and in front of the paramount ruler’s house –
reminiscent of classical Hellenic Greek and Middle-Eastern practices.”\(^{165}\) Willet believes that,
Ifè came into prominence through the presence of the colonial administration in Nigeria, just like
any other important cities.\(^{166}\) Before this time, according to him, Ifè began to wane politically,
especially due to internecine wars among the Yorùbá and especially the Yorùbá war with
Dahomey.\(^{167}\) Cordelia Òsásonà claims that, “The physical presence of a colonial administrator (a

---

\(^{163}\) Obátérù, *The Yorùbá City*, 223
\(^{164}\) Johnson, *The History of*, 90-91
\(^{166}\) Willet, *African Art*, 34
\(^{167}\) Smith, *Kingdoms of*, 1969
District Officer, DO) became felt only in the 1940s; prior to this, the town had been administered indirectly, initially from Lagos, and later from Ibadan.”

Under colonial rule, the core of Ilé-Ifè continued to develop along classical lines: the palace, community square and major market, Ojà Oba (the “king’s market”) continued to be central to the lives of the people. The cultural axis starting at the palace and ending at the Ògún’s shrine, maintained its religio-social prominence, and the town continued to grow essentially along the sectors defined by the major radial roads. The inter-urban roads constructed by the colonialists (from Ìbàdàn to Ifè and from Ifè to Ilé-sà, Ondó, Àkúré, etc), initially did not attract development. According to Òsásonà et al, “Residential buildings in the core (the abode of the city’s political and military classes, ranked outward from the palace to commoners on the periphery) benefited by the introduction of the new, imported, building materials (featuring metal roofing sheets and cement).”

Apart from the Ilé Nlá (“big house”), the major direct colonial construction in the city centre was the museum, built in 1954. From the late eighties and early nineties, Ifè’s inner core has witnessed tremendous transformation. In the early 1990s, Enuwá Square was re-modeled; the triangular communal meeting area was transformed into a park, with the presence of a full-size statue of Odùduwà dominating the landscape. Òsásonà notes that, “The unpretentious temporary mosque that used to be in the Square was demolished and replaced with an imposing edifice – the Central Mosque, even the Ògún Shrine that used to be just a symbolic tree (at the foot of which the rituals were performed), has been integrated in a refined way into the modern City

---

Hall complex.” I will turn to the detailed story of Ifè as the sacred and political center for all the Yorùbá in the next paragraph. In this endeavor, I will be looking at various arguments made by scholars to show how Ifè is called the sacred and political center for all the Yorùbá both at home and in diaspora.

**Ancient Ifè**

One thing that is very peculiar with all the scholars who have written about Ilé-Ifè is that they all agreed on the primacy of Ifè over and above all other Yorùbá cities. In spite of the different variations in the Yorùbá traditions, most of these traditions agree on the common origin from Ilé-Ifè and the dispersal of the descendants of Odùduwà from Ifè to found the Yorùbá kingdoms. Ryder suggests that “the present Ifè may possibly be the remnant of an earlier Ifè which was perhaps located to the east and found its final settlement where we know it to be today.” Olánìyàn and Akínjógbin also make reference to one Sówándé who argues that the Ifè of ancient tradition is not likely to be the present-day Ifè. Abímbólá directs our attention to many references to Ifè in Ifá literature, but points out that those references could not have been made to the modern day Ilé-Ifè.

Leo Frobenius described ancient Ifè as the ‘‘far-famed and mysterious Atlantis,’ assuming it to have represented a superb human civilization, which has perished before this cycle of human civilization, a Greek colony of the 13th Century B.C.’’ One can easily see some biases in Frobenius’ comment here. He didn't think that the statuary he found at Ilé-Ifè could have been

---

170 Òsásonà, “The Ilé Nlá, 82
172 Ryder, “A Reconsideration of the Ifè-Benin...” 28
made by Africans; he thought that it was too sophisticated. There's more than a little racism at work here. Olómólà claims that various names occurred in the oral histories of the Yorùbá, one of such names is Ìnámú, another Ígbómòkùn and yet another is Ìfè Óòdáyé. Inámú according to him appears to have been a local rendition or reference to old Ìlórómù, one of the component village communities of ancient Ìfè (as a matter of fact, Ìlórómù still exists till today), while Ìfè Óòdáyé is the name commonly mentioned by Ìfè traditional historians as that of the earliest habitat of their ancestors as they emerged after the primeval flood.

Based on the foregoing, the history of Ìfè can be summarized into three epochs: The first Ìfè was known as Ìfè Óòdáyé, Ilè òwúrò, ibití ajúmọ́ tí mọ́, that is, Ìfè Óòdáyé, the land of the most ancient days where the dawn of the day was first experienced. Tradition claims that the life of this community came to an end as a result of a flood which flushed the whole area occupied by the community. Those who survived the deluge formed the nucleus of the community that formed the second era of the history of Ìfè. The second Ìfè was called Ìfè Óòyélàgbọ́, that is, the city of the survivors. Tradition maintains that the second Ìfè lasted until the arrival of some strangers who entered the city of Ilé-Ìfè from the “East.”

An attempt made to seize power from the aborigines on the land led to a bloody struggle between the strangers led by Odùduwà on one hand and the aborigines led by Obàtàlá on the other. Eventually, Odùduwà and his groups won the war. The third Ìfè is called Ilé-Ìfè, founded with the arrival of Odùduwà and his groups. It is believed that Odùduwà, the founder of the Yorùbá, emerged after the deluge, and he (Odùduwà) and his followers descended on to dry land by means of chain ropes from their life boat. They later anchored on Òkè-Òra (Òràmfè Hill) between Ilé-Ìfè and Ìtagúnmodì on the Ìfè-Ìlésà road, from where they came to Mòrà quarter in

---

176 Olómólà, “Ìfè Before Odùduwà”, 54
Ilé-Ife. The question we might be confronted with is whether the first aboriginal settler was actually called Ifè or that historians are just making up this story.

In Bascom, the information we have shows that ancient Ifè town was the capital of a kingdom of moderate size, about seventy miles long and forty miles wide, before the wars of the nineteenth century. Oòni as the king ruled over the capital through his chiefs and over the outlying towns through the Ifè town and palace chiefs, the five provincial chiefs, and the local own chiefs called Baálè. These chiefs were: Obalaàyé at Alaàyè, about seven miles from Ifè, controlled some ninety towns in the direction of Ìjèbú in the southwest; but these were destroyed and abandoned just prior to the Òwu war. Obawàrà at Iwàrà ruled the Ôni River in the direction of Ondó in the southeast; only Ifètèdó remains of the former towns in this division. Onpetu at Ìdó, about two miles from Ifè, ruled some seventy towns in the direction of Ilésà toward the northeast; but the six surviving towns in this division (including Òsú and Ìlobà) are under Ilésà today.

Owáfégun at Òkè Àwò ruled to Èjìgbò in the direction of Old Ôyó toward the northwest and Obaléjùgbè at Ìjùgbè ruled to Ikire and the Òsun River in the direction of Ìbàdàn toward the west; but most of the towns in these two provinces are now under Ìbàdàn. This detailed information from Bascom does not only complement Olómólà’s but has also shown how expansive and great Ifè used to be in the ancient period until the nineteenth century, as already mentioned above. Interestingly, all the towns mentioned in the two historical accounts we have in Olómólà and Bascom continue to exist in today’s modern Nigeria. Ifè, in the modern day, still has an expanse of land and controls a number of towns and villages that are subject to Oòni. Those towns and villages are being controlled by kings and chiefs delegated by Oòni.

---

177 Bascom, *The Yorùbá of Southwestern*, 12
A majority of the Yorùbá kings are distinguished by the right to wear beaded crowns, which are the symbols of their authority.\(^{178}\) Initially, the history has it that only a few kings who were direct descendants of Odùduwà, who eventually dispersed to found their own kingdoms, had the right to wear beaded crowns. In modern times, however, many Yorùbá kings are now wearing beaded crowns as symbols of identity with the progenitor—Odùduwà. The only difference is that Oòni of Ifè is the only king who has the prerogative of wearing a ritual crown called Arè, which he usually dons only during annual worship of Olójó in commemoration of Ògún; a subject I will discuss extensively in chapter three.

With regards to Ifè in particular and the Yorùbá kingdoms in general, the king’s person is sacred and in fact a king was usually isolated in the palace (Ààfin) from the people he ruled.\(^{179}\) Bascom, who spent many years among Yorùbá people and especially in Ifè, said that in the ancient times, following the crowning of Oòni, he moved into the palace, and he could return to his lineage home to visit his relatives only incognito and under the cover of darkness.\(^{180}\) He appeared in public only once a year, at the major sacrifice to Ògún, the God of Iron, and even then he was concealed behind cloths held by his messengers so that only his crown and its white egret feather could be seen. During the festival of Òrìsà-Nlá (Obàtálá), he was and still is expected to make three trips from the palace to the shrine, but on these occasions all the townspeople of Ifè had to remain in their houses with their windows closed and the women worshippers waiting at the shrine had to lie down with cloths over their heads so that he would


\(^{179}\) See Bascom, *The Yorùbá of Southwestern*, 31; Pemberton and Afoláyan, *Yorùbá Sacred Kingship*, 13; Olúpòní, *City of 201 Gods*, 13

\(^{180}\) Bascom, *The Yorùbá of Southwestern*, 31
not be seen.\textsuperscript{181} In earlier times, no one could eat with the king, nor could the king be seen eating or drinking in the public space.

*Sacred Role of Ilé-Ifè*

Ilé-Ifè is incontestably the most important city of Òrìsàs of different names and functions in all the Yorùbá society. Ifè is well known as the city of 201 deities.\textsuperscript{182} Olúpònà claims that “regarded as a sacred center of Yorùbá antiquity, the southwestern Nigerian city of Ilé-Ifè today still invokes religious fervor among the Yorùbá in West Africa and their diaspora throughout the Americas.”\textsuperscript{183} It is believed by the Ifè people and the Yorùbá in general that every day of the year the traditional worshippers celebrate a festival of each one of these deities.\textsuperscript{184} Often the festivals extend over more than one day and they involve both priestly activities in the palace and theatrical dramatizations in the rest of the kingdom. The most spectacular festivals demand the King’s participation.

These include the Ìtàpá festival for Obàtálá and Obameri, the Edì festival for Móremí Àjásorò, and the Ìgàrè masqueraders and the Olójó festival for Ògún. During the festivals and at other occasions the traditional priests offer prayers for the blessing of their own cult-group, the city of Ilé-Ifè, the Nigerian nation and the whole world. It is very interesting to note, according to Peel that in spite of the fact that Ifè lost its political glory in the sixteenth century, it nevertheless was able to retain its reputation as the scene of the cosmogony and as the entire region’s most prestigious sacred center.\textsuperscript{185} Abímbólá argues, and I think persuasively too, that in spite of the

\textsuperscript{181} Bascom, *The Yorùbá of*, 31
\textsuperscript{182} Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 13
\textsuperscript{183} Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 13
\textsuperscript{185} Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 29
increasing influence of Christian and Islamic evangelical activities, many traditional religious cults still exist and are venerated in Ile-Ife in particular and in all Yorùbá towns in general. In his recent book, *City of 201 Gods*, Olúpònà extensively explores the roles of Òrìsà in Ile-Ife and how these roles have distinguished Ife as the sacred center for the Yorùbá people at home and in diaspora. Many of these Òrìsà have gone into extinction no doubt; a host of them still exist today and are actively placated and worshipped by the devotees.

My ethnographic experience shows that Òrìsà devotion is still very active in Ile-Ife. They are being worshiped and placated by the devotees, and some Christians and Muslims still identify themselves with their lineage Òrìsàs. Myth has it that the Òrìsà pantheons are innumerable, so much that no one can actually know their numbers. The ancient Ife people put the number to be four hundred and one (401). The belief was that the total number of Òrìsà was four hundred, but that Oòni himself regarded as Òrìsà is the extra one on top of the four hundred Òrìsà, hence his name is called Oònirìsà (Oòni the Òrìsà).

Abímbólá has a different notion of the extra one Òrìsà on the top of the four hundred. His argument rests on the Ifá corpus, which says that Èsù is an Òrìsà who gets equal treatment and share of all sacrifices offered to all other Òrìsàs. Abímbólá claims that this is the reason why the Yorùbá always say, whenever a sacrifice is offered, that which belongs to Èsù must be set apart for him. So, for Abímbólá, Èsù is the extra Òrìsà on top of the four hundred. Therefore, as far as the numbers of the Òrìsà is concerned, even in Ife today, the people proudly reenact this in their invocation to Òrìsà and their anthem. The invocation goes like this:

*Ibà irinmolè ojúkötún*

---

187 Abímbólá, “Ifá; A West African Cosmological System”, 106
We adore you the divinities of the right hand
We adore you the two hundred divinities of the left hand
We adore you four hundred and sixty divinities
That actually line up the very road of heaven.

Their anthem looks interestingly and fascinatingly ethnocentric, which goes like this:

*Ile-Ifè ni Orírun Ayé*
*Ìlu Òodùà Baba Yorùbá*
*Èdùmàrà tó dàwa S’Ifè*
*Kó má se ba ‘fè jé mó wa l’órí*
*K’Ólúwa Kó ma ràn wá se*

*Ifè –Oòyè e jí gírí*
*È jí gírí kí ègbé Ifè ga*
*Olòrí ayè N’ Ifè Oòyè*
*Ka múra láti tè síwájú*
*Òràmfè oní’lé iná*
*Oòdùà a wè rínrin jagun*
*Òkàn lé n’irinwó Ìrùnmolè*
*È gbé ‘fè lékè Èsòro gbogbo*

*Ile-Ifè ‘bojúmó timó wá*
*Ìlu Àsà, òhun Èsìn*
*Gbogbo Yorùbá e káre ‘fè*
*Ka lo w’ohun àdáyè bá tó j’ojú*
*Ilé Oòdùà Ile-Ifè lówà*
*Òpá Òrànmìyàn, Ile-Ifè ni*
*‘Bojì Móremí Ile-Ifè ni*

*Ará e káre ‘fè Oòdàyè*
*Ifè –Oòyè e jí gírí*
*È jí gírí kí ègbé Ifè ga*
*Olòrí ayè N’ Ifè Oòyè*
*Ka múra láti tè síwájú*
*Òràmfè oní’lé iná*
*Oòdùà a wè rínrin jagun*
*Òkàn lé n’irinwó Ìrùnmolè*
*È gbé ‘fè lékè Èsòro gbogbo*

*Ile-Ifè the source of the whole world*
*The home of Oòdùà the father of Yorùbá*
Edùmàrè who created us in Ifè
Should please do not let Ifè collapse during our time
Lord continues to aid us.

Ifè Oòyè wake up, wake up lift Ifè high
The head of the whole world is Ifè Oòyè
Let us be ready to move forward
Òràmfè (similar to Sàngó), the one with the house of fire
Oòduà who goes to war with boldness
The Four hundred and one deities (gods)
Lift Ifè above all her troubles

Ile-Ifè is where the day is dawn
The town of tradition and ritual observances
All Yorùbá, come to Ifè
To go and see great ancient relics that we can be proud of
The house of Odùduwà is in Ile-Ifè
The staff of Òrànmiyàn is in Ile-Ifè
The tomb of Móremí is in Ile-Ifè
Brethren let us go to Ile-Ifè Oòdáyé

Ifè Oòyè wake up, wake up lift Ifè high
The head of the whole world is Ifè Oòyè
Let us be ready to move forward
Òràmfè (similar to Sàngó), the one with the house of fire
Oòduà who goes to war with boldness
The Four hundred and one deities (gods)
Lift Ifè above all her troubles. 188

A closer look at this song will convince one that Ifè people believe that their town is not
only the center of Òrìsà pantheons; they have a grandiose ethnocentric view of the world as said
earlier in this section. They assert that Ifè is the source of all the Yorùbá people and indeed the
whole world. My interaction with some priests, palace messengers (Emesè), and people in the
city further reveals that, regarded as the sacred center of the universe, Ifè city controls what goes
on in the spiritual realm in various other cities’ domains within and outside the Yorùbá society.
As a result of this, Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians within Ilé-Ifè continue to wage “spiritual

---

188 See Olójó 2011 Program Brochure.
warfare” against what they consider as an abomination to the Christian God, who alone should be worshipped and venerated.  

Political Arrangement of Ilé-Ifè

That Ilé-Ifè is not only a sacred center of the Yorùbá society, but also the political center, is clear enough and is underscored by the unique role Ifè is playing in the politics of the nation of Nigeria as a whole, even in modern times. The Ilé-Ifè myth of creation, which makes it to be the sacred center of the whole world, has shown its continued importance even in politics. This continued importance in politics according to Bascom “is demonstrated by the founding of the Society of the children of Oòduà (Egbé omo Odùduwà) in 1948 to unite the various clans in Yorùbáland and its association with the Action Group, a political party which was established three years later.” In Akínjógbìn’s The Cradle of a Race, research findings by different contributors clearly show that Odùduwà started a period of socio-political revolution in Ilé-Ifè and that the system has continued with various modifications till today. There is no doubt that prior to Odùduwà’s period, Ilé-Ifè region as said earlier, was already inhabited by people who had developed a fairly advanced socio-political system, some aspects of which were taken over by Odùduwà.

---

189 Pentecostal Charismatic Christians often always denigrate in their preachings and songs against the Òrìsà worshippers. One of such songs says: Satan cannot build his house near that of Jesus; if he did, we (Christians) shall pull it down. Or another one that says, Get out of the road, the owner of the house on the three-way junction, because Jesus (the owner of the road) is coming. Satan here symbolizes all Òrìsà pantheons and not necessarily a demon mythical figure as seen in the Christian Bible.

190 There are controversies that have been generated as to which town is the political center of the whole Yorùbá race; Ilé-Ifè or Oyo town? Some historians believe that Oyo town was initially a very vibrant political center for all the Yorùbá while Ifè was the spiritual center. But because of the Dahomeans war that ravaged and sacked the old Oyo Empire, Yorùbá historians such as Adéagbo Akínjógbìn hold that political power has been transferred to Ifè. Again, some historians accept that the event that happened in 1903, which brought Oòni face to face with Governor Macgregor in Lagos, actually changed the course of history for the Yorùbá people transferring political power to the king of Ifè instead of the king of Oyo.

191 Bascom, The Yorùbá of Southwestern, 1969
Omótòsó Elúyemí contends that early Ifè was a collection of thirteen (13) settlements; these thirteen settlements had leaderships with their different titles and functions. They were Ompetu, Obalúrú, Obalésin or Obalálè, Lókòré, Obaloràn, Obajió, Ìpáta, Obaláàyè, Obaløjøjè, Fégun, Obawirìn, Obalúfè and Obadió. According to Obáyemí, these represent the most formidable and most promising demonstrable link between the surviving political culture of Ilé-Ifè and its probable prototype, i.e., the pre-dynastic (pre-Oòni) and pre-urban system. The process of Odùduwà’s take-over was fairly prolonged and involved a series of military engagements. As a result, there was a successful establishment of the Odùduwà dynasty in Ilé-Ifè. His children and followers went all over the regions now referred to as Yorùbá region and beyond to replicate the Ifè political system. Yorùbá Obas (kings), just like their progenitor, Odùduwà, in all their various regions and domains, tower higher over and above all the people they rule and were necessarily the controllers of these regions and domains. According to Peel, “The whole disposition made a forceful political statement about the centrality of the Oba in order of things, an order which had a cosmological dimension as well as a charter in its source and example, Ilé-Ifè.” For Akínjógbìn “this process actually gave rise to Ilé-Ifè being regarded as the cradle of the Yorùbá race.”

Ifè political structure is as complex as its sacred structure. Even though Oòni is indisputably the head and owner of Ifè domain, Oòni was not expected to move out from the palace, where he controlled the affairs of the city. He only appeared in public during important ritual functions. He controlled the affairs of the city through the help of his chiefs that were

---

192 Omótòsó Elúyemí, Oba Adésojí aderemi:50 years in the History of Ilé-Ifè, (Ilé: Ògünibíyí Printing works, 1980), quoted in Akínjógbìn, The Cradle of a Race, 71-72
194 Apter, Black Critics and Kings, 29
195 Peel, Religious Encounter, 31
196 I.A. Akínjógbìn, ‘Ifè: The Years of Travail’ in Akínjógbìn ed., The Cradle of a Race, 148-170, see 149-152
structurally arranged into right and left; Ifè people called them Òtún Ifè and Òsì Ifè. Bascom classifies them as the town chiefs and the palace chiefs. The town chiefs were five in number and they were in charge of five wards namely: Òrúntó, head of Ìrémo ward, he is equally known as “King of the town of Ifè” (Obalúfè, Oba ilú Ifè), Èjió of Mòrè ward, Obaloràn of Ìlódè ward, Jagunòsìn, Wásìn of Ìláré ward, Èjèsí, Akogun of Ikogun ward, and Obalaàyè who represents the foreigners who have settled in Ifè. Under the control of these chiefs are other chiefs who are referred to as Baálè—the chiefs in control of outlying towns; they were appointed by the ward chiefs and often they were responsible for the young adults in their wards. Modákéké was recognized as the sixth ward, under its Baálè, but it was being represented in the Oòni’s palace only through Obalaàyè. These entire ward chiefs were particularly chosen from five different clans, and their titles are clan property.

The palace chiefs, on the other hand, were charged with palace affairs. They were eight in all and they were called Woyè. According to Bascom, they are Lówá Ìjawùrá, Jaran, Àgùrò, Àróde, Shániré, Ládìn, Lówátè, and Erébesè, followed by minor palace chiefs and the king’s messengers or pages. They are assigned to three ritual chambers in the palace, with Lówá, Àróde, and Lówátè in charge of Ilé Ògúngún and its deity, Oòduà; Jaran, Shániré, and Erébesè in charge of Ilé Òmìnrín and the deity Òrìsà-ǹlá; and Àgùrò and Ládìn responsible for Ilé Ìloshìn and Òràmfè, the Ifè God of Thunder who was sent to keep peace between the warring faction of Oòduà and Òrisà-ǹlá.

In addition to their other functions, the palace chiefs and the king’s messengers were responsible for religious rituals performed within the palace and for representing Oòni at the many religious festivals held at the shrines in town. The palace chiefs had the responsibility of

---

197 Bascom, The Yorùbá of, 33
198 Bascom, The Yorùbá of, 34-35
representing the interests of the Oòni in dealing with Ifè town chiefs and with outlying towns within the kingdom. The chiefs of Ile Ògúngún were intermediaries between the Oòni and the town of Mòro, and received tribute from it for Oòni. Those of the Òmìnìnrín served in the same fashion for the town of Asípa and for the black-smiths and hunters, as those of Ilé Ìloshìn for the town of Ìpetumodù and the woodcarvers. The Ifè town chiefs also served as intermediaries for the outlying towns, with Obaloràn receiving tribute to the Oòni from Edúnábòn and Ìwó.

The palace chiefs are chosen from individuals with the status of Modéwá, which is distinct from that of royal clan, the Ifè clans, and the strangers from other towns.

The reason for the distinction is not clear, according to Bascom, but he claimed that in return for assistance to an Oòni in the remote past, he permitted the ancestors of the three Modéwá clans to live inside the palace gate (Enuwá Gèru), where their compounds were located, until the palace walls were shortened, leaving them outside. They did not belong to any of the five quarters, but were directly under the Oòni, and they were called servants or “boys of the king” (omodé owá), which was contracted to Modéwá. Modéwá was not a permanent title held by anybody; any Ifè man may become a Modéwá and his children after him, if he is wealthy enough to afford two expensive initiations (arápón, ìdòko) so as to become a man of leisure (Lòdòko) and spend his days in the palace. Even though the palace chiefs initially were regarded to be lower in rank than the town chiefs, they have more privilege than the town chiefs, because they have access to the palace and whatever goes on there.

Bascom writes that “During the British colonial rule, the Native Court system was instituted, both the town chiefs and palace chiefs became parties that could listen to people’s cases and report the same to Oòni.” Interestingly, in modern day Ile-Ifè, it is almost difficult to

199 Bascom, *The Yorùbá of*, 34-35
separate the two chieftaincy groups because both groups sit together to listen to various cases brought by the Ifè people to the palace. I was granted the privilege of sitting with these chiefs during their Traditional Court sessions on two occasions during my last ethnographic visit. We need to know, however, that palace chiefs do not wield the same political and judicial authority like the town chiefs. The town chiefs are over their wards/quarters as kings and are also in charge of city affairs.  

During my visit to the local court session I observed that when individuals brought cases to the palace court, the highest ranking chiefs (the town chiefs headed by Lowa) presided over the cases. They adjudicated on matters such as disputes on lands (which are very common in Yorùbáland) and marriage issues. Even though women who occupied the positions of chief such as Iyalode I, II, and III were present, their roles were just that of passive observers. I want to believe that this is just an isolated case. This single observation is not the adequate representative of how religious and political arrangements have made women to be visible in pre-colonial and post-colonial Ifè. At least Ifè was said to be ruled by a woman named Oòni Luwo Gbadiga in the pre-colonial days. Besides this observation, I also noticed that, the local court proceedings almost follow the pattern of the Nigerian court proceedings.

When a dispute is brought to the palace court, the disputants (complainant and defendant) make their cases and the highest chiefs occupying the elevated position in the court ask further questions from the disputants before they make their judgment. Interestingly, a particular case might become difficult to decide upon immediately. When this happens, the disputants are asked

---

200 Olùpònà, City of 201 Gods, 96
201 The clear difference between this palace court and the Nigerian magistrate, High, appellate and supreme courts is that the seating arrangement is not the same. Instead of the complainant and the defendant to occupy the deck, they make their case kneeling down (both male and female) except the presiding chief asks them to stand to make their case, they remain kneeling down until their cases are either resolved or adjourned.
to come back at a certain date when the court shall be sitting again. There are also levels where
cases can be heard in Ifè local court. The first level is that of the Emesès’ court, where petty
cases such as the case of one person owing another person money but being unable to pay, or of
local trade disputes and so on. The emeses are the palace messengers and palace guards. Due to
their knowledge in some of the ways small cases are handled, they are the first adjudicators or
arbitrators to be seen.

The second level is the Ifè Chiefs’ court, where more serious cases are handled. The third
level is the Oòní’s court, where the king more or less uses his authority to make a
pronouncement on a particular case. The final level is the shrine of Lákin Ládìn. Lákin Ládìn
shrine is believed to be a place where the first primeval Ifè blacksmith entered into the ground
after he was betrayed by his wife, who revealed his secret of smith’s skills to the ancient Ifè
people. This is a place where people normally swear to an oath that what they have said is
nothing but the truth. The belief of all traditional Ifè people is that if a person swore to an oath
but lied, the person would die within seven days. The seemingly apparent passivity of women in
all these levels of court decisions only reinforces the attitude of the Yorùbá to the position of
women in the society.

*The Sacred and Political Roles of Oòní*

The Oòní is chosen from the royal patrilineal clan just like any Yorùbá Obas (kings). This,
according to Bascom, was the largest clan in Ifè with over twenty compounds and more
than five thousand members in 1937. Oòní’s position is hereditary, but like many other titles
of priests and chiefs which are “owned” by particular clans, it does not automatically pass from
father to son. Males (in certain instance, females) of four lineages or branches of the royal clan

---

203 Bascom, *The Yorùbá of*, 31
are eligible to become king in rotation, but lineages are skipped if they have no suitable candidates, and the same lineage may even provide two Oòni in succession.

Each of the eligible compounds may campaign for its own candidate by spending money in entertaining the town and palace chiefs, who select the king, and by deferring to all who may influence them in their final choice. While one of their number rules as Oòni, the other members of his compound can count on his protection and can take advantage of the townspeople; but the members of the other royal compounds rank beneath the townspeople because they must be careful of their behavior lest they gain a reputation for arrogance or selfishness which could decrease the chances of their future candidates. One important factor that can either qualify or disqualify a person from becoming the Oòni, just like in any Yorùbá towns, is the unique place of Ifá divination.

While it is true that wealth plays a crucial role in the choice of a candidate from a particular royal lineage, it is also true that the choice of Ifá is taken into consideration rather than the economic influence of the candidate. This is very important because the Yorùbá people believe that, if a choice of a person to be made a king is manipulated by wealth or position, it can lead to a serious negative consequence for the whole town of Ifè and the Yorùbá societies at large. Whether due process of selecting a rightful person to become a king in the future through Ifá divination is going to be taken into consideration or not, especially with the present political situation in Nigeria, should be an interesting research to be pursued. The political decisions of Ifè kingdom were made by the chiefs, especially the senior chiefs as said earlier; the Oba merely ratifies or ordains them. In modern day Ifè, the role of the Oba seems to be essentially an arbitrator between chiefs who are competing on behalf of their different descent groups; however, Oòni seems to be in control of the wealth of the city. There was a common saying in
Ilé-Ife, according to Bíódún Adédìran that, “Ọrúntó Obalufón l’oni ’lú, Oba l’oni sésé efun meaning that while the civil chiefs could run the administration of the town, it was only the king who had control over sésé efun beads (source of wealth).”\textsuperscript{204}

P. Lloyd, claims that “the sacred status of an Oba provide him with opportunities to increase his personal power;”\textsuperscript{205} the situation which is still in practice in Ilé-Ife today. The present Oòni of Ifè, Okùnadé Sijúwadé Olúbùse II, wields enormous power not only because of his wealth but because of his political connection both nationally and internationally. Even in the earlier period, historians and anthropologists have shown how Oòni’s political power was enhanced by a special invitation extended to him by the colonial governor, Sir William Macgregor, to come for a visit in Lagos in 1903.\textsuperscript{206} Olúpònà has a more detailed history of the event than Smith, Bascom and Omósini. All of them agree that the purpose of the journey was in connection with the controversy surrounding who among the then Yorùbá kings had the right to wear a crown. Olúpònà regarded the historic occasion as an earth-shattering year for the Yorùbá people. For him it was earth-shattering in the sense that Oòni, the god-king of the Yorùbá, who had never vacated his stool, had to encounter directly the full impact of British modern colonial rule.

Governor Macgregor was said to refer to the occasion as the “Great Crown” case, to Oòni Adélékàn Olúbùse I (1894-1910) (apparently the grandfather of the incumbent Oòni).\textsuperscript{207} To the Yorùbá people, it was a precedent-setting “Great Journey” because it marked the first time in history of Ilé-Ife that an Oòni would venture out of his palace and beyond the center of the

\textsuperscript{204} Bíódún Adédìran, “The Early Beginning of Ifè, in Akinjógbin (ed.), \textit{The Cradle of a Race}, 92
\textsuperscript{205} P. Lloyds, “Yorùbá Myths—A Sociologist Interpretation”, in \textit{Odù}, no.3; P.C. Lloyds, “Political and Social Structure” in S.O Biobaku (ed.) \textit{Sources of Yorùbá History}, 205-223 see especially page21
\textsuperscript{207} Olupona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 77
When the Yorùbá and their various Obas heard about the unprecedented journey, it provoked fear, anxiety, and uncertainty because it was a great taboo for the Oòni to vacate the sacred city of Ile-Ifè to travel to another seat of power, a secular power at that. Olúpònà asserts that “For Westerners, the occasion would have been tantamount to asking God to leave heaven to answer the call of a mere mortal.” He thinks when Oòni acceded to the request of the governor in Lagos; it only signified the capitulation of tradition to modernity and of religious authority to secular authority.

In April 18, 1902, the governor of Lagos ordered the clerk of the Central Native Authority in Lagos to write to the Oòni, asking that the Oòni provide at his earliest convenience a list of “Obas and chiefs who have the right to wear the crowns originally when leaving Ifè.” The main reason why the governor made this demand was to guide him in giving his ruling on whether the Oba Eléèpé of Èpè was entitled to wear a crown or not. There was a sharp dispute between Àkarigbò of Ságámù (now Ìjèbú Rémo) and Eléèpé of Èpè (a town in the Ságámù district) over who had the right to wear the sacred beaded crown that originated in Ilé-Ifè, and thus the legitimacy to rule. The Àkarigbò of Ságámù was said to have claimed primacy over the entire Ìjèbú Rémo district and refuted the right of Eléèpé of Èpè to wear the crown.

Although the Oòni compiled and sent to the colonial office in Lagos a handwritten list of about fifty-four titles, the governor still pleaded with the Oòni through an invitation to visit Lagos to help resolve the dispute between the two Obas, and to show who was sovereign. In describing his journey to Lagos, the Oòni emphasized only the religious and political aspects of the trip; although he observed great apprehension in the people of Ilé-Ifè, indeed in the people

---

208 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 77
209 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 77
throughout the entire land of the Yorùbá. Many of his subjects accompanied him to the distant River Asèjiré that forms the boundary between Ile-Ifè and the land of Ìbàdàn people, and many vowed to remain there until the Oòni returned unharmed to Ile-Ifè.

All across the Yorùbá land, including the region of the Aláàfin of Òyó, the Oòni observed that the Yorùbá Oba began to vacate their thrones. They remained outside the gates of their cities, waiting until the Oòni’s safe return. A time of great dread and trepidation befell the land, as all Yorùbá Oba feared that Oòni’s departure could spell doom for the entire Yorùbá kingdom. Oòni was aware of the implication that might befall the land if he vacated the seat in Ifè to accede to the request of the governor in Lagos; he performed sacrifices “all along the journey, in order to ensure a successful journey.” Oòni arrived in Lagos through the train from Ìbàdàn to Lagos on February 23, 1903, with his retinue of wives, servants and chiefs, and was lodged at Tinúubú Square until February 24, when the meeting with the governor was held.

The outcome of the meeting on the second day ended and the Oòni of Ile-Ifè indicated that the Eléèpé of Èpé did not have the right to wear the crown. Both Olúpònà and Omósini agree on the notion that the invitation that was given by Macgregor to Oòni was a calculated attempt to introduce some form of modernism aimed at promoting British influence and ideas and thus enhancing indirect rule system in Yorùbáland. Oòni, on the other hand, also had his own calculations in undertaking the journey to Lagos. The Oòni was clearly concerned about securing the help of the Lagos government in his domestic troubles with Modákéké and Ìbàdàn. Thus his purpose in collaborating with the Lagos governor was to secure the support of British

212 Omósini, ‘Ifè: The Years of Recovery’, 175
administration in bringing about the implementation of the 1886 treaty relating to the disbandment of Modákéké.  

Let us recall that there was hostility between Ifè and Modákéké for a very long time. According to ancestral myth, both are descendants of Odùduwà, the perceived progenitor of the Yorùbá people. The sociocultural and political systems of the two communities are essentially identical and their geographical distribution largely overlaps. As related as Ifè and Modákéké are, both have engaged in protracted conflict for over a century. It remains the oldest intra-ethnic conflict in Nigeria. The Modákéké people are generally considered strangers, tenants, and migrants in Ifè. Historical accounts suggest that they migrated and settled in Ife in the aftermath of the collapse of the Old Òyó Empire in the nineteenth century, causing a refugee crisis to the south and resulting in the occupation of their contemporary location.

Two distinct categories of people were thus created: the original settlers (landlords—the Ifês) and the migrants, tenants, farmhands, and a resettled group considered as refugees (Modákéké). The first recorded conflicts took place in 1849 and periodic outbursts of violence occurred throughout that century. While there were no recorded incidents during the years of British colonial rule (1914 - 1960), there were repeated incidents in the 1980s, the 1990s and most recently between 2000 and 2002. One can understand the sentiment of the Oòni Olúbùse at this crucial time in the history of Ifè; the Modákéké people have successfully dispersed Ifè on at least two occasions. The first occasion when Ifè was dispersed was in 1882-1894. The period was a harrowing experience because of the political turmoil it created for both the Oòni and the people of Ifè. On the second occasion when Ifè people were dispersed, it was said that

\[213\] Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbá*, 647
\[215\] Omósini, ‘Ifè: The Year of, 171-172
\[216\] Akinjogbin, ‘Ifè: The Year of Travail, 159.
many houses were burnt down including the palace. As a result of this, Oòni Adélékàn Olübùse was insistent on dispersing Modákéké people who had disgraced their landlords twice. He had been looking for an opportunity for revenge; and such an opportunity came on a platter of gold. The invitation of Oòni Adélékàn Olübùse by the Governor Macgregor to Lagos was an auspicious time to achieve his goal of making the British Administrator side with him against his perceived strangers and even enemies—the Modákéké.

Abídèmí R. Asiyanbólá agrees with Otite by arguing that conflicts arose from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and groups in defined social and physical environments. The literature on the subject demonstrates that the ethnic conflict was grounded on socio/cultural differences. Martha Nussbaum, in her book “The Clash Within” shows how religion has contributed to ethnic crisis in India. Otite, according to Asiyanbólá, gives a picture of ethnicity as the contextual discrimination by members of one group against others on the basis of differentiated system of socio-cultural symbols. He affirms that ethnicity has the properties of common group consciousness and identity and also group exclusiveness on the basis of which social discriminations are made. One can argue that, this is what is going on here. While the Oòni of Ifè knew from either history or oral source that Modákéké people were actually from the same Odùduwà root with the Ifè people, he seemed to see more of socio-cultural differences than seeing Modákéké as having the same ancestral root with Ifè.

What is most interesting in this story is how Ooni Adélekàn Olúbùse manipulated his visit with the Governor in Ifè’s favor through the gifts given by the governor Macgregor in his house to Ooni in order to cement their alliance.\textsuperscript{221} A brief analysis of the issue of the gift presented to the Ooni by the Governor Macgregor is in order. Like it has already been remarked in the introduction, gift giving has the capacity of creating alliance, causing friendly feelings no doubt; yet it has the capacity to put the receiver on the vulnerable side, that of subordination. All the scholarly accounts about Ooni Adélekàn Olúbùse’s visit to Governor Macgregor in Lagos do not only make Ooni inferior to the governor who was a colonial representative but, the account in Olúpònà about the one-sidedness of the gift giving actually made the king to be only a stooge in the hands of the colonial government at the time.\textsuperscript{222}

Omósini’s account shows that Ooni, on arrival in Lagos, made powerful impressions on the Governor Macgregor.\textsuperscript{223} What those impressions looked like was never pursued by this author, but he (Omósini) quickly adds that Macgregor in turn made generous contributions to enable the Ooni to rebuild his palace. In spite of the detailed account given by Olúpònà about the visit of Ooni to Lagos, he never mentioned any generosity shown on the part of the Ooni to the governor.

\textit{The Ooni and the Gift}

The Ooni, instead of making him look like a beggar, when coming to Lagos must have brought some of the produce of the land of Ifè to present to the governor as gifts. One, the gift would have served to speed up the answer to his requests and secondly, it is unthinkable that a king of the cadre of Ooni would be embarking on an important (historic) journey such as this,

\textsuperscript{221} Olupona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 82-83
\textsuperscript{222} Olupona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 83
\textsuperscript{223} Omósini, ‘Ifè: The Year of Recovery, 172
without having anything to present as gift to the Governor of Lagos. Is it not to be suspected that
these scholars are given too much to the colonial administration in their bid to explain how Oòni
encountered modernity? Otherwise, if Oòni indeed did not take any gift with him to Lagos, then
one can agree that the Governor was using his gift to arm-twist the Oòni to achieve the colonial
administrative aim of introducing indirect rule system into the Yorùbá land.

Omósini is right then, in saying that, “The Oòni was, for all practical purposes, a useful
tool in the hands of the British officers while at the same time he appeared as an uncontrollable
despot in the eyes of his people.”\textsuperscript{224} Still, it is appropriate to maintain that Oòni gave a gift but
the historical account was silent about it. The reason why one could argue this way is that
Yorùbá people are said to be very hospitable and there are evidences to show this. For example,
N.A. Fádípè writes that:

Yorùbá hospitality is far more spontaneous than the white man is ready to give
due credit. Missionaries and colonial administrators have had many opportunities
of putting this to test. While Captain Clapperton complained of the greed of the
Aláàfin when he visited Oyo in 1825, Sir Gilbert Carter, the Governor of Lagos,
was given as present a horse, sixteen sheep and thirty bags of cowries (equivalent
to $13.00)\textsuperscript{225} when he visited Oba Adeyemi in 1893.\textsuperscript{226}

Going by Fádípè’s nuance, it seems to me that the Yorùbá conceive of hospitality to be sacred
duty not only to be given to strangers but that which confers honor on both the giver and the
recipient. Again, one can see that hospitality might turn a hostile stranger into a transformed
member of one’s household or the larger community. The practice of hospitality is essentially
reciprocal, just as gifts are. As seen above, a receiver of hospitality at a certain time might need
to reciprocate at some point just as we see in the case of Aláàfin in the quote above.

\textsuperscript{224} Omósini, ‘Ifè: The Years of Recovery, 175
\textsuperscript{225} This is actually my own approximation; the exact money given was seven pound and ten shillings. Unfortunately, I do not have the symbol for British pound sterling on my computer.
\textsuperscript{226} N.A. Fádípè, The Sociology of the Yorùbá, 305-306
Role of Women in Ilé-Ifè Sacred and Social Domains

The rise of the women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s, first in the West and later in various other developing countries, especially in Africa, has generated a lot of scholarly debates. Often, attempts made by some feminist writers to prove their points look very exaggerated and overdramatized. Men have, no doubt, unduly subordinated women for so long that those women have been classified among the muted group of any society even by the ethnographers.\(^ {227} \) Edwin Ardener’s fieldwork experience in Nigeria and Cameroun is particularly telling: women were said to be inaccessible for ethnographic questioning, yet he believes that they (women) were being seen in ritual, dance, art, myth, or in less analytical speech registers.\(^ {228} \) Besides Ardener’s observation, many other feminist scholars have argued perhaps persuasively too, that in many societies of the world, women exercise power but their male counterparts still dominate. Peggy Reeves Sanday, in her book *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality*, rejects the argument of universal domination of women but argues to the contrary that male dominance is not an inherent quality in human sex-role plans, as many feminist writers of the 1970s had assumed, but a response to particular environmental pressures (whether social or physical).\(^ {229} \)

Based on Sanday’s argument, the question we may want to address ourselves to is: In spite of the patriarchal structure of the Yorùbá society, are women’s roles undermined?

Oyèrónké Olájúgbù’s fascinating and interesting book, *Women in the Yorùbá Religious Sphere*,


\(^ {228} \) Ardener, ‘Belief and Problem of Women, 3

offers a very good answer to this question.\footnote{Oyèrónké Olájugbù, \textit{Women in the Yorùbá Religious Sphere}, (NY; State University of New York Press, 2003)} According to her, one of the intentions of the book is to establish the historical legacy of women as critical actors in the religious sphere, and to show that women play major roles in the spiritual life of their people, roles that are often unrecognized in previous works on religion in Nigeria. She even thinks that, while gender roles in Christianity are fixed, such roles are fluid in the Yorùbá religion. Olúpōnà argues that “The mythic world of Ifè features narratives of numerous goddesses, portrayed variously as wives, mothers, concubines, cultural idols, entrepreneurs, and daughters. Virtually all Ilé-Ifè festivals and rituals assign important roles to women.”\footnote{Olupona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 104-107.} The mythical narratives that follow confirm the points made by both Olájugbù and Olúpōnà.

Upon the disappearance\footnote{The word disappearance is used as a euphemism for death here. This is as a result of the Yorùbá belief that Odùduwà did not die but disappeared into the lower part of the earth through a long chain.} of Odùduwà, there was a dispersal of his children from Ifè to found other kingdoms. Each of these dispersed children made its identity in the subsequent urbanization and consolidation of Yorùbá confederacy of kingdoms, with each kingdom tracing its origin to Ilé-Ifè. After the dispersal, the aborigines became difficult and constituted a serious threat to the survival of Ifè. Thought to be survivors of the old occupants of the land before the arrival of Odùduwà, these people now turned themselves into marauders. They would come to town in costumes made of raffia palm with terrible and fearsome appearances, and burn down houses and loot the markets. Then came Móremí on the scene; she played a significant role in the quelling of the marauders’ advancements. This was at a great price; having to give up her only son Olúorogbo. The reward for her patriotism and selflessness was not to be reaped in one lifetime as she later passed on and was thereafter immortalized. The Edì festival celebrates this feat.
till date. Besides Móremí, there is a clear indication that women have always occupied a prominent position in Ifè religious, political and economic life.

It has been shown that first in the Ilé-Ifè festival calendar is the festival of Òsàrà, the goddess often referred to as the consort or confidant of Òrúnmìlà.\textsuperscript{233} She was a powerful goddess whose importance in Ifè social and ritual cycles centers on the place of motherhood in Ifè gender ideology. Òsàrà was a goddess of rivers, while another woman of highest importance was Olókun, the goddess of Ocean. Both were married to Olófin according to Ifá narrative. Olápònà says that “although Ilé-Ifè has a preponderance of male priests, some female officiates perform similar functions to those performed by men….Many of the 201 deities in the Ifè pantheon are female; some are as famous, if not more so, than their male counterparts.”\textsuperscript{234}

My ethnographic experience confirms that important female deities are often venerated and there are women who served as custodians of Òrìsàs and some others serve the function of memorializing the important deities in Ilé-Ifè through songs and poems. Some of these women from Òrisà priestly families played a very crucial role during the 2012 Olójó festival. They served as the preserver of traditions through their unique gift of singing and poeticizing the praise-names of Ògún, Odùduwà and Òrànmiyàn. Traditions indicate a woman was once a king of Ilé-Ifè, and it was during her regime as a king that terracotta pavement became popular in Ilé-Ifè. It is very clear that the matter is neither that of exclusion nor participation in religious and social function. The issue is that women were not yet allowed to function as traditional judges, as I noticed in Ifè traditional court system.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{233} Olápona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 104
\textsuperscript{234} Olápona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 106-107
\textsuperscript{235} When I asked one of the Iyalodes, (Chief Sariyu) she told me we are all doing everything together. As far as she is concerned, she did not see any marginalization with respect to adjudicating in judicial matters even in matters that concerned women much closely.
Islam in Ilé-Ifè

Eboussi Boulaga argued that “Modern society is interestingly characterized by varied human experiences: it is even called an “open society” where numerous religions and civilization can coexist within it, each without fear of violence on the part of others.” While this might be partially true of the Yorùbá society, the situation at the initial stage was not anything that we understand as coexistence today. When the two most important world religions, Islam and Christianity, came to the Yorùbá land, manipulations, coercion and pretensions were some of the methods used to win converts to their sides.

Attempts made by the Muslim crusaders, in particular, was to wipe out “idolatry and paganism” practiced by the natives through the use of sword until the Jihadists met with initial resistance from the Old Òyó people. As we shall soon see, some of the early converts into both missionizing religions from Yorùbá traditional religion syncretized their modes of worship; a situation which arguably is still being practiced in some mosques and churches in the present day Yorùbá towns. With respect to the coming of Islam to Yorùbá land in particular, Òsán gangan n’ìgbàgbó wolé dé “We met Òsán in the world, we met Islam in the world; it was only in the afternoon that Christianity arrived. We shall see this in the following historical narratives”.

---

237 Johnson, The History of the Yorùbá, ; Smith, Kingdoms of the Yorùbá,
Islam came to Yorùbá land through Northern Nigeria, from the Hausa-Fulani in particular.\textsuperscript{239} It reached Oyo and Northern Yorùbá town before it reached Ilé-Ifè. According to Dàda Adélówò “There appeared to have been infiltration of some elements of Islamic culture and traditions into Ilé-Ifè before the formal introduction of the religion, but not much of these survived by the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The popular opinion is that Islam reached Ilé-Ifè during the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.”\textsuperscript{240} David Laitin’s accounts agree with Adélówò’s but adds that, “In Yorùbá land, one could distinguish the Islam brought down by the Fulanis from Ìlorin from the Islam that dominated Ilé-Ifè, which had been brought north from Lagos Islam and transmitted by the Yorùbá coastal traders.”\textsuperscript{241} In 1870s specifically, an Ìlorin man Danielu—a traditional healer who incorporated Muslim prayers, incantations and medical knowledge, had built up a clientele in Ifè for his reputed healing powers and his ability to overcome infertility.\textsuperscript{242}

Laitin and Adélówò agree that, “The Ifè-Modákéké war of 1882 caused Ifè people to be scattered to huts on their farms. Danielu, however, through his loyalty to his customers (along with good profits), followed them to the farms and thus enhanced his reputation among Ifè people.”\textsuperscript{243} During this intercommunal war, a young Ifè boy from the Adéòsun family was captured and sold into slavery to a Lagos businessman. In Lagos, young Adéòsun took lessons in Arabic on his own, unknown to his master. His master, having learnt of this, became impressed, and being without male issue, adopted the boy and gave him the Muslim name Kaseem. Kaseem became very rich—mostly by selling ammunition from Lagos and buying rubber from the interior. After the return of Ifè people to their city, Kaseem’s mother urged his son to return back


\textsuperscript{240} Adélówò, ‘Islam and Christianity in Ilé-Ifè’, 333

\textsuperscript{241} Laitin, \textit{Hegemony and Culture}, 49

\textsuperscript{242} Laitin, \textit{Hegemony and Culture}, 51: Adélówò, ‘Islam and Christianity,333

to Ifè—the city of his father. In Modákéké, Islamic religion had already had a foothold, partly due to the fact that there have been Muslims among the people before they migrated from the Northern Yorùbá country and eventually settled in Ile-Ifè. This assumption seems reasonable because Islam had penetrated many other Yorùbá towns such as Òyó, Ìséyìn, Sakí, Ìlorín and a host of others situated towards northern part of Nigeria, much earlier.

It was not until the early part of the twentieth century that Islam took root in Ile-Ifè. The first recognized mosque was built at Ìtakogun in 1903 during the reign of Oòní Adélékàn Olúbùse I, the grandfather of the present Oòní Sìjúwádé before he (Adélékàn) died in 1909. Laitin links the building of a mosque in Ifè to the period when Modákéké people were temporarily driven from Ifè in 1909. Although a number of Ifè people had embraced Islam during the exile, Kaseem Adéòsun was the only returnee who was versed in Arabic, the official language of Islam. He later became the Nàìbí, the Deputy Chief Imam. He eventually succeeded Danielu as the Chief Imam in 1922. Even though his method of winning converts from the Yorùbá traditional religion was very contrary to Islamic injunction that preached against alcohol consumption (*haram*), Kaseem Adéòsun as Nàìbí and Chief Imam was fond of organizing colorful celebrations, and through those means, he would serve palm-wine and assorted foods.

One can think about another form of gift exchange here—hospitality was used a means to achieve an end, conversion to Islam. He always used the occasion to preach and teach Muslim styles of praying and doctrines and thereby to link Islam to the progressive Lagosian trend. It was through the Imamship of Adéòsun that Islam began to have a solid base in Ifè. Both Laitin and Adéléwò agree that, during Danielu’s tenure as Chief Imam, only five mosques were built in

---

244 Adéléwò, ‘Islam and Christianity, 334
245 Peel, *Religious Encounter*, 190-192
246 Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, 52; Adéléwò, ‘Islam and Christianity, 334
247 Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, 52
Ile-Ife, though after his death the number of mosques increased to about seventeen. Adélówò says that “In 1928, Chief Imam Kaseem convinced Oòni Adémilúyì Ajagun that all other Yorùbá towns like Òyó, Sakí, Ìséyìn, Ìbàdàn and Ìjèbú-Óde had central mosques in front of the Oba’s court, that it would be proper for Ifè to follow the same pattern; to which request the king granted.” The mosque was situated in the front of Odùduwà shrine at Enuwá and adjacent to the palace.

In 1930s, the Hausa community requested that a separate mosque be built at Sabo, their expatriate quarter in town, and they were granted that wish by the then Oòni Adérèmí. Laitin and Adélówò do not explain why the Hausa community requested a separate mosque from that of the Yorùbá in Ifè; yet there are at least two reasons that can be given. First, traditional and religious beliefs and practices in which Yorùbá Muslims participate along with Islam (syncretism) could be one of the factors why Hausa might have asked for a separate mosque. Second, they requested their own mosque for the sake of identity. This implies that Hausa language, culture of worship and ways of life are quite different from that of Yorùbá, a reason that one can easily distill into the first reason. Julius Adékúnlé claims that, “In many respects, the north is profoundly different from the south; religion only represents an example of the differences. The Muslims in the northern Nigeria regard Islam as a mark of identity while the southerners identify more with Western education and political astuteness rather than Christianity.”

The Ahmadiyya mosques were also built in Ifè at this same period, but according to Laitin, not more than twenty men observed their Friday prayers in those mosques. A brief

---

248 Laitin, Hegemony and Culture, 52; Adélówò, ‘Islam and Christianity, 334
comment about the Ahmadiyya is in order. Ahmadiyya Muslims do represent the moderate and peaceful version of Islam. They also believe in all the major religious teachings, books and prophets. Their foundation does lay in the basic teachings of Islam as laid out by Prophet Muhammad and his early followers. Laitin in fact, claims that, by 1967, there were twenty-five sectional mosques in Ife alone. Today, every street in Ile-Ife has at least a mosque and quite a few rich Muslims in Ife have mosques in their various houses. Indeed, there is a very big mosque each located in Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) and Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex (OAUTHC) respectively in Ile-Ife. Laitin equally thinks that “as other Muslim converts in Yoruba-land, individuals in Ife were drawn to Islam in large part due to utilitarian benefits, such as remedies for illnesses and opportunities for trade with high-status Lagosian merchants.

Laitin oversimplified his analysis; he only looked at the psychological and economic benefits without paying attention to the spiritual/sacred dimension of some converts who must have joined Islam due to purely religious experience. The question is, if Laitin’s analysis is correct: Were there no wealthy Òrìsà worshippers among the Yoruba before the coming of Islam or Christianity? I will be discussing the full impact of Christianity in Ile-Ife in the next chapter and show how Christianity and Islam have been competing for the souls of the traditional worshippers of Òrìsàs.

An Examination of the Practice of Gift Exchange in Ancient Ile-Ife

If the practice of gift exchange is a worldwide phenomenon and it is as old as the dawn of human consciousness as anthropologists have convincingly argued, it would not be wrong to think that gift exchange practice has always been part of Ile-Ife traditional life. The gift exchange

Laitin, Hegemony and Culture, 53
is a social customary practice of Ifè people; of which its rule is taught from one generation to the next. Different types and methods of gift giving and reciprocity existed among the Yorùbá people in general and Ilé-Ifè in particular and subsequent generations are either formally or informally taught about their importance. This gift ranges from non-altruistic giving either within families or among kinship relations to even food sharing and to Mauss’s conception of gift, and to the notion of sacrifice between humans and the gods. Sociologists and anthropologists assume that the practice of gift and reciprocity in both archaic and modern societies has a higher probability to enhance solidarity, reduce war, and promote alliance.²⁵²

All these theoretical assumptions do point to common practices in some human communities. Something is very certain, though, it is not the case that people who enter into the practice of reciprocity will necessarily have friendly feeling towards each other. The Potlatch ceremony has shown this very clearly; it trumps the Durkheimian assumption that primitive social solidarity had to involve friendly feelings. Roy Rappaport actually presents a case of the Tsembaga Maring people of Papua New Guinea. This mountain people were stereotyped as wasteful of resources because they consumed pigs only once or twice a year, concentrating their rare source of protein when they should have spread it out over the year. Mostly the pig feasts were held before combat.

The high consumption of salt in their pork limited their ability to fight, resulting in a kind of "civilized" warfare where village boundaries were established, males gained prestige, but few casualties occurred.²⁵³ It is logical to think that gifts not only ought to create a society of peace

but should in fact create the fact of social alliance, as argued by anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss and Marshall Sahlins.\textsuperscript{254} Their arguments show that alliance need not only be realized when there is an atmosphere of symmetrical gift exchange practice. Even in asymmetrical gift exchange, it is believed that alliance will take place. Among peoples with elementary structures of kinship, there are many whose alliances are consciously seen as establishing status inequality, because the one who gives a gift of a woman as bride is always seen as superior to the one who receives.

What is very important is that the Yorùbá expects gift-exchange to involve give and take phenomenon. One of their aphorisms says; \textit{Fùnmì kí n’fùn o ni òpòló nké} [Give me and I give you is what toad is saying]. Within a Yorùbá epistemological discourse, the conception of the good, the bad and the beautiful are clearly enshrined as different modes of thought by which value is placed on the social world and such value is judged either to be virtuous or vice, noble or ignoble, honorable or dishonorable. For example, while it is virtuous to be hardworking and acquire wealth, it is paradoxically a vice or ignoble to be miserly (\textit{ahun}). Yorùbá will say \textit{Kòsí eni tí ó le j’èrè ahun} [No one can inherit a miser]. A miser does not think about people around him/her, but about him/herself alone. In this tripartite mode of thinking, therefore, one can argue that, to give a gift is ‘the good’, to refuse to give is ‘the bad’ and to make a return gift will be considered ‘the beautiful.’

Ifè people are very accommodating, generous and caring, and are often referred to as; \textit{Eni tí Ò se fún âlejò, tí ó tún se fún Onílè} (“He or She who gives to a stranger without neglecting his immediate family’’).\textsuperscript{255} This saying has at least an implication for the cohesion of the society.

\textsuperscript{255} Olupona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 44
The giving of gifts either to one’s kin or a stranger shows a kind of value one places on life and the people through whom one has and maintains an intricate web of connections. Among the Ifè people, conscious effort is made to incorporate into their social convention the use of gifts at the beginning of a relationship that would support long-term cooperation. Before the coming of Islam and Christianity, ancient Ifè people and the Yorùbá in general have been engaged in interpersonal communication strategy, especially the use of cowry (used as money) as gifts.

Beyond the social purpose, cowry served the sacerdotal function as well; it served the function of gift to Obàtálá (Ọrìsà-Ìlrà) and Èsù in ancient Ifè city as carefully observed by Toyin Fáolá and G.A. Adébáyò. A few words about Èsù are in order. Traditional religious people in Yorùbá society regard Èsù as an Òrìsà in his own right. In all cases, gifts are constantly offered to the Òrìsàs; these sacrificial gifts, especially the ones given to Èsù, are offered on his shrine, which is situated outside the house and in some instances at the popular city junction. These sacrifices are either eaten by dogs or by certain individuals (in most cases, mentally ill people and some people who are poor) who, as a result of hunger, are usually looking for things to eat; if they cannot find the food they need, they go instead to collect the foods already offered on Èsù’s shrine. As a result of this, Èsù’s shrine is always empty except for the palm-oil that is poured on the shrine. Hence, a Yorùbá proverb says,” A k’òwó ebo ni kò jé k’Èsù ó ní lárí, [The stealer of money from the shrine of Èsù deprives him of becoming rich]. We can perhaps argue that this is Èsù’s way of giving his own gift to the poor in the society.

At the communal and family levels of interaction, there are usually gifts given to people during their rites of passage such as marriages, installation ceremonies, and funerals. Fádípè says

---

that “Yorùbá child is given at an early age every opportunity to acquire a sense of individual property. The gifts of money made to him on the occasion of his ıkójáde (bringing out) are utilized partly to buy clothes for him or her and partly to buy a domestic animal—a goat or sheep…”258 There were usually gifts or tributes to chiefs or patrons at annual Òrìsà festivals as well. With respect to chiefs or kings in particular, because the ancient Yorùbá society was an agrarian society, (quite a number of people either practiced subsistence farming or commercial farming) each time the harvest season came, it was seen as an occasion for farmers to present farm produce as gifts to the kings or head chief of the town. There is a sense in thinking that in traditional city of Ilé-Ifè as it is now; there were many people who were perhaps victims of wars or family breakdown who were being cared for through deeds of charity. What this implies is that gift giving can be said “to be inconceivably outside the moral frame of the community, which was itself defined as a social entity by the networks of giving and receiving.”259 I will discuss in full details this all important practice in chapter four of this dissertation.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the history of the Yorùbá and carefully linked this to the history of Ilé-Ifè and endeavored to analyze the different myths surrounding the founding of the city. There is still mystery surrounding the founding of Ifè, which needs a constant revisit by researchers and academic scholars, as new evidences are unfolding. Even though in this chapter the controversies that surround the relationship of Ifè and Benin are not treated in detail, yet I have paid some attention to it. In this chapter I have given a panoramic view of the city, not only the central role the city is playing in sacralizing the whole Yorùbá race, but also as an important

258 Fadipe, The Sociology of the Yorùbá, 194
259 Peel, Religious Encounter, 87
city center where political power is derived by all other Yorùbá nation-states. Olúpònà says that “Ifè is a classical model of sacred center whose inhabitants across the globe apply the same imaginative geography. No matter where they are, the Yorùbá claim Ilé-Ifè as their original home place (Ilé).” When Ile Ife, as a sacred center, encountered one of the two missionising world religions, Islam, the encounter radically changed the traditional religions and Islam itself was also changed or compromised in the process. Islam has adapted very well to the traditional way of Yorùbá religious life far more than Christianity.

I have also made an attempt to show how Islam had great impact on the people. Its influence was felt especially during the time when intercommunal war sacked the inhabitants of Ife. Since then Islam has continued to maintain steady growth. I have also discussed the important role women play in Ife (Yorùbá) traditional religion which makes them visible. Evidence from Ife has been used to show that women were never undermined in Yorùbá cultic and social life. Yet, as I have argued above, women still need to be active participants in the politics of Ife in particular and Yorùbá society in general.

---

261 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 50.
Chapter Two

History of Christianity in Ilé-Ifè

This chapter considers the emergence of Christianity, first in Nigeria and then in Ilé-Ifè, and how it has expanded over the years. Much attention is devoted to Christianity, since the goal of this study is to compare one Pentecostal Christian group, Christ Way Church International with a traditional religious festival – Olójó - in Ile-Ife. This section draws from interdisciplinary sources. Much of this chapter relies on information from David Laitin’s and Dada Adélówò’s accounts. Additional information is sought from other scholars who have done major research work in Ilé-Ifè and its religious life. The chapter will examine what has been the pattern of interactions between the Mission Churches and the Pentecostals on the one hand, and the pattern of interactions with other religions such as Islam and, in particular, the worshippers of the Òrìsà. I will also examine the changes that have been made to the traditional ways of thought and doing things since the rise of Pentecostalism in this City of 201 Gods, according to Jacob Olúpònà.²⁶²

My interactions with both Christians and Òrìsà worshippers during my ethnographic field research are the source of the data I analyze and discuss in this chapter. I will also draw from my studies and analysis of Yorùbá culture Ilé-Ifè where I have studied, lived, taught as a member of the academic staff of the university.

Christianity has largely contributed to significant changes in the Nigerian socio-economic and political landscape. As a matter of fact, its role has been crucial to the political and social history of most countries of black Africa, as rightly observed by Adrian Hastings.²⁶³ When missionaries from diverse denominations such as Methodist, Christian Missionary Society

---

²⁶² Jacob Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods.
(CMS), Baptist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic came to Nigeria in the middle to the last part of the nineteenth century, they introduced literacy. This in turn has contributed immensely to the making of the elitist culture and the introduction of modernity to African countries in general and Nigeria in particular. Christianity and modernity was a problematic proposal on the Nigerian landscape. First, colonization and its twin sister Christianity systematically tried to curtail or change traditional (native) ways of life and in particular to wipe out completely the Traditional African Religious system. John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff rightly observe that “Colonizers everywhere try to gain control over the practices through which would-be subjects produce and reproduce the bases of their existence.”

Second, Christianity is part of “grand narratives” told to make intelligible the recent history of the world and Africa’s place within it, such as the rise of capitalism, European colonialism, modernization, globalization, and so on. Third, Webb Keane claims that “the concept of modernity lies not only in the improvements in technology, economic well-being or health but is also and perhaps above all, about human emancipation and self-mastery.” Keane agrees with Bruno Latour who claims that the so-called modernity is characterized by the work of purification. We agree with Latour who defines purification as the drive to draw a clear line between humans and nonhumans, between the world of agency and that of natural determinism. This was part of the agenda of the missionary Christianity that was planted in Africa, especially

---

266 J.D.Y. Peel, Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yorùbá, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 2
in Nigeria as we shall soon see. The fourth problem is that modernity introduced estrangement that actually defined it. 269 Human agents are unfortunately alienated from their productions, as forcefully argued by Karl Marx. 270 The fifth problem is the issue of language as a moral problem. Missionaries to African nations insisted on the use of western texts as the primary and normative means of understanding the world in which we live and the transcendent, and in the process, the missionaries often paid little attention to rituals and symbols that are often characteristic of the Traditional African Religions language. 271

Mission churches introduced modernity projects such as education by building affordable schools where the educated elites are made 272; a health care system centered on hospitals that are equipped with modern technology and followed biomedical understanding diseases and their treatments, which have today continued to help reducing the high mortality rate. 273 My objective here is to summarize the story of Christianity in Nigeria, examine the changes that have taken place since Christianity was planted, and then see how the planting of Christianity in Nigeria has affected the history of Ilé-Ifè in particular. The first section will be devoted to Christianity in Nigeria, the rise of Pentecostalism and the role of women within it, and in the second section I will examine the role of Christianity in Ilé-Ifè. I will then conclude with general reflection.


273 Missionaries built medical institutions like Baptist Hospital in Saki, Ògbómósó, Our Lady Catholic Hospital in Ìséyìn, St Anne Hospital Olayoro Ibadan, Seventh Day Adventist Hospitals and a host of other hospitals that are well-equipped with modern medical gadgets and help to cater to the needs of the local people at very affordable prices.
History of Christianity in Nigeria

Christianity came to Nigeria in two phases. First in the fifteenth century it began with the Itsekiri and their neighbors. Because of their geographical location the Itsekiri came into contact with Portuguese priests who accompanied Portuguese explorers in their bid to find a sea route to India in the fifteenth century. By about 1477 the first European contacts were made with Benin, and by 1555 Augustinian monks visited Warri. They were sent by Gasper Cao, who was the bishop of the diocese of Sao Tome. One of the monks, Father Francisco a Mater Dei, baptized the son of the Olu of Warri and gave him the new name, Sebastian.

When Sebastian later succeeded his father he encouraged the work of the Portuguese missionaries, and allowed his son, Domingos, to be sent to Portugal and trained for the priesthood. It was hoped that if this happened the spread of Christianity to the hinterland would be expedited since indigenous priests would not suffer from the ill effect of the equatorial climate. This climate imposed a serious limitation on the work of the European missionaries. Unfortunately, Domingos was not able to qualify for the priesthood since he ended his ten years stay in Portugal by marrying a Portuguese woman, contrary to the stipulation of celibacy for priests in the Roman Catholic Church. Some other attempts made later to train indigenous priests also failed, with the result that the Itsekiri people came to the conclusion that the Almighty did not intend Africans to become celibate priests. Omóyájowó interprets the fact that the church did not take roots to be an indication that traditional religion resisted attempts to displace it by the “new” intruder.

---


275 Omóyájowó, Makers of the Christianity, xi
The second phase of the Christian missionary activities began in the 1840s. Sierra Leone is very important to the discussion because that is where the freed African slaves from the Atlantic world landed. While it is true that Sierra Leone had been inhabited for up to 2500 years, it was in 1787 that a plan was hatched to settle some of London’s black poor. It eventually began as a colony of American freed slaves on March 11, 1792. Nigerian slaves who were liberated also settled in Sierra Leone. Some of them desired to return back to their homeland and several eventually made the journey back home and arrived in Abéòkúta and Badagry in 1838 and 1839 respectively. People converted to Christianity in Sierra Leone requested missionaries; as a result of this the Church Missionary Society (CMS) sent Henry Townsend, who arrived in Badagry in December 1842 and in Abéòkúta in January 1843. The Methodists had, a few months earlier, sent Thomas Birch Freeman, their missionary in the Gold Coast (Ghana), to visit Badagry and Abéòkúta. Like Freeman, Townsend was accorded a warm reception by Oba Sódeké, the king of the newly established city of Abéòkúta (only about twelve years old then). Favorable reports of mission work told by Townsend encouraged the C.M.S. to send a team of missionaries in 1844 comprising Henry Townsend, C.A. Gollmer, Mrs. Gollmer, Samuel Àjàyí Crowder (a Yorùbá ex-slave), two Sierra Leonian school masters, four carpenters, one interpreter, three laborers, and two servants.

They could not proceed to Abéòkúta, because they heard that their friendly king Sódeké just died. While waiting in Badagry, they started a church and a school there, and so made it the first missionary post in Nigeria. Freeman, who had earlier come to Badagry, also stationed his

276 Isichei, A History of Christianity, 170; J. Omóyájowó, Makers of the Church in Nigeria, (Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd. 1995), xi
278 Omóyájowó, Makers of the Church, xi
279 Omóyájowó, Makers of the Church, xii
associate William de Graft, and a Methodist Mission also began there. There was an initial problem; the politics of Badagry, Abéòkúta and Lagos by the pro- and the anti-missionary issue almost crippled the missionary activities. The pro-missionary group was joined by Akíntóyè, who was deposed in 1845 by his more powerful nephew Kòsókò, who incidentally belonged to the anti-missionary group. Akíntóyè used this political move to gain the favor of the missionary, who he thought might reinstate him as the king of Lagos. By August 1846, the C.M.S. missionaries finally arrived at Abéòkúta and on February 6, 1848 the first Christian baptism was performed there. It was in this place that Samuel Ájàyí Crowder’s mother was baptized and had her name changed to Hannah. Thus, the Christian work that began in Badagry now extended into the hinterland of Nigeria. Other stations were opened.

David and Hannah Hinderer of the Basel Mission arrived formally in ̀Ìbàdàn in 1852. By 1860, Yorùbá mission had extended to Òtà, Ìsàgá, Îjàyè, Ògbómòsó and Òyó. During the beginning years, Christianity did not make any headway in the northern part of Nigeria, which was already dominated by Islamic religion. The colonial administration forbade any operation of Christian evangelists in the Muslim areas in the Northern States of Nigeria. The reason might be that the colonial administrators did not want any religious crisis to erupt in a Muslim stronghold. Another reason was due to the indirect rule system of administration that was already introduced by Lord Lugard, which was operational in Northern Nigeria and other parts of the country at the time.

When Christianity came to Nigeria, many Yorùbá resisted joining the movement because they did not want to leave their traditional religion for Christianity. Yet a sizeable number of the

---

281 Omóyájowó, *Makers of the Church*, xii
282 Omóyájowó, *Makers of the Church*, xiii
283 Omóyájowó, *Makers of the Church*, xiv
Yorùbá people embraced Christianity during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of twentieth century. Ìjèbú people were an exemption in this case. Despite their closeness to Lagos, they initially resisted Christianity. The reason is because the Ìjèbú people have long been known for their intense sense of pride and cultural confidence; they always think that everybody in the world is a slave except the white people and the Ìjèbú. During the 1890s, many of them started converting to other religions including Christianity and Islam. Scholars have advanced many reasons to explain why the Yorùbá were converted to Christianity. Did the Yorùbá convert to Christianity as a result of missionaries’ civilizing or modernity projects of opening up schools where modern elites were being made? Or could it be as a result of existential perplexities of life, to which perhaps their Yorùbá traditional religion could not fully offer solutions? Certain scholars have explored these questions as they have assessed missionary activity in Africa.

One of the theorists of conversion in African Christianity is Robin Horton who has argued: “with the advent of the twentieth century, Europeans came to be seen as symbols of power, and Christianity itself came to be seen as part of a larger order, comprising Western education, colonial administration, commerce and industry, with which everyone had henceforth to reckon. These changes created a much more favorable climate for conversion.” He states further that “if the missionaries had come in with a straight other-worldly creed, the Yorùbá and many other African peoples would have rejected them. As it was, they came with the promise of


\footnote{Isichei, *A History of Christianity*, 178}

a new source of strength which would enable people to live in and cope with a new world."

J.D.Y. Peel agrees fully with this notion.

Secondly, Peel claims that social distinction contributes more to conversion than gender relations; youth, middle-aged and older women seemed to be attracted to the missionary’s message. Thirdly, Joel Robbins says that certain other scholars emphasize matters of meaning, and argues that converts are attracted to the new religion because it renders meaningful new situations that defy the sense-making capacities of their traditional ways of understanding the world. However, it has also been documented that the acceptance of Christianity by large numbers of Nigerians depended finally on the various denominations coming to terms with local conditions and involved participation of an increasingly high proportion of African clergy in the missions.

Is the assumption by Horton that Africans were attracted to other forms of power because they were less powerful than the Colonial Administrators and their initial allies—the Missionaries correct? It seems to me that making this a fundamental reason for the spread of Christianity in Nigeria ignores other reasons. Given the history and culture of the Yorùbá, one could argue that the traditional Yorùbá people did not have any problem coping with plurality of religions as long as those religions did not undermine their kinship relationships and their ethnic identity. Before the coming of Islam and Christianity, traditional Yorùbá worshippers of Òrisàs had already been known to be pluralistic in their religious modes of worship even within

---

287 Horton, “African Conversion” 90
288 Peel even thinks that because the missionaries’ power seems to be superior and was able to enhance political power, many Yorùbá obas quickly allowed the missionaries to set up their mission post in their various domains. See Peel, Religious Encounter, 123-124.
289 Peel, Religious Encounter, 238
291 Ájàyí, Christian Missions, 206-230,
292 Peel, Religious Encounter, 53
the Òrìṣà tradition. This means that an Ògún worshipper does not have any problem celebrating with a Sàngó devotee and vice-versa.

The complexity of Òrìṣà worship and the different divinities offered a space for religious pluralism within the system and the Yorùbá religious life, and therefore allowed for different expression of faiths than one would perhaps see in the Northern and Eastern parts of Nigeria. Another very important reason could be as a result of the fact that missionary activities were initially concentrated in many Yorùbá towns and cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, and Abeokuta apart from Benin. Apart from my assumptions, Horton’s observation has been interpreted by other scholars to be utilitarian in character.²⁹³ This approach, according to Joel Robbins “focuses primarily on the worldly advantages, in terms of material goods, position, power, prestige, and so forth, which accrue to those who convert.”²⁹⁴ This might be what Robbins means by ‘matters of meaning,’ which is equally regarded by certain scholars as an Intellectualist approach.²⁹⁵

Intellectualism according to Joel Robbins is the name usually given to the approach to conversion that focuses on issues of meaning.²⁹⁶ He refers to Horton’s influential articles on African conversion and the controversy they have generated to have been important in defining intellectualism as a distinct approach to understanding conversion. For Robbins, then, the intellectualist approach is built on the argument that conversion allows people to comprehend and live meaningfully in a changed world. Robbins thinks that there are some problems connected with accepting these two approaches wholesale. He instead provides an alternative reason why people get converted to Christianity based on his field experience in a particular

²⁹⁴ Robbins, Becoming Sinners, 84-85
²⁹⁵ Horton, African Conversion, 94
²⁹⁶ Robbins, Becoming Sinners, 86.
Papua New Guinea society. He thinks that his adoptionist approach could be a better answer to why local people get converted to Christianity.²⁹⁷

Robbins believes that in this approach, “the initial impetus to adopt a new culture is formulated in terms of a group’s existing culture. It is humiliations or other disappointments that make sense in traditional terms that drive people’s efforts to change. He explains this in terms of “people’s traditionally phrased understandings of what things of value they lack and might be able to attain through conversion,” especially in the first-stage conversion experience. For him, it is at the second-stage conversion experience that “the real work of adoption takes place as people grasp a new set of cultural understandings in its own terms. If Robbins is understood very clearly, it is when people have firmly grasped a new set of cultural understandings that genuine conversion takes place. This might be what was going on at the initial stage of Christian missionizing efforts in Yorùbáland.”²⁹⁸

_African Initiated (Independent) Churches_

As missionary Christianity took root in Nigeria, Omóyájowó claimed that the white missionaries acted as a new class of rulers.²⁹⁹ The colonial administration guaranteed their safety in a place that once used to be named as the ‘white man’s grave.’³⁰⁰ No sooner had the mission churches got firmly established with the Europeans still in control of those churches than signs of disaffection by the Yorùbá converted Christians appeared. Yorùbá congregations resented the European monopoly of church authority; and their resentment was exacerbated by strongly

---

²⁹⁷ Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, 87
²⁹⁸ Syncretism, a mix-match of different religions continued to be practiced within Yorùbá Christianity until the upsurge of Pentecostal Charismatic movements. Even with the presence of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements, there is little doubt that syncretism has not continued to be feature of Nigerian Christianity. Quite a number of women who were active at the 2012 Olójó festival belonged to one Pentecostal church or the other.
³⁰⁰ Omóyájowó, *Makers of the Church*, xiv
authoritarian patterns of church organization. Samuel Àjàyí Crowther, who was initially ordained a Bishop, began to suffer persecution from the C.M.S. authority, under the guise that religious discipline had grown too lax during Crowther's episcopate. This persecution was interpreted to be as a result of prejudice on the part of C.M.S authorities against black participation in ecclesiastical order of the church. The outcome of this prejudice was the rise of African Initiated Churches during the period 1890-1910, and a clamor by the enlightened Nigerian Christians for the establishment of a native pastorate. These new Christian bodies were headed by Yorùbá bishops who behaved very much like obas (kings), who were backed by polygamous men of influence, and who presided over organizations of decidedly traditional complexion.

When Àjàyí Crowther died in December 31, 1891, the Christian church in Lagos began to break into fractions. In 1888, the Native Baptist Church had also broken away from its parent body, the Nigerian Baptist Church, in protest against the unpleasant treatment of the first Nigerian Baptist pastor, Moses Ládèjo Stone. By 1901, the African Church Incorporated (ACI later turned AIC) had come into existence. This was made of members of St. Paul’s Church, Breadfruit who broke away over the crisis caused by the Anglican Church’s transfer of Bishop James Johnson. Some of these break-away churches who were practicing polygamy ironically continued to use the same liturgies, prayer books and ministerial orders as their parent bodies they broke away from. Many scholars have given different reasons why mission churches began to lose their appeal to the members in their analysis. According to Ogbu Kalu:

---

301 Horton, “African Conversion”, 3; Latín, Hegemony and Culture, 30
302 Horton, “African Conversion”, 86
303 Omóyájowó, Makers of the Church, xiv
304 By AIC it means African Initiated Churches or African Independent Churches.
A significant aspect of the nineteenth century was that as missionaries sowed the seed of the gospel, Africans appropriated it from a primal, charismatic world-view and read the translated scriptures in that light. Indigenous agencies recovered the spiritual resources of the gospel and challenged missionary Christianity to be fully biblical. This set the stage for the decolonization process that followed the world wars. New forces such as the implosion of the state challenged the heritage of African Christianity; and the collapse of the dictatorial states and attendant poverty probed the tensile strength of the church’s stewardship.\(^{305}\)

Donatus Pius Ukpong on his part has argued: “The inability of the mainline churches established by the western missionaries to foster Christian principles that are culturally liberating and anthropologically enhancing, and religiously fulfilling in African context, is the bedrock of this unfortunate situation.”\(^{306}\)

Social scientists, especially in the West, have explained the upsurge of New Religious Movements (NRMs), to which Charismatic Pentecostal Christianity (including AIC) can be grouped, as part of one of the modernity crises or an *instinctual deprivation*, a situation whereby the human organism is said not yet complete at birth.\(^{307}\) In an attempt to compensate or make up for this depravity, the individual person creatively engages in meaning making activity and also makes deliberate and purposeful choices.\(^{308}\) The human being according to Gehlen, finding herself or himself in a state of rupture with her or his own biological constitution, must stabilize and specialize her or his activity through structures produced by herself or himself.\(^{309}\) She or he must construct his own world. Gehlen even thinks that one of the most important aspects of

---

\(^{305}\) Ogbu Kalu, “‘African Christianity’ in Bowden, John (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christianity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11


modernity is that the foreground of choice is growing, and the background of stable institutional patterns is receding.\textsuperscript{310}

The stable institutional patterns are considered to be those of child rearing and marriage as good examples. The process of institutionalization is said to be complete, according to Gehlen, when the rules and procedures guiding these practices become a feature of the society’s taken-for-granted experience.\textsuperscript{311} However, scholars also point out that modernity tends to de-institutionalize those basic patterns of behaviors, leading to a serious crisis and anomie. As the old institutional stabilities are lost, people are forced to turn to various new modes of structuring his life. What AIC and Charismatic Pentecostalism (including any New Religious Movements) have done is to de-modernize to the extent that it serves the purpose of resolving the perplexities experienced by modern man, even though their projects also carry with them seeds of modernity.

This explains the beginning of the first wave of African Independent (Initiated) Churches (AIC). Many Yorùbá converted to newly found Christian faith had not left behind their primal belief systems, but rather they still enunciated those beliefs. They sought to indigenize Christian faith through the religious parameters of African Traditional Religion.\textsuperscript{312} This Africanized version of Christianity not only indigenized, but also syncretized the modes of worship to conform to local indigenous religious worship style. It introduced traditional drums and music that they felt were better than the missionary’s hymns and hymnodies.

\textsuperscript{310} Arnold Gehlen’s observation is nothing different from what culture of Enlightenment ushered into the world. The Enlightenment is more or less an enthronement of moral individualism. Immanuel Kant sees Enlightenment culture as an enthronement of individual reason independent of any religious authority or external control. See Kant’s What is Enlightenment, http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREA/D/etscc/kant.html

\textsuperscript{311} Hunter, “The New Religions,” 4

\textsuperscript{312} Harvey Cox recently observes also that African independent Christians seem proud that they have not forsaken the spiritual customs their ancestors passed on to them before the whites came, even though the first missionaries urged them to abandon these ‘remnants of superstition.’ They believe that God was already present in Africa before the Europeans arrived and that many of the ways Africans worshipped then are better than the ways the Missionaries taught them. The result is a thoroughly Africanized version of Christianity. See his book Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), 247
The second wave of African Initiative Christianity (AIC) began in the second decade of the twentieth century and differs radically from the initial converts who left from different mission churches due to one grievance or the other. This began with what was later to be known as Aláàdúræ Churches. This group deserves detailed examination and analysis not only because of their radical departure from the liturgical practices of the old mission churches but also because of the important roles they played in paving way for the Pentecostal Charismatic movement in Nigeria generally and among the Yorùbá in particular. Peel sees the concern of the newly converted Yorùbá people with explanation, prediction, and control of space-time events as the central continuity; and in pointing to the inability of the orthodox churches to countenance this concern. 313

The Aladura Churches and later Pentecostal churches rely on the power of prayer and stressed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Today such churches include Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) and Church of the Lord (Aláàdúræ). The first Aláàdúræ Movement was started at Ìjèbú-Ôde, Nigeria in 1918 by Sophia Odúnlámi, a school teacher, and Joseph Sádáre, a goldsmith. They both attended St. Saviour's Anglican Church. They rejected infant baptism and all forms of medicine, whether western or traditional. In consequence, they initiated the "Prayer Band," popularly called Egbé Aláàdúræ. 314

Joseph Sádáre was compelled to give up his post in the Synod and others were forced to resign their jobs and to withdraw their children from the Anglican School.

313 J.D.Y. Peel, Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yorùbá. (London, 1968); Robin Horton also quotes J.D.Y. Peel with regards to this. See Horton, African Conversion, 1971:94
314 It is good to point out that at this stage the differences that exist between the Aláàdúræ churches and Pentecostal/charismatic churches. Most Aláàdúræ founders are semi-illiterate, though some of them went as far as Teacher's Grade 2 colleges, whereas majority of the founders of Pentecostal Charismatic churches have University degrees education, some are even PhD holders such as E.A. Adébóyè, Chris Oyakhilome, Revd. Dr. Aransiola etc. The Aláàdúræ depends on itinerant preachers to spread the gospel, the Pentecostal Charismatic leaders depend in most cases on Media both Print and Electronic to do the same. See other features in Ojo, The End-Time Army, 8.
Thus one could argue that the Aláàdúrà began as a renewal movement in search of true spirituality. A revival took place during 1918. This consolidated the formation of the prayer group and the group was named "Precious Stone" and later the "Diamond Society". By 1920, the Diamond Society had grown tremendously and had started to form branches around the Western region of Nigeria. In particular, David Odùbánjo went to start the Lagos branch. The group emphasized divine healing, holiness, and all Sufficiency of God, which form the three cardinal beliefs of the Church today. The group established an association with Faith Tabernacle of Philadelphia and changed its name to "Faith Tabernacle of Nigeria."

The group first attracted the poor and the disinherited, but as time went on these members moved up in the social scale, and the group adjusted its behavior to conform to the norms of the wider society. Isaac Akínyelè became the traditional ruler of Ìbàdàn and Christianah Olátúnrìndé was a wealthy woman. Both were said to be siblings of Anglican bishops. J.B. Sádáre was one of the founders of Ìjèbú-Òde Grammar School, and Captain Abiódún Akínsòwón was born into a Lagos middle class. Initially regarded as unsophisticated, there was influx of the poor and uneducated during the mighty Revival of 1930, at Òkè-Oòyè to the Aláàdúrà group. One may then ask why they attracted mostly members from lower classes. The reason is very simple, at their initial stages; many members were illiterates due to the fact that many did not attend any formal school. The use of native languages and the incorporation of local religious expressions of trance, dreams, visions and worship also immensely contributed to this. It could also be due to the miracles of healings and deliverances that were being performed by the leaders in Aláàdúrà churches free of charge, which were not present in mission churches.

These churches are tagged Aláàdúrà because they believe in the efficacy of prayers not only to bring about prosperity, but also healing and children; sickness and infertility are said not
to be peculiar to the poor.\textsuperscript{315} They were a response to society in crisis, afflicted by the deadliest pandemic epidemics (influenza, smallpox, and plague), and famine. Aláàdúrà spirituality resurfaced to provide the energy for growth and sustainability in the midst of hostile circumstances. In spite of this fact, the upper class people in society at the founding of the African Initiated Churches still preferred the older mission churches. That means many of those upper classes did not make up their minds either to become full members or not.

In the Aláàdúrà group, it must be pointed out that, while laying a greater emphasis on the gulf created between humanity and the creator God through sin and how humans need to be reconciled to their creator by turning to Him in confession, there is equally a serious attention being paid to the present precarious human condition. This forms one of the cardinal doctrinal emphases of the Pentecostal Charismatic denominations that would soon be considered in this chapter. One fundamental factor that distinguishes the latter AICs, especially the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), though, from the rest of Aláàdúrà, is that it comes closer to the older missionary denominations, and according to Isichei “many of its members prefer to be called Pentecostals, rather than Aláàdúrà”.\textsuperscript{316} Horton argues that some of the terms used to designate these churches emerged from fact that other Aláàdúrà churches such as Cherubim and Seraphim, wanted to be closer to the traditional worldviews than the CAC.\textsuperscript{317} On the flip side, though, CAC differs from older denominations (Missionary churches) in its radical rejection of both Western and traditional medicines. They evince through prayers their absolute dependence on God for healing and deliverance from any form of sicknesses and diseases; a practice that continues till today among some of its members. According to Isichei, “prayer sometimes becomes a form of

\textsuperscript{316} Isichei, A \textit{History of Christianity}, 281
\textsuperscript{317} Horton, “African Conversion”, 92
technology, like traditional rituals; if the right words are pronounced at the right place and time, very specific consequences follow."³¹⁸ Another important factor that makes CAC to resemble the older mission denominations is that it takes education very seriously. Another similarity with the older churches is that its members’ children are shown to grow up taking their church affiliation for granted.

Studies of independency in other parts of Africa have highlighted distinctions between the new churches and older mission churches. With respect to South Africa, Oosthuizen³¹⁹ believes that the following traits distinguish African Initiated Churches from the Mission Churches: (i) those who follow the established approach and doctrinal norms, which the established churches uphold; (ii) those who have established Pentecostal church approaches but, nevertheless, with minor differences when it comes to the ministry and the interpretation of the sacraments, especially baptism; (iii) those who follow the original tenets of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion and remain consistent with its teachings and administration as well as such as the Ethiopian³²⁰ Churches and some with the Apostolic Faith Mission background; (iv) those who are no longer original Ethiopian, Zionist or Apostolic, but who have departed to a limited extent only, from the mainline churches; (v) those who are marginal, and who are often

---

³¹⁸ Isichei, *A History of Christianity*, 278
³²⁰ Later missionary activities dictated by racist’s attitude prompted a critical response among early advocates of the Ethiopian ideology (Ps. 68:31). Rooted in cultural nationalism, Ethiopianism provided an outlet to assert a new Africaness that focused on racial equality and ecclesiastical independence. See Ayándélé, *The Missionary Impact*, 202-203. Zionism is a political movement among Jews (although supported by some non-Jews) which maintains that the Jewish people constitute a nation and are entitled to a national homeland. Formally founded in 1897, Zionism embraced a variety of opinions in its early years on where that homeland might be established. See Paul C. Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism 1891-1948*, (London, Portland Oregon: Frank Cass, 1998) for full details.
treated by the above mentioned categories as apostate because they are deeply embedded in the traditional worldview and its metaphysical forces.

He believes that there is no distinction between Ethiopian, Apostolic, and Zionist and many have the “Zion” added to their names as well as “of South Africa”. Without any doubt, one can discern these character traits among all the African Initiated Churches (AIC) all over Africa, as already hinted earlier on in this chapter. For example, there is a Christian denomination, which is known as Christ Gospel Apostolic Church of Nigeria, while another denomination is designated Mount Zion Faith Ministries of Nigeria. What one can conclude here then is that the added title “Zion”, Apostolic” and Bethel might have nothing to do with Ethiopianism and Zionism as politically or ethnically minded movements. How Pentecostal Charismatic churches have either altered or perpetrated that will continue to attract analysis from scholars, but in the next section, I will look at the rise and impact of Pentecostal Charismatic churches in Nigeria in general and in Ilé-Ife in particular.

*The Beginning of Pentecostal Charismatic Churches*

Matthews Òjó is regarded as the pioneer scholar of Pentecostal Charismatic Movement in Nigeria. In his foreword to Ojó’s book: *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria* (2006), J.D.Y. Peel says Matthews Òjó has not only been an active member of this group but that he was first to appreciate the Pentecostal Charismatic wider significance as marking a new phase in the history of Nigerian Christianity. This statement is correct in view of the fact that his doctoral work in the School of Oriental Studies in London focuses exclusively on Charismatic movements in Nigeria. He has also written extensively on Pentecostal Charismatic polity, the pattern of their interactions, and how they have been governed since then. Allan Anderson, Ogbru Kalu, Asonzeh Ukah, Ruth Marshall-Fratani, and a host of others are brought in
conversation with Òjó, whose works are relevant to the understanding of Nigerian Pentecostalism.

Pentecostal Charismatic denominations tend to present themselves as a kind of “New Reformation” of the twentieth century, especially in the developing world. Corten and Marshall-Fratani, who of course are still honing back on the problems connected with the modern world, claim that “Pentecostalism projects a new vision of the world, responding in particular to processes and promises of ‘modernity’ and ‘modernization.’” A host of scholars have connected the culture of modernity to the rupture of African and many under-developed nations of the world’s traditions; to the extent that traditional ways of seeing and doing things are radically undermined by three overlapping powers: the colonial state, science, and Christianity.

Others argue that modernity has opened up a space for varieties of religious experience, thus relegating to the background one institutional Christian religious way of thinking and interpreting the world. Ernst Troeltsch particularly argues that Protestantism participates in the process of ushering in the modern culture, through which sacerdotal authority and infallible institution was grossly undermined. The birth of modern culture not only paves the way for

325 Troeltsch, Protestantism and Progress, 20-33
alternate modernities\textsuperscript{326}, but also opens up a space for ethical relativity and plurality of ideas. It is against this background knowledge that Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity’s ambition to de-modernize and then re-institutionalize pristine Christian morals and ethos can be appreciated.

Paradoxically, while Pentecostal Charismatics are critical of modernity, eschew and constantly embattle what can be termed ‘evils’ of modernity of loose living, moral decline, the rise of the “ungodly” rational individual, secularism and humanistic ideology, they nevertheless espouse and celebrate modernity by adopting the communication strategies and equipment of modernity and are adept at using them for the spread of their message and promotion of their own lifestyle. Is this ambivalent nature manifested in Pentecostal Charismatic morality? The answer lies in thinking that attempts made by the Pentecostal Charismatic churches to fulfill the mandate “to go ye” can only be realized by the globalizing culture. A culture which already “opens up new worlds as processes of migration and mass mediation accompanied by new forms of wealth and accumulation, opening wide vistas of possible lives, inciting desire and fantasy, but also anxiety, frustration, downward mobility and insecurity”.\textsuperscript{327} Arjun Appadurai interprets the new world in economic terms. He argues that “this new global economy is a very complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models.”\textsuperscript{328}

Pentecostal Charismatics make use of the global culture to their advantage. There is no doubt that what makes them visible and promotes their proselytization is the easy flow of trade in the context of globalization. If some African nationalists are crying against globalization as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item[326] Comaroff and Comaroff, \textit{Modernity and its Malcontents}, 2
  \item[328] Arjun Appadurai, \textit{Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
another means by which the west\textsuperscript{329}, especially the United States of America, is attempting to impoverish the underdeveloped world, Pentecostal Charismatic churches actually stand to benefit a lot from it, in terms of movement of people, ideas and traditions through electronic media. Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity is made visible and recognizable as the fastest growing among the world religions today. Van Dijk observes: “Pentecostalism constitutes not only a discourse within modernity, but also a discourse about modernity, insofar as it elaborates a series of reflections on the present, adopting and adapting modernity’s techniques, discourses, and practices into a new imaginaire.”\textsuperscript{330}

Ironically too, while attempting to completely wean and disengage its members from what can be termed evils of African cultural past, the African Pentecostal Charismatic denomination seem to oscillate between the Western idea of Christianity and its cultural heritage. Kalu sees the development as “preserving a worldview.”\textsuperscript{331} This is where one can see that there is continuity between prophetic African churches and the Pentecostal Charismatics. Jacob Olúpònà notes this very clearly:

Both churches (prophetic and Pentecostal) are engaged in what we could term the African primal quest for the sacred and the transcended: the quest for healing, wellbeing, material success, and long life. Both establish some degree of religious independence in that, unlike the mission churches before them, they are not under larger foreign mission. Both groups of churches also derive their success from their appeal, however unacknowledged, to Africans spiritual sensibilities.\textsuperscript{332}

\textsuperscript{329} Many Nigerian University teachers see globalizing culture as another mean of re-colonizing the Third World. That is why some of these teachers are still kicking against Neo-liberal economy, which they think will only benefit the West and those who act as their local agents (the political class) at the expense of the rest of the world.


\textsuperscript{331} Ogbu Kalu, ‘Preserving a Worldview: Pentecostalism in the African Maps of the Universe’, PNEUMA Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 24:2 (Fall 2002)

There is no doubt that this innovation has contributed in no small measure to the sudden growth of Pentecostal Charismatic denomination in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular.\footnote{Olupona is very correct in this regard. For example, African prophetic churches and Pentecostal-charismatic churches, while both condemning African ritual practices such as divination, ancestor veneration, traditional medicine, and healing, paradoxically share other aspects of indigenous orientation, such as visions, dreams, healing, "spirit" possession, and divine revelation.} It must be pointed out, though, that Olúpònà’s observation can be situated only within the latter part of the developmental stage of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity in Nigeria.\footnote{Enoch Olújídé Gbádégesin, “New Religious Movement and the Politics of Nation Building” in J. A. Adékúnlé (ed.) Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria. (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, Inc. 2009), 281} The initial Pentecostal Charismatic teaching is a radical conversion from the traditional African past. In fact, Deeper Life Bible Church of William F. Kúmúyi is still battling very hard in its refusal to bow to the pressure of some of African cultural heritage; it continues to adhere strictly to the ethic of fundamentalist and literalist biblical culture.\footnote{This fundamentalist and literalist bible culture has done a lot of damage to many homes. Many unguarded youths that join this kind of church unduly lift bible texts out of their immediate context to justify their willful instead of bible action. See Ojo, The End-Time Army, 148-158}

Originating in evangelical student revivals, a wave of Pentecostal expansion founded new churches in the 1960s and 1970s. Benson Idahosa, one of Africa’s most influential Pentecostal preachers established the Church of God Mission International in 1972. In 1974, the Pentecostal umbrella organization Grace of God ministry was founded in eastern Nigeria. The Deeper Life Bible Fellowship was founded in 1973, and soon became one of Nigeria’s largest neo-Pentecostal churches, with an estimated 350,000 members by 1993.\footnote{Musa A.B. Gaiya, “The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria.” Occasional Paper of the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, July 2002; Olupona, “Africa, West; Ojo, “Pentecostalism, Public Accountability and Governance in Nigeria” Paper presented for the Pentecostal-Civil Society Dialogue, Lagos, Nigeria, October 18, 2004.} Neo-Pentecostals are regarded as those churches that appropriate all of the Pentecostal doctrines and are regarded as the third wave Pentecostalism. Before this time, foreign Pentecostal denominations such as the Welsh Apostolic
Church (1931), the Assemblies of God (1939) and the Foursquare Gospel Church (1954) had already been introduced into Nigeria.

Ọjó's account further shows that Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity began as an independent Christian movement in 1970s, that was pietistic and reformist. Interestingly, the same pattern was noticeable in the United States of America in the 1960s, when the older evangelicals took seriously the theology that was centered on the hereafter, the world to come. Richard Quebedeaux asserts that:

Conversion to Christ opened up the gates of heaven to believers, but it did little else. Although the neo-evangelicals, in breaking with the fundamentalists, did express, as early as the 40s, a new social conscience and a desire for evangelical involvement in the political, economic, and social life of the world, and it was not until the 70s that they really got off the ground on this issue.

Ọjó believes that Pentecostalism emerged initially as a reformist movement that championed a new spirituality and a deeper understanding of Christianity that was redemptive and progressive. This explosion of Christianity was at first identified with certain youths who labeled themselves as pastors and evangelists although they lacked pastoral and theological training. This group also emerged through the influence of the North American young evangelists. Since the 1950s, Pentecostal and Evangelical movements of the North American origin have spread their influence throughout the globe, including much of Africa. While earlier Pentecostal movements

---

337 Ọjó, *The End-Time Army*, 2006
339 It is doubtful whether the earlier Pentecostal Charismatics styled themselves pastors and evangelists as Matthews Ojo claims. The invention only came in the late eighties specifically from 1989 when some leaders of the Colleges’ fellowships in Nigeria began to see themselves as pastors and evangelists in their own right. The reason is that some of them were already leading fellowship groups, which have up to five hundred members or more than many local churches could boast of. Even the now fastest growing churches such as RCCG, as at that period could not boast more than one hundred to two hundred local congregational members. See Matthews A. Ọjó, “The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in Modern Africa” in Elias Kifon Bongmba (ed.) *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions*, First Edition, (Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2012), 295.
in Nigeria had indigenous origin, there was a proliferation of these movements in the 1980s and 1990s and the forging of ties with their North American partners.

Events since the mid-1980s have shown the emergence of a trans-national religious movement known as the “neo-Pentecostalism”\(^{340}\) or “Charismatic Christianity” across most parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Neo-Pentecostalism is regarded as those churches that appropriate all of the Pentecostal doctrines and are also called the third wave Pentecostalism. Their proselytizing approach can be said to parallel Jesus’ rapprochement with Nicodemus in John 3.3, where the former informed the latter that the only condition to get into the kingdom of God is to be “born again.” Thus, the Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic movement adopts this style of preaching as the members approach their targeted audience with the daring message “You must be Born Again,” or by using interrogation method: “Are you born again?” Corten and Marshall-Fratani believe that “Conversion, or ‘getting born-again’, is still conceived in terms of radical transformation of the self through rupture with the sinful past.”\(^{341}\)

Ôjó argues that: “The Charismatic Renewal in Nigeria is unprecedented in terms of its scale, complexity and intensity. Being born again, prophetic revelation, the Pentecostal experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, and Holy Spirit manifestations in miracles, healing and Pentecostal empowerment are central to their (sic, its) doctrinal emphases.”\(^{342}\) He believes that a new doctrinal emphasis soon emerged in 1990s, called ‘deliverance,’ and in some Pentecostal organizations has displaced healing to a second position. Just like the deprivationist theorists argue, Ôjó thinks that Charismatic movements emerged and

\(^{340}\) For more detail see Stanley M Burgess; van der Maas, Eduard M, eds. New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 286–87.
\(^{341}\) Corten and Marshall-Fratani, Between Babel and Pentecost, 6
\(^{342}\) Ojo, The End-Time Army, 2
spread within conditions of rapid social change in Nigeria. The economically prosperous
decade of the 1970s, which gave way to economic decline of the 1980s, has much bearing on the
structure and message of the movements. He claims that “in their search for messianic
intervention, Charismatic organizations proliferated greatly in the 1980s and 1990s as Nigerians
searched for personal and collective salvation.”

Using a functionalist approach to the understanding of a religious phenomenon, Òjó
argues that, Charismatic movements as agents of social disclosure actually developed prophetic
apparatuses to cope with the realities of their present situations. I am arguing that the failure of
the political actors to provide social amenities for the people and to provide answers to various
existential needs for the poor masses, especially in Nigeria, which Pentecostal Charismatic
churches claim they are providing, makes them not only visible but also powerful. Apart from
serving as an alternative to state hegemonic power, the appearance of New Religious Movements
(NRMs) to which Pentecostal Charismatics belong, can be interpreted by adapting A.R.
Radcliffe-Brown’s functional hypothesis as attempts to relieve a condition of social dysnomia
produced by the rapid modification of the social life through contact with white civilization.

Apart from this way of explaining what makes Pentecostal Charismatic denominations in
Nigeria visible, is the adoption by young graduates and university teachers such as William F.
Kúmúyì, Enoch Adéjàre Adébóyè, David Oyèdépò, Francis Wálé Òkè, and Odúnlámi Oríòkè the
Pentecostal ethos and culture of speaking about and acting in the power of the Holy Spirit in the
early 1970s. Their presence has contributed in no small way to the bringing into the Pentecostal

\[\text{References:}\]

343 Òjo, The End-Time Army, 3
344 See also Gbádégesin, ‘New Religious Movements and the Politics of Nation, 279
345 Òjo, The End-Time Army, 3
Charismatic folds other like-minded educated folks as many testifiers often claim in their testimonies. Urbanity has also contributed to the astronomic growth of this group through the immense power of mass mediation on its polity.\(^\text{348}\)

Ôjó believes that while Pentecostal liturgy is very simple, nonetheless, the worship services are full of warmth with clapping and dancing to choruses, in what members call ‘praise worship’ or ‘singspiration.’\(^\text{349}\) Kalu has argued: “They [Pentecostals] realized the impact of music and dance as two powerful tools for winning souls and for attracting the masses, especially women and young people.”\(^\text{350}\) Cardinal Arinze views the group in a negative light, by claiming that, “NRM of Protestant origin provoke diverse reactions because of their aggressive proselytism which denigrates the Catholic Church, or because of their expansionistic programs and their use of the mass media in a way that looks like commercialization of religion.”\(^\text{351}\)

Asonzeh Ukah takes up this issue of commercialization of religion by arguing convincingly that:

> Their leaders are media savvy individuals who, with the university education background, have introduced commercial practices into their organization and in the production of religion and other goods. It is now a common feature particularly among the mega-churches, but also medium-sized Pentecostal groups, that they produce a huge array of videos, magazines, CDs, DVDs, books, booklets and pamphlets, stickers, key-holders and other religious memorabilia or ritual paraphernalia (handkerchief, olive oil). The RCCG produces and markets all over the world well over half a million copies of its leader’s sermons on DVDs, VCDs, VHS and audio tapes.\(^\text{352}\)

Marshall-Fratani argues that, “The wave of conversions to Pentecostalism which has swept across urban Nigeria in the past decade or so has brought a number of changes in doctrine,

\(^{348}\) Marshall-Fratani, “Mediating the Global”, 80-85; Ojo, The End-Time Army, 3

\(^{349}\) Ojo, The End-Time Army, 3


\(^{351}\) Cardinal Arinze, 6.

membership, organization and transnational affiliation to the already existing Pentecostal churches which expanded or were established in the earlier revival."\textsuperscript{353} The leaders of these Pentecostal groups not only place their organizations firmly in the world, but can project a sense of well being in this world because they are well educated, are upwardly mobile, have privileged international contacts and experiences.\textsuperscript{354}

Ôjó believes that Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic movements contribute in large measure to the growth of Pentecostalism in other countries in Africa.\textsuperscript{355} His argument is bolstered by the fact that the Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic group has continued to take its churches to various nations in Africa, and hence, has aided and stimulated the charismatic activities in these other African countries. Even though, they continue to operate at local levels in order to reflect their national and cultural identities, yet Nigerian Pentecostal Churches continue to significantly influence what goes on in other nations of the world where they have planted their branches. Many of these Pentecostal Charismatic groups continue to maintain a solid and unbroken link with a host of Charismatic organizations in North America and Europe.\textsuperscript{356}

\textit{Pentecostal Charismatics’ Engagement of Public Space}

With respect to their engagement of the public space, the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have not only annexed physical space where their denominational camps (often nicknamed: Redemption Camp, Life Camp, Shiloh, and Mountain and Fire Camp) are being built, they have also engaged the political space as well. Adogame has accounted for the larger process of ‘Christianization’ of the public space in Nigeria by highlighting a Christian scramble

\textsuperscript{353} Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global and the Local, 84
\textsuperscript{354} Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global and The Local, 85; Ojo, The End-Time Army, 3
\textsuperscript{355} Ojo, The End-Time Army, 168
for public roles in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{357} At the heart of this engagement with the public sphere is what Kalu refers to as the “theology of engagement.”\textsuperscript{358} Within this context, Pentecostal churches and their followers have come to constitute a major factor in Nigeria’s social, economic, and political life.\textsuperscript{359}

They have engaged in building businesses, and establishing institutions that supplement or replace the weak public infrastructures, especially, in the area of education. They are now regarded as agents of social and political change. Òjó argues that:

Pentecostal emphasis on spiritual empowerment tends to challenge the individual to satisfaction and achievement against the background of a dislocated society. Consequently,…the successes of Charismatic religion in Nigeria have been due principally to the ability of Charismatics to use their doctrinal emphases to simplify the complexities of modern life in such a way that everyone connected to the religion succeeds in negotiating and finding answers to problems of modern urban life caused by social dislocation and failure of the centralized state.\textsuperscript{360}

Ôjó’s observation is highly informative. In the midst of the distress and chaotic situations in which a majority of Nigerians are found, the Pentecostal movements showed up as an alternative center of hegemonic power to solving human needs. They founded schools and built hospitals; projects that Mission churches had initially begun but were later taken over by the wave of nationalization of these institutions during the short lived administration of General Murtala Mohammad.

The schools that the Pentecostal Charismatic movements built continue to provide moral and religious instruction, which are no longer part of the public school’s curriculum. Added to

\textsuperscript{359} Gbadegesin, ‘New Religious Movements, 276-291
\textsuperscript{360} Ojo, The End-Time Army, 13-14
this is the way in which they creatively engage the media spaces, either the ones owned by the government or the private ones owned by these movements.  

According to Olúfúnké Adébóyè:

In Nigeria, some Pentecostal churches are beginning to own television stations. For instance, the RCCG owns Dove TV while the Loveworld Christian Television Network belongs to Christ Embassy. This is in addition to the fact that several other Pentecostals regularly buy airtime on other private and public television and radio stations to broadcast their programmes to a mass audience. In addition, they have also taken over several public spaces such as stadia, hotels, cinemas, school halls, civic centers, restaurants, nightclubs etc, which they regularly hire for their worship services. Hence spaces hitherto ‘criminalized’ by Pentecostals as the ‘abode of sin’ are now being appropriated for religious purposes.

Adébóyè’s observation is very apt, because Pentecostal appropriations of any available spaces are becoming annoying and intolerable for many other religious groups, especially the Muslims who feel that they have been taken undue advantage of. According to Barbara Cooper,

“Evangelical Christian practice in Maradi is shaped in substantive ways by the consciousness that Christianity is in competition with Islam and must constantly prove itself in terms that are legible to Muslims.”

In reaction to this move, they have also begun to acquire not only available landed properties to build their religious centers, but they also have begun to make use of many government official buildings for their religious programs, an issue that I already raised elsewhere.

There is ambiguity in calling a place the “abode of sin”, and yet continuing to make use of the same place for religious worship. This situation characterizes many Nigerian Pentecostal

---


groups especially the Redeemed Christian Church of God’s indiscriminate use of spaces.

Adébóyè notes that:

This ambiguity and seeming inconsistency has generated considerable tension in relations between Pentecostals and other religious groups, which feel the latter are using all possible avenues to ‘entice’ their own members and also to encroach on public spaces to which everybody is expected to have equal access.  

Some Pentecostal leaders such as Chris Okotie and Túndé Bákărè have even ventured into the political arena. Paradoxically, this arena used to be a no go area for the ‘born-again’, ‘sanctified’, ‘heavenly-bound Christian’ in the 1970s until the early 1990s. The Deeper Life has been very vociferous in this regard; the leadership sternly warned the members not to go into politics or have anything to do with the dirty and evil game of politics. While Deeper Life Bible Church detests politics as a dirty game, there have been records of past governors who belong to Pentecostal groups such as Rev. Jolly Nyame of Taraba, and Evangelist Bámidélé Olúmilá of Ondó State, who are also clergymen. In the current democratic dispensation a Pentecostal pastor, a former lawyer and pop singer, Chris Okotie established a political party and another person, Pastor Tunde Bakare, the founder and president of the Latter Rain Assembly was named a running mate in another political party established by a Muslim, a retired military General Muhammed Buhari from the Northern State.

---

366 Ojo, The End-Time Army, 185, 207
This development could be interpreted as one of the means devised by the South to break the Northern political hegemony that has been ongoing in the country for many years. It all began in 1988, when Pentecostal Charismatic leaders reacted against a provocative statement made by Alhaji Sheik Abubakar Gumi, who said that the Muslim North will never allow Christians to rule Nigeria. In order to prove a point to Gumi that Pentecostal Charismatic groups are a factor to reckon with in Nigeria’s politics, the Pentecostal leaders sponsored Christian candidates for the local government elections, which were overwhelmingly won by these Christians. In another instance, during the peak of the controversy over Nigeria’s membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference (O.I.C.), Archbishop Benson Idahosa called for a boycott of newspapers that were owned by Muslims or favored Islamic domination in the country.\footnote{Ojo, The End-Time Army, 182-183.} In the present political discourse in Nigeria, the suspicion between Muslims and Christians has heightened as a result of the Northern people losing their grip at the center in Abuja. The fact that an Islamic insurgence group Boko Haram from the North is causing untold hardship on the people there, especially the Christians, further shows that things are not well in terms of politics in Nigeria.

**Women in Pentecostal Charismatic Movements**

The quest and agitation for women’s visibility and participation in religious, political and economic spheres have occupied feminist and gender scholars across the globe. Even in the West, negative attitudes to women have not changed significantly. We no longer need any prophetic figures to tell us that, in all nations of the world, women have been treated as a muted group and have also been given insufficient attention in scholarship. Fiona Bowie argues: “The
rise of women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s, prompted a reassessment of the treatment of women not only in anthropology but also in the public spheres.  

Women’s visibility through participation in public discourse may not be as rapid as one would have expected, yet there is a marked improvement in the way women are made to express themselves in religious, economic, and political affairs in some nations of the world. Good examples to cite here are: the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Malawian President, Joyce Banda, Ramphele Mamphele of South Africa and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria, who is the current minister of Finance, but has served in the World Bank as one of the executive directors. There is no doubt that many nations still have conservative ideas that women should be consigned to the private realm in accordance with alleged traditional belief systems. However, there is bound to be a change as those nations fully embrace progressive thought and calls for justice in an increasing global environment. What is ironic about attitudes to women is that, its manifestation represents the negative side of Missionary churches. In many Christian churches, even in Europe and North America, many women seeking ordination have been denied that opportunity. If, however, attitudes to women in Protestant Christianity have been negative in mainline denominations, the Pentecostal Charismatic movements have radically changed that mode of behavior, especially in Nigerian Christianity.

---

371 Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 94; See also Carol R. Berkin, Judith L. Pinch and Carole S. Appel [eds.], *Exploring Women’s Studies: Looking Forward, Looking Back*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall 2006). The contributors to this book argued from different scholarly perspectives such as Literature, Art, History and Sociology that great changes not only have taken place in making women visible but also argue that the issues concerning women should dominate academics and public policy.


Pentecostal Charismatic movements do not merely recognize women as co-partakers of the ‘divine grace,’ the women are assigned roles which make them visible in the sacred order of things. Oyèrónké Olájugbù’s (2003), book titled: *Women in the Yorùbá Religious Sphere* adequately summarizes the argument that women are no longer interpreted as mere objects to be seen and not heard. In her introduction, she shows the paradoxical roles of women in power relations among the Yorùbá. According to her, gender roles in the Christian tradition are erroneously considered to be fixed, whereas in that of traditional Yorùbá religion, gender roles are flexible - an issue that has been discussed in chapter one.

Based on extensive ethnographic research, especially among the Yorùbá, Bólájí Bátéye argues that there is a paradigmatic shift in attitudes towards women in the Pentecostal Charismatic movements, which she dubs New Generation Churches (NGCs). She claims that “a greater number of Pentecostal women are seen rejecting the stereotyped passive traditional and supportive roles of women as characterized by most mission churches for support of active female leadership roles in the churches.”

Some scholars even think that one could make a case for a changing attitude towards women in the Nigerian public sphere by examining the public roles of former Nigerian First Ladies, the late Maryam Babangida and Maryam Abacha, who during their husbands’ rule as military presidents of the country introduced some programs that made women visible and contributed to the discourse on the emancipation of women.

It is not only Olájugbù and Bátéye who notice the significant changes in the roles of women in Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic historiography; male scholars such as Ôjó and Ukah also notice this trend. While Ôjó thinks that women are still playing supportive roles, Ukah

---

374 Bátéye, *Paradigmatic Shift*, 113
thinks that the role of women in new churches receives a great deal of visibility. According to him:

Women are integrated in the decision making processes and exercise a certain degree of power and authority. Some church founders are women and there are cases that wives of deceased church founder/owners have succeeded their late husbands. The spouses of church founders are usually the second-in-command in the hierarchy of power and authority. It has turned out that wives of pastors also serve another purpose in the spouses’ ministries: they protect the family’s estate and control most financial dealings in the church. Some churches purposely create products that cater to the interests and needs of women in order to proselytize specific segments of the population.\textsuperscript{375}

Ukah further claims that, “Knowing the power of women to attract men into religious organizations, some churches deliberately exploit this in giving women pastoral duties so that men would be drawn into the fold.”\textsuperscript{376}

My own research confirms the view that women are increasingly taking on leadership roles in Pentecostal churches. In Nigeria today, Christian women leaders include Helen Ukpabio, founder and President of Liberty Gospel Church, who recently attracted both positive and negative attention globally, because she embarked on a crusade to exorcise children of witchcraft, but allegedly demonized children as witches.\textsuperscript{377} She is also the CEO of Liberty Films and Music Plaza, which already produced about twenty home videos. Other women in her categories are Pastor/Prophetess Rêmîlékùn Bátiré, the founder of Christ Miracle Christian Center, Àkúré; Pastor Bólá Táíwò founder and president of The Last Days Deliverance Ministry

\textsuperscript{375} This paper does not have any pagination, but in Asonzeh Ukah, ‘African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems’, a working paper written in Guttenberg, Universität, Department of Anthropology and African Studies Nr. 79, this quote can be found in his fourth feature of New Churches (Pentecostal Churches).

\textsuperscript{376} Ukah is highly entitled to his opinion here. Ordaining women into the office of Priest or pastor does not translate into using them as means of alluring men into the church. This idea looks rather biased and terribly simplistic.

\textsuperscript{377} The Nigerian Guardian, December 9, 2007.
International at Ilo, Ilésà; Archbishop Dorcas Siyanbólá Oláníyì, the founder of Àgbàlá Daniel Church with the Headquarters situated in Ìbàdàn and a host of others.\textsuperscript{378}

\textit{Pentecostal Charismatic Movement and the Prosperity Gospel}

If there is anything that the Pentecostal Charismatic denomination is being heavily criticized for, it is this issue of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel began to make waves, first in America and then in other parts of the world, especially in Africa. Òjó sees it as “the very modern orientation of Charismatic movements on teaching on Success and Prosperity.”\textsuperscript{379} He thinks that the new emphasis first appeared as part of the interpretation of healing, but it gained ground in the mid-1980s and by the 1990s had become quite distinctive. Òjó claims that, in Nigeria, the teaching of the prosperity gospel first caught the attention of the press, the government, and other religious groups in the early 1980s, when Archbishop Benson Idahosa began to incorporate faith gospel into his church’s cardinal teachings.

The faith gospel is an aspect of Pentecostal teaching that is shared by many Pentecostals around the globe. Pentecostals preach the right of believers to material possessions and divine health. The ‘Gospel of Prosperity’ teaches that God intends His followers to prosper, and that the way to riches is by giving, or, more specifically, tithing. Isichei interprets this attitude to be partly due to the enormous costs of their ministry. She believes that these ideas were widely disseminated in America by tele-Evangelists, some of whom are now eclipsed, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim and Tammy Bakker being some prominent examples.\textsuperscript{380} Other scholars also think that American televangelists have influenced Nigerian Pentecostal preachers.

\textsuperscript{378} Bátéye, Paradigmatic Shift, 117
\textsuperscript{379} Òjó, \textit{The End-Time Army}, 206
\textsuperscript{380} Isichei, \textit{The History of Christianity}, 335
Anderson also believes that “the prosperity gospel actually originated in North America, particularly found in the preaching and writings of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland.”

Asonzeh Ukah says, “This new message promised individuals a comprehensive solution to all their worries on condition that they become born again and give generously to the religious leader (and God my emphasis) in exchange for material and spiritual blessings in the form of healing, wealth, abundant life, success and earthly promotion.” With respect to the rest of Africa, Gifford argues that prosperity gospel is the ‘Americanization’ of Pentecostalism, and there is little ‘African quality’ responsible for the growth of these churches. He sees this new phenomenon as a type of neo-colonialism propagated by American ‘prosperity preachers’, a sort of ‘conspiracy theory.’” Marshall-Fratani claims that the prosperity doctrine serves to “integrate the born-again experience of redemption with social mobility, conspicuous consumption and the legitimation of wealth in a time of scarcity. The gospel of prosperity offers a doctrine of morally controlled materialism, in which personal wealth and successes are interpreted as the evidence of God’s blessing on those that lead a ‘true life in Christ.’” These observations indicate a wide consensus among scholars that Nigerian and African Pentecostals embraced the prosperity gospel as a response to the collapse of the economy in African countries.

Our understanding of this phenomenon must be situated within the context of socio-economic crisis that began to create untold hardships on the people of Nigeria especially and Africans in general, rather than seeing it as a sudden impulse on the part of those preachers.

Within the Indigenous Religious traditional understanding in Africa, especially among the

---

384 Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global in Local’, 85
Yorùbá, there is close connection of health with wealth. When placating Òrìsà, a Yorùbá man or woman would always ask for: "Ire owó, Ire omo, àti àlàáfíà baálè Orò" [Blessing of Money (wealth), blessing of children, and health - the ultimate form of wealth]. The only difference in this indigenous traditional way of thinking and that of Pentecostal Charismatic nuances of prosperity is that, while the former is thinking about blessings of money in terms of what can reduce the pain of poverty and what can be of benefit to the society at large, the latter is thinking about prosperity in terms of acquiring a host of material things such as: many motor cars, buildings, business conglomerates, and in recent times, the possession of aircraft for self aggrandizement and self-projection.385

Ôjó mentions notable Pentecostal Charismatic preachers in Nigeria who place a premium on the prosperity gospel such as late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, then Bishop David Oyèdèpò, Bishop Francis Wálé Òkè, Rev. Chris Okotie, Rev. Chris Oyakhilome, Dr. Oltúkọyà and Bishop Mike Okonkwo.386 Jacob Àyántáyò has pointed out that the late Archbishop Idahosa stated at a crusade at Obáfemi Awólówò University in Ilé-Ifè in 1994 that: “I am serving a God of wealth and not of poverty. The whole world is owned by God and God is the God of riches. We are the sons of God and princes and princesses and only the best is good enough.”387

Many people were disappointed that no healing was effected as claimed by the Archbishop. Some others regretted ever coming to the crusade at all and gave out their hard

---

385 Enoch Olújídé Gbadegesin, “Re-Examination of the Traditional Yorùbá Cultural Traditions of Morality and their Implication for Abundant Life” in Dúró Öní and Emmanuel Adédayò Adédùn (Eds.) Lagos Notes and Records, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Vol. 17, 2011, 127-142, see p.131
386 Òjo, The End-Time Army, 207
387 I was an eye-witness of this event, when Arch-Bishop Benson Idahosa held a special Crusade in 1994. He actually showed his automatic Mercedes Benz 300 to all the audience present that day, how his God blesses a born again Christian. He even claimed that he was the first person to be riding on a car like that in Nigeria. Many people who came for the program that day went home disappointed, especially the “unbeliever” friends that were invited. See Jacob K. Àyántáyò, ‘Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality: A Critique’, in David O. Ògúngbiélé and Akintúndé E. Akinadé (Eds.), Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity. (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2010), 201-216. See especially p.203
earned money as offering to a man who was already well-fed and wealthy. Oyèdèpò boldly proclaims in his book, *Breaking Financial Hardship* that, “Christ purposely died in poverty leaving everything behind, so that we might live in spiritual and physical wealth, and the more abundantly.”

The irony of it all is that the fastest growing churches in Nigeria and Africa generally, as perhaps in Latin America, are those that preach a prosperity and deliverance gospel—if you believe (and give and “seed” money) you will be blessed with health and wealth. Furthermore, Marshall-Fratani, argues that these churches are full of mostly young members who now belong to a struggling middle class, even if many of the churches claim that there are many elites on their membership rolls. Leaders of these churches still quote bible verses such as 3John verse 2; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Luke 6:38 and etc, albeit wrongly to justify the reason why people should give in order to prosper.

In many instances, members of these organizations are asked to give a specific amount of money that is usually dictated by the preacher/evangelist. In Nigeria, it ranges from N5, 000 to N100, 000. In America, it usually starts from the highest denomination of $1,000 to the lowest of $100.00 or $50.00 if too many people do not come out to give. Àyántáyò calls this appeal to giving, the gambling method, while Obiora calls it commercialization of religion. Perhaps we can employ the words of George Ritzer to describe the process as the *McDonaldization* of Christianity, although he has used the phrase with respect to the growing global economic

---

389 Corten and Marshall-Fratani, Between Babel and Pentecost, 1-10; Adébóyè, “Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America, 146-147
391 Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global and the Local, 85
392 There is now a spiritual price tag put on the amount anyone could give. Anyone who is able to afford to give $1000.00 and more is sure to receive a special anointing, to be administered by the invited preacher who makes a call for the donation. Anything less than $1000 means that the individual will have to anoint himself or herself. This happened recently in the local church I attend located on Beechnut and Synot in Houston, Texas on May, 2013.
393 Àyántáyò, ‘Prosperity Gospel and Social Morality’, 206
markets and their cultures. Ritzer in *McDonaldization of Society* argues that *McDonaldization is “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.”*\textsuperscript{395} If we narrow it down to the Pentecostal culture of prosperity, it is a “get-rich-quick” kind of mentality. A kind of marketing strategy of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control identified as part of American marketing strategy in the new world.\textsuperscript{396}

Asamoah-Gyadu sees the development in a different light. For him, “the greatest virtue of the health and wealth gospel for the new churches lies in the ‘indomitable spirit that believers develop in the face of life’s odds…. In essence, the misfortune becomes only temporary.”\textsuperscript{397} Following the argument of Asamoah-Gyadu, Allan Anderson sentimentalizes the phenomenon as part of Pentecostals’ method of preaching the ‘Full Gospel.’\textsuperscript{398} Reacting to Gifford, he justifies the action by saying that, “the idea that ‘prosperity’ churches in Africa are led by unscrupulous manipulators greedy for wealth and power does not account for the increasing popularity of these new churches with educated and responsible people, who continue to give financial support and feel their needs are met there.” He even thinks that, “Often, those who are ‘anti-charismatic’ and resent or are threatened by the growth and influence of the newer churches are the source of these criticisms.”\textsuperscript{399} Anderson argues this way, because he has Pentecostal roots and may not appreciate the excesses of the prosperity gospel as non-Pentecostals do.

After this background to Pentecostalism and the popularity of the prosperity gospel among its leading preachers, we can relate this discussion of the Gospel of Prosperity to the gift

\textsuperscript{396} Alister McGrath, *The Future of Christianity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 50-58
\textsuperscript{399} Anderson, ‘The Pentecostal Gospel, 15
economy as we enter into the twenty-first century. It is having this very clear understanding that will help us to appreciate the principle behind the Pentecostal prosperity teaching. The question may be raised: What assumptions about gift giving and generosity are at work in the Pentecostal Charismatic theology? The logic is simple; it is the logic of investment. The worshippers’ needs and desires are guaranteed by God, but only on the condition that they prioritize the church. All other aspects of their lives God will take care of if they can give generously to God’s cause and His ministers. Pastors and leaders in these churches often engage in the rhetoric which promotes giving by demonstrating the generosity of God who will give bountifully to those who give. Some ask: Is God a debtor to anybody? Can you out-give God? Of course, the congregation always will respond with a resounding ‘No’.

One can also easily see the sentiments that will follow a statement: “If we do not give to God, we are giving to the devil”. Giving as far as Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are concerned is two-way traffic, reminiscent of Mauss’ conception of gift as the obligation to return. Marcel Mauss argues that gift exchange establishes and sustains mutually-binding links and obligations between transactors. When promises of prosperity fail to manifest, why would one continue to tithe or give offerings week after week? According to Devaka Premawardhana, “Ritual action, even when failing to alter objective circumstances, often succeeds in transforming how those circumstances are subjectively experienced.” One can say that Premawardhana’s observation is very insightful, given the fact that among the faithful in the Pentecostal Charismatic denominations, even if giving has not obtained for the giver an immediate desired result, it does not automatically lead to abandoning the practice. Ritual action such as this actually has a way of inspiring hope and confidence in people.

---

The problems connected with Pentecostal Charismatic Prosperity Gospel or gift and reciprocal mentality are myriad, as carefully identified and documented by the media and the public. According to Aïhiokhai, “The extravagant spending of some of the church leaders is fast becoming a source of embarrassment.” Fúnke Adébóyè, quoting from *The News* (of June 9, and June 30, 2003) one of the Nigerian Newspapers, puts her finger on the real problem that may be encountered—Scandal! According to her, “The Christ Embassy in Nigeria, for instance, has been involved in scandals in which members embezzled funds from their workplaces and were alleged to have donated large chunks of it to the church. Even the Redeemed Christian Church of God has had its own share of such scandals.” She thinks that this has negatively affected the image of the neo-Pentecostal churches, whose pastors are largely considered as religious entrepreneurs.

Asonzeh Ukah agrees with Levy Fragell on the same issue bothering on scandal. Fragell believes that:

> The excessive recruitment of funds, display of scandalous wealth by the leaders and increase in instances of clergy malfeasance, indicate troubling future for many individuals and groups of both in Africa and outside. These features qualify the pastors and leaders of Pentecostal or Charismatic church to be the only legally and politically accepted movement in the world that is fully and completely based upon systematic fraud, deception and cheating.

Both Ukah’s and Levy-Fragell’s observation are highly informative especially if one considers that similar issue are being raised by African commentators. Though, while it is true that some leaders in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles are engaged in fraud and cheating, it is also true that some leaders are sincere and are very transparent in the running of the church.

---

401 Aïhiokhai, “Pentecostal and Political Empowerment”, 7
402 Adeboye, “Pentecostal Challenges, 147
403 Ukah, African Christianities, 2007, no pagination
Another problem connected with the Prosperity Gospel is that, in many Pentecostal Charismatic churches today, either in Nigeria or the diaspora, there is a tendency to interpret acquisition of wealth (money or materials) to be a cardinal sign of God’s favor as a result of holy living, devoutness and pietism. It seems that the Pentecostal Charismatic leaders have forgotten the injunction of Jesus Christ who says that no man can serve two masters; it is either one serves God or mammon (the god of money) Matthew 6:24. They also have forgotten the injunction of Paul the apostle in I Timothy 6: 3-10, verse 9 especially reads: “People who want to get rich fall into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction”.

_Pentecostalism and Other Religious Traditions in Nigeria_

The scholarship on the interaction between Pentecostalism and other religious groups in Nigeria is growing, as we can see in the foregoing analysis. Pentecostalism throughout its short history in Nigeria has faced challenges in its relationship to other religious groups. When Pentecostalism first started as a distinct Christian group with its emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, prophesies, healing, deliverance, and miracles, the public reacted to their message and teachings in a negative light. Things have now changed significantly. Pentecostal Charismatic churches see themselves as a special breed of people who are distinguished from the rest of the people because of their faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They think that they are the only chosen children of God who are destined to go to heaven and have also been given a mandate to convert the rest of the world and win them to Christ since unbelievers will be condemned to hell.

In Nigeria, especially, since their inception, the Pentecostal Charismatic groups often believe they constitute a special people of God who alone are saved and the rest of humanity is
doomed to perdition. Their new theology, which is grounded on what scholars consider uncritical hermeneutic, is deemed contradictory and also has zero tolerance for Islam, African Traditional Religions, and African worldviews. Pentecostal interpreters tend to promote a literalist interpretation of the biblical texts and their opponents have called them fundamentalists because they claim to return to the authentic message of the Bible. In their relationship to other Christian denominations, the Pentecostal Charismatic groups act as if they are the only ones who have everything right and the Pentecostals and Charismatics tend to see the other Christian churches as deviant, cult-like, and departed from the teaching of scriptures. Given this negative attitude towards other Christian churches, it took a very long time for the Pentecostal Charismatic groups to join the Christian umbrella association called ‘Christian Association of Nigeria’ (CAN), which was formed in 1976. Even with this development, the relationship between the Pentecostal Charismatic churches and the other Christian denominations has not been cordial. This has led to the formation of a parallel association by the Pentecostal Charismatic group known as Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria which began its operations in the early 1990s.

Just like Catholic and Mainline Churches are being treated, Islam is particularly demonized as a religion of the ‘bondwoman,’ and of ‘slavery’ by the Pentecostal Charismatic groups. They have consistently made polemical remarks against Islam and Islamic groups have returned the favor. The increasing evangelistic activities of Pentecostal Charismatic groups in Nigeria have heightened the recent religious violence especially in the Northern Nigeria and some people think such violence is a response to the derision of Islam by Pentecostal

---

Charismatic churches. Muslims tend to see the criticism of their faith by Pentecostal Charismatic churches as an assault on the Islamic tradition. Hence, the most important opposition to Nigerian Pentecostals is from Islam, and the dividing line is drawn not just between Muslims and Pentecostals, but also between Muslims and Christians generally.

The religious crisis in Jos and Kano areas of Nigeria in May 2004 and other recent religious crises testify to this. Tóyin Fálolá has written extensively on the role of religion in violence with respect to Nigeria. In his carefully written book, he is able to demonstrate that contrary to the general opinion that political actors in Nigeria manipulate religion to advance their goals, he argues instead that the mass appeal of religion, the rise of fundamentalism, and the fact that political actors seem to profit from religious violence are other possibilities. 406 Fálolá rejects the thesis that presents Nigeria as a liberal secular state; he argues instead that religion has always been part of how the Nigerian state is organized. This, according to him, explains why Nigeria has always been embroiled in a religious violence or the other starting from Usmanu dan Fodio Jihad to the Qaduriyya and Tijaniyya till the major Christians-Muslims clashes from 1980 till the present moment. 407 According to Adeboye, “The militancy of Islamic fundamentalists in northern Nigeria is thus matched by the uncompromising disposition of southern Pentecostals, bent on ‘winning the country for Christ,’ as they demonize all Muslims and other ‘Unbelievers.’” She even states further that:

While traditional religion does not appear to pose so much threat to Nigerian Pentecostalism, scholars have expressed some concern about the increasing tension between Muslims and Pentecostals in the country, and about the implications of such hostility for national unity. This particularly has to do with

the increasing politicization of the Pentecostal identity vis-à-vis the Islamist politics of Northern Nigeria.\textsuperscript{408}

In recent times, constant bombings by some Islamist groups in the northern states of Nigeria are being experienced, known as Boko Haram, which registers its annoyance against western education.\textsuperscript{409} The word “Boko” means western education, while “haram” means against, anti, in opposition to a thing. Because of its various activities that are constantly being carried out on daily basis, killing and maiming innocent people, especially targeting Christians in the North, the group has been named a terrorist group.\textsuperscript{410} The Christian Association of Nigeria’s (CAN) president, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, made a statement that provoked nationwide reactions. According to Oritsejafor:

We have hitherto exercised restraint in our public statements on these matters. However, we cannot continue to do so indefinitely, and are determined that in the year 2012, if these unprovoked attacks continue, and Christians remain unprotected by the security agencies, then we will have no choice but to defend our lives and property and take our own steps to ensure our safety and security.\textsuperscript{411}

The statement credited to Oritsejafor was not unilaterally written and signed by him alone; the reporting newspaper said that the statement was jointly signed by notable Pentecostal Charismatic leaders such as CAN president, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor; General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor E.A. Adeboye; Bishop Mike Okonkwo of The Redeemed Evangelical Mission; Bishop David Oyèdépò of Winners Chapel; Rev. Felix Omobude, Evangelist Uma Ukpai, Rev.(Mrs.) Mercy Ezekiel and Pastor Wale Adéfarasín.\textsuperscript{412}

Unfortunately, only Ayò Oritsejafor is bearing the brunt of the blame. A young unidentified

\textsuperscript{408} Adeboye, ‘Pentecostal Challenges in Africa’, 153-154
\textsuperscript{409} Nicknamed Boko Haram, a phrase in the local Hausa language meaning, "Western education is forbidden"\textsuperscript{410} Boko Haram has been named a terror organization by the United States State Department, a move that will have legal and financial repercussions for its members abroad as well as its affiliates in the United States. See Nigerian Newspapers of November 13, 2013; most especially see BBC news online; www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24922833
\textsuperscript{411} See Vanguard Newspaper December 28, 2011.
\textsuperscript{412} See Nigerian Vanguard Newspaper December 28, 2011
Muslim reacted by saying, “You are not God, why behaving like this?” Another Christian immediately responded to the criticism from the young Muslim by saying:

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God. So why are we thinking of fighting back the evil with same carnal weapon? We can never win such a battle. Because Christ our Lord, who is the Lord of host, will not be there with us in this kind of battle. He is a God of love, righteous and holy. We should rather seek for His voice, than giving our self to the pressure of the evil acts…

It is clear that Pentecostal Charismatic groups would continue to experience either positive or negative reactions even in many years to come, if their style of evangelism remains unchanged. The next section will examine how Mission Christianity came to Ilé-Ifè, what challenges it met and how it continued to survive in the midst of myriad Òrisà pantheons that inhabit the city. It will also look at how the Pentecostal Charismatic groups have been able to deal with those challenges faced by the Mission churches.

The Beginning of Mission Christianity in Ilé-Ifè

Christianity came to Ilé-Ifè, the sacred City of the Yorùbás, in an indirect way, because the City itself was not one of the first stops for missionaries to Nigeria. Missionaries made contacts with other large cities such as Lagos, Abéòkúta, Badagry and Benin when they first arrived in Nigeria. Christianity came to Ile-Ife directly from neighboring Ondo town.413 Adélówò claims that “Although Chief M.A. Fábùnmi, the Òdolé Atóbase of Ile-Ife, talks about the impact of Christianity in Ile-Ifè in sixteenth century, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the Christian religion became firmly established.”414 He even believes that an attempt made

---

414 Adélówò, Islam and Christianity, 337
in 1853 by David Hinderer of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) in Ìbàdàn to evangelize Ilé-Ife proved futile for lack of evangelists.

The Anglican Diocese website claims that Christianity came to Ifè in three phases. The first phase began in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Oba of Benin embraced Christianity brought by the Capuchin Monks (of the Roman Catholic Church). He accompanied the Portuguese traders to Benin, and ordered some of the priests to be sent to Ile-Ife, his ancestral home, to introduce the new religion to the Oòni of Ifè. The Oòni accepted the religion and was baptized as "Thomas John Oòni." The religion thrived so much that a large number of people in the town became Christians and a big church was built at Òkè-Ìlèrì. The traditional priests, who were enraged at finding their religious practices seriously threatened, started to plot against the new religion.

Soon after the Oòni’s death, Ifè people renounced Christianity because it did not help them in their divination. Many early Christians were slain and others fled the town. The Church was pulled down and, on the spot where the church building stood, the people took a solemn vow never again to embrace Christianity. The place was named "Ôkè-Ìlèrì" [which means Hill of Boasting (which can be rendered “hill of rebellion”)] since then. The location in Ìlòdè Quarters where the first meeting for the revolt was held has since then been called "Igbó Ìtàpá,” i.e. the place where the resolution to kick (against Christianity) was taken. Since then, no news of Christianity was heard anywhere in Yorùbáland or elsewhere in Nigeria until Christianity was again brought through Badagry to Abeokuta by Thomas Birch Freeman of the Methodist Mission and Henry Townsend of the Anglican Mission (The Church Missionary Society) in December 1842. It is not very clear where the Ifè Anglican Diocese got its information from, for both Laitin and Adéjówò never referred to this historical account at all. E.A. Àyândélé only makes mention
of the opposition of the then Oòni of Ifè (who was not mentioned by name) to the establishment of the Christian mission station in Modákéké and Ilé-Ifè in 1900. This led to the humiliation of the local catechist Mr. Káyòdé from Modákéké. The second and third phases correspond to Laitin’s and Adélówò’s accounts of the very beginning of Christianity in Ile-Ifè.

In the second phase, especially in 1859, Christianity was re-introduced to Ile-Ifè for the second time by Rev. David Hinderer who was the missionary and a great Ifè man from Òkè Èsó named Lábosíndé who was then resident at Ìbádàn. Having invited some evangelists from Sierra Leone, Rev. David Hinderer transferred some missionaries whom he had recruited from England and had settled in Sierra Leone, Henry Thomas to Ile-Ifè, T. Williams to Modákéké and three others to Òsogbo, Ìwó and Ilésà. Lábosíndé worked seriously and built a Church at Làgèrè, but the members were later driven away by non-Christians and the church building was pulled down. The site of the church is where John Holt and Sons Limited initially stood and the place has recently been taken over by the Ifè Central Local Government, and used as a rented shopping complex. In the Ifè Anglican Diocese’s account of the third phase, which is interestingly very similar to Laitin’s and Adélówò’s accounts of the continued challenge of Christianity in Ifè, the church seemed to have taken root in 1898.

That year John Adélàjà, a descendant of Ifè (whose mother was an Ifè woman and his father a native of Ìjèbú-Ôde), who paid frequent visits from Ìjèbú-ode to Ile-Ifè in connection

---


416 The heathens here referred to the Òrìsà worshippers who were very actively involved in their many Òrìsà worships. At this time, it was not yet clear whether or not Christianity would survive.

417 The CMS church experienced some setbacks at its initial stage due to the cold reception with which it was received by the then Oòni Adélékàn Olúbùse 1 and the Òrìsà worshippers. In addition to that there was the problem of Ifè and Modákéké intercommunal crisis during Oòni Adélékàn Olúbùse’s reign.

with his rubber trade, preached Christianity at Oke-Èsó in the house of one Adéetù with whom he always stayed. Before the end of that year, an educated man and musician, Daniel Láwànì Àmódù Ológbénlá, came from Òkèigbó to join him in holding divine services every Sunday in the house of Chief Efúnlúyì Onífé-Àrán. Early in 1899, the congregation made up of 20 Ifès and 120 Modákékés invited Bishop Charles Philips from Ondó to visit them and this he did.

Both Laitin’s and Adélówò’s accounts show that it was hardly long that Phillips visited them when they were visited again by Rev. R.S. Oyèèbòdé from Ilésà, (4th March, 1899), Rev. E.M. Lijádu from Ondó, Rev. T. Harding from Èbàdàn and Mr. Àtândáolú from Ilésà, who was ordained soon after. At the beginning of May 1899, and in response to the congregation’s request, Bishop Charles Philips transferred a Schoolmaster/Catechist, Mr. E.A. Káyòdè, to them. He arrived on 23rd May, 1899, and took up residence in Adélàjà’s house at Ijúgbè. 419 The new Christian community approached Oba Adélékàn Olúbùse I, the Oòni of Ifè, for a piece of land at Ìtakogun to build a church in the heart of Ifè City. This was rejected on the grounds that Òràmfè would not allow it and that it was only in Modákéké and thereabouts that such strange practices could be tolerated. 420 He then sent Chief Omísore, the Yégbáta, to instruct Ògúnsínà the Baálè of Modákéké to allocate a piece of land at Ìyékéré. The land was cleared immediately and Bishop Phillips dedicated it.

Among participants in and witnesses to the above were Jacob Òpánúsì (later Bàbá Egbé of the African Church), Daniel Adédèjì (later of C.M.S. Ayétòrò), Isaac Ògúntólá and James Awósopé (later of C.M.S.), Ezekiel Adégbèsan (later of C.M.S., Modákéké), John Adélàjà, Samuel Òkí, Daniel Æmódù Láwànì Ológbénlá, Adéetù, Joseph Olóòpádé (then the Asáájú), Àjá,

419 All the above named people belonged to the CMS, which happened to be the first church to be planted in Ilé-Ifè at this period.
420 Laitin, Hegemony and Culture, 54
Elúítàn, Adéróba, Ôgúntókè, Joseph Ôgúnsolá, and the following from Modákéké: Abraham Olátúnjí, Daniel Ìjàdù, Ôgúndìran, Odéwálé, and Johnson Oyinadé. The first church, measuring 25 ft by 15 ft, was built, followed by the building close to the church of a small mission house for the catechist. In this small Church, on 18th February 1900, Bishop Phillips first baptized four men and three women, namely: Samuel Adéyefá (father of late Rev. S.A. Adéyefá), Jacob Akínbò, David Fóndèyí, Joseph Olóòpádé, Comfort Òté, Jane Májèkógbé and Maria Dàda. On 21st April, 1900, Rev. R.S. Oyèébòdé baptized two adults and two infants.

Laitin claims that “Ifè Christianity was not strongly associated with Victorian social norms⁴²¹, yet, the practical religion of Ifè’s converted did entail a large dose of organizational hierarchy.” He said this because Mr. Káyòdé and other members of the congregation had to communicate frequently with the outside higher authorities, and they were judged by bureaucratically set standards. Káyòdé was said to be a novice (I presume with regard to the Anglican Church faith) like many Africans, hence he had to write an essay on his views on polygyny before he could be ordained. The church took this position to ensure that African clergy took an anti-polygamous position because Reverend Adéjùmò was accused of promoting polygamy and traditional healing. He had a charismatic gift, and used it to grow the newly formed church, yet he was said to have engaged in irregular activities that contradicted Church doctrine, such as marrying many wives and using traditional healing methods to treat his sick members. As a result of this, Adéjùmò was never made a bishop. The Anglican churches in Ifè at present cannot be less than twenty-five in number. The Ifè Anglican Diocese’s and Laitin’s

---

⁴²¹ Victorian social norms also referred to as Victorian morality can be described as any set of values that espouse sexual restraint, low tolerance of crime and a strict social code of conduct. They were norms that were spread across the world at the time when England was a great empire and during the reign of Queen Victoria. See David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, 55
account of Christianity concentrate on the planting of Anglican (C.M.S.) church in Ile-Ife.

Adélowò goes further to show how other denominational churches came to be planted in Ife.

The establishment of the Baptist church in Ile-Ife is associated with one Daniel Adérenlé Obasá, a native of Ife from Ìläré compound who lived and worked in Ìbàdàn. He came to Ife in 1912 to start the Baptist Church. The Baptist community in Ile-Ife first began in the house of Afolábí Ògúnkómi; a space which was used as the church space before a permanent center for church activities was secured. A permanent church building was erected in the same community and the first teacher and pastor of the church was Mr. Òkè, who was from the Ìjébú area. He served the church between 1912 and 1915. He was succeeded by Mr. Àgbéníyì, from Ìjésà who was himself succeeded in 1919 by Mr. James Tólá. This church continued to grow by leaps and bounds and eventually gave rise to many other Baptist churches in Ife and its environs.

The Catholic ministry was formally introduced into Ile-Ife in 1918, with the first converts worshipping in the house of Johnson Láyadé in Òrúntó compound. The church began to witness growth, and had to contact their mission in Òsogbo for a priest. Rev. Father Louis Friess was then sent and he, together with ten members of the church, went to Ooni Ajagun Adémilúyì to make a request for a piece of land for the construction of a church building. Other denominational churches began to spring up in Ile-Ife, such as the Salvation Army which started in 1924; the Methodist church of Nigeria began its operation in Ile-Ife on Sunday, June 10, 1951. All these Mission churches and the Salvation Army opened up opportunity for further evangelical efforts and for more denominational churches to be planted in Ile-Ife. In particular, Aláàdúrà churches or African Independent Churches are a force to be reckoned with in Ile-Ife today.
The Emergence of African Independent Churches

At the initial stage after the first church (C.M.S.) was built, the ruling Oòni at the time hesitated in allocating another portion of land for the building of the church, but he eventually changed his mind. The place the king allocated for the building of the first church was at Ìyékéré; but because an intercommunal war broke out between Ifè and Modákéké in the years 1900-1904, some of the Ifè worshippers left the Ìyékéré church and some even abandoned the Christian faith altogether. The five Chiefs under the Baálè of Modákéké, who were richer than the Baálè, had refused to be subservient to the Oòni Olúbùse. Cases of Modákéké men taking Ifè men as hostages were also frequent.

This development adversely affected the Church at Ìyékéré. In September 1904, the Oòni Adélékàn Olúbùse (the same Oòni who embraced Christianity and was baptized John) summoned nine Ifè elders of Ìyékéré Church to his palace where, with kolanut touching their heads, he solemnly forbade them from entertaining Christianity thenceforth, since they were not born under the auspices of “the worthless paper leaves” bound together and called “Bible.” He urged them to return to the traditional gods of their fathers. The men left the palace silently and straight-away proceeded to inform Mr. E.A. Káyòdé of the incident. Mr. E.A.Kayode reacted in such a derisive manner that the elders angrily departed from him and returned to the palace where they told the Oòni that much as they loathed returning to “ido1 worship”, they were prepared to abandon worship at the Ìyékéré Church if only the Oòni would give them an alternative site for building another church.

The Oòni was so pleased with their resentment towards the Ìyékéré Church that, not only did he gladly grant the site at Ìtakogun which had earlier been denied them, but he also promised to embrace Christianity. This solution would have put an end to the matter but for the sermon
preached on Sunday by Mr. E.A. Káyòdé based on the text John 6:67 “will ye also go away?” which further enraged the church elders, whose hearts were already wounded. As if this was not enough, Mr. Káyòdé, on the following Monday, wrote letters to the elders telling them to hold fast to their idol worship. The men thereupon sent Mr. J.S. Adéjùmò, the school master, to bear their letter of grievances to the Bishop at Ondó. The Bishop counseled patience on the part of the elders, promising to come to Ife to investigate the matter. But before the Bishop came, the people started to build the church house at Ìtakogun.

When at last the Bishop came, he and the elders went to the palace to find out about what happened but the Oòni did not attend to them. The Bishop then led all concerned to Ìyékéré where after hearing the case, he reprimanded Mr. E.A. Káyòdé for his action, his impatience and his reprehensible sermon. The elders were happy at the Bishop’s judicious judgment, accepted his ruling that on Sundays, morning services be held at Ìyékéré and evening services at Ìtakogun. When the Ìtakogun Church was completed, Mr. E.A. Káyòdé refused bluntly to have anything to do with that church, which he considered was built as an act of revolt against him. This made the leaders at Ìtakogun resolve to keep their church separate from the CMS churches as an African Church which it has continued to be till today.

This chapter has gone into the details of how the first African Independent Church (A.I.C.) started in Ile-Ife to show that there are variations in the ways the Independent Churches began especially in Nigeria. This necessitates that the history of this group must be properly contextualized within their respective historical setting instead of making a hasty generalization that there is one singular factor responsible for the evolution of this group of churches. Deidre H. Crumbley’s observation with respect to Africa Independent Church is apt in this regard. She claims that:
Among the Yorùbá of Nigeria, this religious reformulation occurred in two waves of church independency, much as it did among African Americans in the United States. The first represented a primarily institutional secession from missionizing churches of the dominant group; the second, a cultural secession from their symbolic and ritual content.\textsuperscript{422}

What was responsible for schism in this case was quite different from what happened during especially the time when Christ Apostolic Church started in Nigeria in the late 1930s.

Another very interesting African Independent Church in Ilé-Ifè, which adopted a syncretized form of worship, is the Church of Ethiopia, which is completely different from Ethiopianism, an umbrella term used to describe many types of churches in Africa that have demonstrated freedom and independence from missionary churches. The term Ethiopian is used because Ethiopia was not colonized by the Europeans. This church in Ifè is referred to as Ìjo Adúláwò (Church of the black-skinned people). It was established on October 1, 1919, with its headquarters at the Òkèjan, Mòrè area of Ilé-Ifè. The church combines a multiplicity of features taken from various Christian denominations; the service is conducted on Sunday like any other established churches, some members of the church act in their capacity as prophets and sees visions. Some are well skilled in traditional medicine and magic. In the church, Àse (Let it be sanctioned) is used as a response to prayers as opposed to Amen that is common in all Mission and Aláàdúrà churches.

Two other Aláàdúrà churches: The Apostolic Church (TAC) and Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) are also very important to our understanding of gender relations in the church, especially Christ Apostolic Church in Ile Ife. Here, women were initially very visible and active in church activities; paradoxically, though, men still control the religious hierarchy, and have the highest

\textsuperscript{422} Deidre H. Crumbley, \textit{Spirit, Structure, and Flesh: Gendered Experiences in African Instituted Churches among the Yorùbá of Nigeria.} (University of Wisconsin Press. 2008), 126
The beginning of CAC in Ìfè is credited to the evangelistic activity of Mrs. Marian Òní, also a native of Ìfè and a former evangelist in the Faith Tabernacle Church in Lagos. After she had spent some years in Lagos, she moved to Ìfè to settle down. Attracted by the miracles performed by Prophet Ayò Babalolá in Ìlésà, she took some people, including Mr. Josiah Adémákinwá, to Ìlésà to witness what was described as “the wonderful work of God” done through prophet Ayò Babalolá.

Mr. Adémákinwá was attracted to the Faith Tabernacle church because of the miracles he saw; he eventually convinced his wife and both left C.M.S. not only to join Faith Tabernacle church but also actually to attend their seminary in Lagos. Upon completion of their seminary courses, they returned to Ìfè to join Mrs. Òní in a house which eventually became CAC, with its first church branch located in Arùbûdî on a plot of land purchased by Mrs. Òní. In spite of the fact that it was Mrs. Òní who started a group that eventually gave birth to the first CAC in Ìfè, the highest position she could attain in the church she founded was the position of an evangelist; men took over the position of pastors and, hence, were the key leaders of the church.

Challenges Faced by Pentecostal Charismatic Churches

In Ìle-Ìfè today, there are many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches whose activities began about three decades ago, with their various challenges. How have these new churches coped with the challenges posed by the Òrìsà worshippers on the one hand and on the other, the challenges of new converts from Òrìsà religions to Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity? How have those leaders in these groups addressed those problems? Only some of the activities of these churches will be highlighted here and the next chapter will provide more information on one of them—Christ Way Church—a Pentecostal denomination that this dissertation focuses on.

423 Laitin, Hegemony and Culture, 71
Meanwhile, it is very interesting to note that none of the scholars, who have written on Ilé-Iṣẹ sacred and secular life, devote any serious attention to the impact of Pentecostal Charismatic churches in this city of 201 gods. Adélowò and Laitin historicize Christianity in Ilé-Iṣẹ and how it had reshaped Yorùbá religious ways of thinking to some extent.

Olúpònà iconizes Olorí Morísádé Síjúwädé with respect to her role in the building of a chapel and the consequent evangelical activities in the traditional palace, and briefly discussed the activity of evangelical churches in the conclusion of his book. No mention was made by Laitin and Adélowò of the activities of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in enshrining fundamental Christian principles in Ilé-Iṣẹ city. My assumption is that the omission lies in the fact that these scholars have either not fully appreciated the enormous change the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have initiated in Ilé Christian historiography or that they see Mission and Aláàdúrà churches to be more central to their analyses of Christianity in Ilé-Iṣẹ. Another important observation could be that they have chosen to focus on other groups, instead of Pentecostal groups in the town of Ilé-Iṣẹ.

It has been clear for some time now that, over the last fifty years, the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches have been part of Ife and Nigerian Christianity, and their role cannot be ignored in a study of religious developments in the city or even in Nigeria at large. Ironically the University of Ife (now Obáfemi Awólówò University, Ilé-Iṣẹ), that was founded specifically as a secular institution in 1962 was appropriated by the Pentecostal Charismatic movements in Ilé-Iṣẹ and some other cities like Ìbádàn, Lagos and Zaria. Most of the open spaces such as Sport complex, Biological garden and even Zoological garden have not only been annexed, but classrooms have also been hijacked for the purpose of studying the Bible and having fellowship.
Pentecostal Charismatic influence is enormous at the university in Ifè; it first penetrated into the University of Ifè (now Obáfemi Awólówò University) before it began to make its impact felt in the midst of the mission churches in the city. The Pentecostal Charismatic church that was first planted in Ilé-Ifè is perhaps Gospel Faith Mission International, which began in the late 1970s, followed by the Assembly of God, Salem Gospel Church, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Four Square Gospel Church, Christ Way Church and a host of others. I am going to expand on the importance of Obáfemi Awólówò University and the Teaching Hospital to the founding of Christ Way Church in particular in the next chapter.

At the initial stage, Pentecostalism did not interest a host of students and their teachers in the University of Ifè because of many people in this institution who belonged to mission churches, and because Aláàdúrà movements saw a strange behavior in the lives of the so-called ‘born-again,’ especially with regards to the issue of speaking in tongues at the time. They were not only accused of this, but also because of their earlier rigid emphasis on ‘holiness’ doctrine, which stressed a retreatist and anti-materialist ethic, they seemed to be very exclusivist in their way of life.\(^{424}\) As one observer puts it:

> The Holy Spirit is known in Anglican theology as a very cultured Godhead who is physically represented by a gentle dove. But conversely, those supposedly under the influence of the Pentecostal Spirit do put up strange and irrational behaviours. Consequently, some can swear convincingly that it was not the Spirit of God in action.\(^{425}\)

This is one among many reactions that greeted the Pentecostal Charismatic experience among the students in the University of Ifè. Many other denominations such as Baptist, Methodist and


African Churches were very impatient with what one of the Baptist leaders in one local assembly called, ‘Youthful Exuberance.’ Many youths were either forced to leave the Roman Catholic Church in Ilé-Ifè just like elsewhere in Nigeria, especially those youths that tagged themselves ‘Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement (CCRM).’ What prompted this negative reaction towards Pentecostalism can be traced to the irritating ways of life and methods of worship by many of the Pentecostal Charismatic members, especially around the 1970s when the phenomenon first manifested in the University of Ife until the very late 1980s.

People did not like their modes of worship. In worship, they were not only hilarious but were also noisy; they prayed extempore and very loudly too, instead of the systematic and quiet mode of praying from the Book of Common Prayer that characterized churches such as Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist denominations. Annoyingly too, their repetitive, ritualistic shout of Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!, was not only too boring but also highly irritating to the members in the mission churches who had not had such experience. As if that was not enough, one of the ordained clergymen Professor Simeon Onibere (an Archdeacon at the time) who belonged to the Evangelical Fellowship of Anglican Communion (EFAC) in Ilé-Ifè diocese was said to have spoken openly against some important members of the Anglican Church who were believed to belong to the secret cult like Ògbóni Fraternity and Freemasons. In view of that, the Anglican Authority in Nigeria withdrew his pastoral license for “fanning incendiary passion in the Anglican Church… and preaching heretical teachings.”

EFAC introduced the doctrine of restitution into Christianity. As already said above, the very first ordained clergy man in Ilé-Ifè, Adéjúmọ was said to be not only polygamous but also an herbalist. Going back to the history of Christianity in Nigeria, one of the reasons given for the

---

426 See African Guardian July 5, 1993; Ruth Marshall, ‘‘God is not a Democrat’, 245
The founding of Independent churches was the polygamous practices that the missionary could not condone within the church. The Pentecostals did not only denounce polygamous practices in the church, they prescribed that those who were already involved in the practice should divorce other ‘strange women’ and retain the first wife. This is a Pentecostal new doctrinal emphasis being practiced especially in Deeper Life and Redeemed Christian Church of God till today. Even though the Missionary churches have never accepted the polygamous marriage, there is a new dimension that the Pentecostal Charismatic group has added. This doctrine is called ‘Restitution.’ To restitute is to return what has been unlawfully been taken from someone or somewhere. The Pentecostal teaches that if even a person is born again, she or he still needs to return back what she or he had taken illegally before she or he can make it to heaven in the end.  

Prospect of the Pentecostal Charismatics

In spite of the initial challenges faced by Pentecostalism in Ifè, how can we possibly explain its rapid expansion from the mid-1980s until the very present time? There are some reasons based on my own participation and observation. I will be making reference to concrete examples where it is necessary to do so. The first reason is that many joined Pentecostalism for utilitarian reasons; many of these converts practiced communitarianism. Well-to-do members began to take care of those who were less-privileged in their midst and especially those youths who were already being thrown out of their various families and the Mission Churches to which they initially belonged. Members were provided with "material benefits such as employment  

---

427 Deeper Life Bible Church of Pastor W.F. Kumuyi and RCCG of Pastor E.A. Adébóyè are more insistent on this doctrine of restitution than many other Pentecostal Charismatic churches. See Deeper Life Bible Church's website especially no. 6 of what we believe. [http://www.dclm.org/content/what-we-believe](http://www.dclm.org/content/what-we-believe) and RCCG website, look at What we believe at [http://rccg.org/index.php/about-us-2/our-beliefs/](http://rccg.org/index.php/about-us-2/our-beliefs/)
opportunities, exchanges of goods and services, and even access to officialdom without the usual costly red tape and inevitable ‘dash.’” 428 So, it was possible for them to sing:

*He has done it for me; he has done it for me*  
*What my father cannot do; Jesus has done it for me;*  
*What my mother cannot do; Jesus has done it for me.*

Another one goes like this:

*Come and see ooh; Come and see*  
*Come and see what the Lord has done*  
*Come and see what the Lord has done* 429

The truth is that Jesus might not have done it for these people in the physical sense of the word, but that Jesus’ community has done it on behalf of Jesus.

The second reason is that many youths who belong to ‘Born Again’ group were not only well-behaved morally speaking, they were actually doing very well academically. Many Nigerian universities are notorious for occultic members who continued to disrupt the peace of these universities. The Pentecostal Charismatic members were and continue to be law-abiding students. Hence, they not only become a reference point, but their admirers began to imitate their good behaviours too. The third reason is that Pentecostal Charismatic praise worship, with the exception of the Deeper Life, has been very appealing and fascinatingly interesting. Many youths who love music and like to dance were attracted to the Pentecostal churches because of their modern musical instruments. According to Kalu:

They realized the impact of music and dance as two powerful tools for winning souls and for attracting the masses, especially women and young people. They were aware of the psychological effect of music and dance in worship, in accessing the supernatural world, and in effecting conversion and healing. But

---

428 Marshall-Fratani, “Mediating Global and the Local”, 85   
429 These songs have been in vogue since early eighties, however recently many gospel artistes are adapting them into their albums. A good example to cite is Agatha Moses’s popular album titled “He has done it for me.” And “come and see oo.” These two songs can be listened to on the YouTube.  
they feared the negative dimensions, the idolatry embedded in the sources and goals of indigenous music and dance and in popular culture.\[430\]

Initially some Pentecostals such as Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) and Gospel Faith Mission Church (GFMC) feared the negative impacts of music and dance as rightly argued by Kalu, but they no longer do. For example, music can be said to contribute to the influx of many youths into churches such as Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Winners’ Chapel, and Christ Way Church, to mention just a few of them in recent times. At the University of Ile-Ife Sports’ center complex at night, the music is always very appealing and interesting; a practice which began in the late 1980s and continues today. The same music and dance culture has become part of the older Mission Churches’ liturgical practices; because those mission churches have realized that they are losing their youths to Pentecostal Churches.

The fourth and crucial reason to the understanding of the spirit of the time, is that many youths are leaving the Mission Churches in their large numbers for the Pentecostal Charismatic churches, because they claim that they were not getting fulfillment and that they were not being allowed to use their God-given ‘anointing’. The former Baptist church I was attending had this experience in 1991. As a result of a doctrinal controversy bothering on the issue of speaking in tongues, more than one hundred and fifty students who had been coming to the local Baptist church every Sunday, withdrew their memberships in June, 1991.\[431\] The same defection took place in the Anglican and Methodist Churches during that same period. Anglican churches in Ile-Ife, in particular, actually felt this impact more than any other Mission churches.

\[430\] Kalu, “Holy Praiseco”, 24
\[431\] Before this incidence, the Baptist Student Fellowship was formed in the late 1960s with the aim of servicing and helping the local Baptist churches in Ile-Ife. Their purpose was to help teach Sunday school and Sunbeam Classes. They were also expected to provide leadership roles for the students in High Schools and also teach them during summer. The students withdrew their memberships and their services because of the issue bothering on whether speaking in tongues are a necessary experience to have or not.
The reason is that the Evangelical Fellowship of Anglican Communion (EFAC) arm of the Church was seen as a threat to the church’s doctrinal policy, as we can see in the case of Simeon Onibere above. Hence, the leadership of the church and the Bishop at the time, helped many members, especially youths and women, to leave the Anglican Church either to start their own personal churches or join existing Pentecostal Charismatic churches. Many of the key leaders in Christ Way Church today are from Anglican churches, while others are from the Baptist, Methodist and Christ Apostolic Churches. In the RCCG, Winners’ Chapel and a host of other churches that have been founded in Ilé-Ifè between early 1990s and 2000, a majority are from Mission Churches and few others from Cherubim and Seraphim and Celestial Church of Christ.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced and analyzed the history of Christianity, its growth and expansion in Nigeria on the one hand, and on the other, the beginning of Christianity in Ilé-Ifè. Christianity in Nigeria at large and in Ife in particular has advanced cross-cultural fusion and has largely contributed to the culture of modernity in the city. The Pentecostal Charismatic churches in particular, has radically redefined Christian culture in Ilé-Ifè so much that many highly placed people including the Ooni, the king of the town, are claiming to be born again. The key priests of the Olójó festival, one of the foci of dissertation, also belong to Christian denominations. Olúpònà claimed that one of the Ife priests greeted him sometime when he went on his normal research with a loud Praise the Lord! The evidence can also be seen in the way a Charismatic

---

432 Both Pastors Kehinde Orímọgúnjẹ and M. Eladire founded their separate Pentecostal churches after the Anglican Bishop had sent them packing from the church. Because of what the Bishop considered un-Anglican, the many Pentecostal practices that were introduced to the church.
Chapel was allowed to be built within the palace of an Òrìsà sacred city in Oòni Sijúwadé Olúbúse II’s time.

While it is true that there are still many people who are merely professing to be Christians, who have not left their traditional Yorùbá worship of Òrìsà, yet, it is true that Christian traditions have radically changed the way many of these traditional Òrìsà worshippers and their priests perceive reality. While one can argue, that modernity has also contributed to the making of Ilé-Ifè, Christianity, especially Pentecostal Christianity, has nonetheless contributed immensely to the social, economic and religious climate of the town. Many Òrìsàs have already gone into extinction.433 The question that can be raised is, if the Pentecostal Charismatic groups have done so much to Christianize Ilé-Ifè, why are there still vestiges of important Òrìsàs such as Olójó (Ògún), Edì and Obalufon and so on? The next chapter will address this question when comparing and contrasting the worship of Olójó and Christ Way denominational practices.

Chapter 3

Comparative Analysis of Ògún worshippers and Christ Way Church International in Ilé-Ifè

The first section of this chapter focuses on the mythic story of Ògún and the controversies surrounding his person and his activities. The choice of Ògún is as a result of the popularity his ritual festival is enjoying in Ilé-Ifè’s cultic practices. It is also the case that Ògún is an Òrìsà worshipped almost throughout the Yorùbá society because of his relevance to the mythic, economic, political, and religious life of the Yorùbá people. I will analyze Ògún’s myth to narrate a comprehensive account of the beginnings and history of the Olójó festival, its commemoration in Ilé-Ifè and how that festival has become more popular than other Òrìsà festivals. One gets the importance of this festival if we consider that it is now regarded as the sacred kingship ritual by some scholars.\textsuperscript{434} The chapter discusses my findings from field work and I also provide a hermeneutic of Olójó, its performance, and the cultural expressions involved in memorializing it.

In the second section, I trace the history of Christ Way Church (Ministries Int.) and examine what has influenced its growth and development. In order to do this, I will consider its programmes, diversities, and its pattern of interactions within the Pentecostal denominations and with other Christian denominations and how that has affected the (re) evangelization of Ilé-Ifè. I will also briefly explore in a comparative manner the symbolic ways by which the Ògún (one of the traditional Yorùbá principal deities) and Christ Way Church Int. are organized and different from each other. Such an exploration is important because it could provide clues to how religious groups negotiate social boundaries in a given society, especially when we are dealing with

\textsuperscript{434} Jacob Olúpònà interprets the Olójó festival as a sacred kingship ritual in his analysis. See his book, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 111-143.
people who have and express different religious ideologies. Therefore, in the final part of this chapter, I shall employ Annette Weiner to consider the politics of religious identity and how it affects the maintenance, contestation, and transformation of boundaries.

*Myth and Ritual of Olójó Festival of Ògún*[^435]

In chapter one, I examined the history of Ilé-Ifè as an important factor in the understanding of the whole Yorùbá society. In that chapter, I drew from mythic and oral accounts used by social scientists and scholars of religion to reconstruct the accounts of the settlement of Ifè city. In this chapter I analyze the mythic accounts and oral histories collected during field research to discuss how the celebration of Olójó festival began. Scholars have written extensively about the deity Ògún and his activities in different Yorùbá communities.[^436] William Bascom provided a broad and expansive landscape in his study and for that reason was not able to devote much attention to specific divinities. Later scholars have been able to examine the record in different divinities and expanded our knowledge of the system. For example, the writings of Wole Soyinka have done so, Sandra Barnes has engaged in a detailed study of the Ògún tradition in Africa and the African Diaspora, Mei Mei and other scholars have studied the deity Òsun in Nigeria and in the African Diaspora. What Bascom did was to treat briefly the

[^435]: I have recently written on Olójó festival in an article titled: Religious Experience, Cultural Expressions: Traditions and Politics in the Making of Olójó Festival in Ilé-Ifè, Nigeria. The article has been accepted to be included in an edited book tentatively titled: *Gendering African Social Spaces: Women, Power, and Cultural Expressions* by Shadrack Nasong’o. What I intend to do here is to adapt the article and add more important details where necessary using Jacob Olúpónà’s detailed study to corroborate my ethnographic field research and or expand our understanding of this all-important traditional Yorùbá religious festival. See Jacob K. Olúpónà, *City of 201 Gods*, 2011.

Òrisàs in Ilé-Ifè, especially Ògún and Olójó festival. Ògún is an important Yorùbá deity and there is no Yorùbá sub-ethnic community where his worship is not observed. In Ilé-Ifè, Ògún’s annual worship is very elaborate and is becoming a global annual festival just like Òsun Òsogbo and Ifá.

Even though scholars have studied the symbolic and sacred significance of the annual Olójó festival in Ilé-Ifè, its social and political significance has not been given adequate scholarly attention. It is also true that no ritual festival in Ilé-Ifè today attracts so much attention of the inhabitants. Scholars have also ignored its possible cross-cultural significance at the global level as Òsun festival of Òsogbo and perhaps the Ifá religion in Ilé-Ifè itself, which have attracted interdisciplinary research. One can argue that, unlike Ifá and Òsun Òsogbo, Olójó remains a traditional ritual practice that attracts the attention of only large number of local inhabitants of Ilé-Ifè; and only a few initiates come from overseas (North America and the Caribbean). While that might be the case, Olójó festival is unique because of its interesting mythological background which calls for new investigation today.

The festival has attracted considerable participants and many spectators, and it is perhaps the only annual ritual festival during which the Oòni (the king of Ifè) appears to the inhabitants.

---

438 Both Òsun Òsogbo and Ifá festivals have been recognized by the UNESCO due to the fact that many participants from North America and South America such as Cuba and Brazil and a host of African countries have embraced these two traditional Yorùbá festivals. See Wàndé Abímbólá, “Ifá: A West African Cosmological System”, in Blakely, Thomas D, Walter A. van Beek and Dennis L. Thomson (eds.): *Religion in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), 101-116; Joseph Murphy and Mei Mei Sanford (eds.), *Òsun Across the Waters: A Yorùbá Goddess in Africa and Americas*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001.
of Ilé-Ifè as part of the yearly ritual drama to reenact the founding myth of the city,\textsuperscript{440} while performing his role as Oòduà reincarnate in the full gaze of the Ògún’s priests and the devotees. According to Eliade, myths provide exemplars of authentic life, precedents for action. For him, myths help people in ritually performing what the gods did in the beginning. He argues that rites always consist in repetition of an archetypal action performed \textit{illo tempore} (before “history” began) by ancestors or by gods, in which people try by means of hierophany, to give “being” to even the most ordinary and insignificant acts.\textsuperscript{441} Here in Ilé-Ifè, we see the same pattern of repetitive act; that of wearing of the Arè by the Oòni, which was said to have been worn by Odùduwà, the first Oòni.

In addition, the Olójó festival is very crucial to understanding the founding of Ifè city, and indeed of the entire Yorùbá society. Olúpònà argues that the Olójó festival is a spectacle, which “provides a significant point of entry for understanding the ancient Yorùbá myth, history, beliefs, and ceremonial symbols of Ilé-Ifè.”\textsuperscript{442} The Olójó festival seems to be going through a renaissance and attracting interdisciplinary research because it is an elaborate communal rite, whereas other rituals which used to be elaborate annual ritual festivals in Ilé-Ifè have already gone into extinction.\textsuperscript{443} Wándé Abúmbólá argues persuasively that the force of modernity espoused in the two global, missionising religions (Islam and Christianity) has dealt a devastating blow to the worship of Òrisàs, which led to many of them being abandoned.


\textsuperscript{441} Eliade, \textit{The Myths of Eternal Return}, 4-5

\textsuperscript{442} Olupona, \textit{City of 201 Gods}, 111.

\textsuperscript{443} During my interaction with Chief Omísakin, he described the Olójó festival as the most cherished annual celebration in Ilé-Ife, and also said there were about 201 festivals that were being celebrated in the entire Ilé-Ife on daily basis in a year. Chief Omísakin is the Obalúfè (the king of Ife), the highest chief of all the chiefs in Ilé-Ife next in rank to Oòni.
Omósádé Awólàlú thinks that, apart from Islam and Christianity, Western education and Western medical facilities have contributed to the factors militating against traditional Yorùbá religious beliefs. This argument can no longer hold, in view of the fact that many Yorùbá elites such as Wólé Sóyinká, Jacob Olúpònà, Wándé Abímbólá, Bádé Àjùwòn and others who have Western education are not only contributing immensely to the revival of the Òrìsàs traditions in Nigeria but all over the world. The Olójó festival is just like Òsun Òsogbo, which “celebrates wealth, fecundity, political power and the ethos of war.”

Just like one celebrates one’s cultural hero, the Olójó festival actualizes the ritual process through which Ifè people not only reenact a mythico-historical moment of the descent of Òrìsà into the world but also memorialize the Yorùbá deity of iron and war. In spite of the constant attempt made by both Islam and Christianity to purge the Yorùbá society of “idolatry”, “paganism” and the “evil” of the traditional past, the number of devotees and spectators of the Olójó festival continues to increase every year. The reason for this is that most members in churches such as Anglican (CMS), Baptist, Roman Catholic, Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) and indeed African churches see no evil in participating in the communal deity’s worship.

---


447 African church incorporated is the very first African Independent (Initiated) Churches who first seceded from St Paul’s church (CMS), Breadfruit, Lagos in 1901. See Omóyájowó, Makers of the Church, xv.
Indeed, a third of the chief priests of the residual Òrìsàs in Ilé-Ifè belong to these various churches. During my first visit with Chief Mathew Akínyemí, the Erédùmí of Ifè, in his personal house in November 12, 2011, he told me he attended (even though it was once in a while) First Baptist Church, Ìlàré, Ilé-Ifè, Osògún’s family attends Roman Catholic Church, and a host of other chief-priests belong to one church or the other. This action is regarded as syncretism. The Olójó festival has begun to attract many people from the two major religions (Islam and Christianity). Interestingly too, many political office holders are attending Olójó festival because of the relevance of Ifè and Oòni to the political discourse in Nigeria.

This is not surprising, though, for Yorùbá tradition, just like Islam, does not create any artificial bifurcation between religion and politics. Olúpònà’s account shows that, “within the ceremony, the people of Ilé-Ifè attempt to come to terms with social, political and cultural issues that are at the core of their existence as a culture: myth, history, war, violence, gender, power, kingship, spirituality, and medicine, as well as many gods and spirits in the sacred world.” In the past, Olójó festival used to be celebrated under the cover of the night and only the priests, the king (Oòni) and important chiefs of Ifè (that are men) were allowed to participate. Modernity has changed that. Olójó festival has come from its private place to the public sphere. The Yorùbá sacred king (Oòni) is at the center of the Olójó festival, but that does not keep out the importance of the other participants, due to the fact that the festival does not only memorialize Ògún, who once occupied the stool that the present Oòni now occupies, but also is a special time when order is restored back to the Ilé-Ifè cosmos through the sacrificial rites to Ògún.

---

448 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 111.
Myth of Ògún and its Relevance to the Founding of the Sacred City

One important thing that all the world and natural religions share in common is mythical story. The important feature of mythical story is that it calls up or reenacts the individual or communal religious experience of the sacred, and how human responses are generated through the telling of it. Bronislaw Malinowski thinks that “the function of myth is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, or more supernatural reality of initial events.”

From this perspective, myth, therefore, serves as an important vehicle by which experience is mediated either through ritual drama or symbolic actions. This chapter does not dwell on the controversies that have been generated over the years among some scholars as to whether myth comes before ritual or vice versa or that both usually operate together for now. The chapter considers instead the mythical story that makes Olójó festival an important annual religious festival in Ilé-Ifè from primordial time till today.

Myth of Ògún as the Inauguration of Olójó Festival

According to one of the Ifè myths, Olójó festival started with the third Oòni of Ifè, Ògún (the god of iron and war), and it is done by honoring Olódùmarè (Yorùbá Supreme Being), who is the Olójó (the owner of the day). The festival is commemorated in order to thank the ‘Supreme Being’ for his abundance over the entire Yorùbá nation and also to seek his blessing, peace, fruitfulness and longevity of the people. It also calls up the story of the historic journey of the principal divinities from the heavens to Ilé-Ifè. The annual festival of Olójó is, therefore, a reminiscence of those ancient days when Ògún and the Òrísàs arrived at Ilé-Ifè to establish the

---

first Yorùbá kingdom. Ògún’s myth is as varied as the myth of the Yorùbá kingdom. Not only does the idea of Ògún differ across the Yorùbá sub-ethnic groups, its myth of origin also differs from one context to another within those sub-ethnic traditions.

In Bólájí Ídòwú’s *Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief*, we are furnished with the information that Ògún was among the earliest Yorùbá divinities who were commissioned by Olódùmarè to occupy and govern the earth. He was a hunter; and before the earth was founded, he used to descend by a spider’s thread upon the primordial marshy waste for the purpose of hunting. This is the most popular Ifè myth. The myth says that many Òrìsà (principal divinities) descended from heaven unto Ilé-Ifè. The leader of these Òrìsà was said to be Ògún, although Òrìsà-Nlá was actually the arch-divinity. On the day the principal divinities headed for the earth, there was a thick bush, which Òrìsà-Nlá (the arch divinity) attempted to clear so as to create a way for the other divinities to be able to move easily. The cutlass held by Òrìsà-Nlá was very fragile because it was made of brass and, in the process of clearing the bush, the cutlass broke into two.

Ògún, who possessed the adequate implement to clear the bushy path, took up the task. Ògún, according to this Yoruba myth, held a cutlass in his hand and used it to clear the bushy path that led to the earth and then to Ilé-Ifè. In no time the divinities arrived on earth and eventually arrived in Ilé-Ifè. On arriving at Ilé-Ifè, Ògún was rewarded for his heroic task by offering him the only crown they brought from heaven. Hence, he became the Òsinmolè or

---

451 Ògún’s myth is as complex as that of the Yorùbá because of the lack of an eye-witness who can give an accurate account of what really transpired. What historians have relied upon in crafting Yorùbá history is to fall back on myth and oral source that one can say are not too reliable. One sees a similar pattern in the telling of the Bible story.

452 Ídòwú, *Olódùmarè*, 83-87

453 I received this information from the council of Emesè (the palace guards), chief Matthew Akinyemi (The Erédùmí) and Chief Osogungun at different times during my last ethnographic trip to Ilé-Ifè in October, 2012.

454 Ídòwú added that before Ògún undertook the task of clearing the bushy part, he first made other divinities (Òrìsàs) commit themselves to rewarding him, if he did the job very well. All the divinities agreed to Ògún’s
Ôsìn Imolè (Chief among the divinities). This is one of the reasons why he was regarded as the most indispensable of all the divinities. The popular Yoruba name for him is “Ọgúnlànà.”[Ọgún cleared the way]. Here Ọgún is regarded as the hero of all the Yoruba divinities. Because of his heroism, he was accorded a very special privilege to be the king of Ìlẹ-Ifẹ. By this token, the chief priests of Ọgún often regard him as the Ôsinmolè or the head of all Ôrìsàs (gods).⁴⁵⁵

Because it is believed by the Yorùbá that Ọgún is capable of providing prosperity for his devotees, he is called, Onilé Owó, Olónà Olà, Onilé kángunkàngun Ôde Ôrun [The owner of the house of money, the owner of the house of riches; the owner of innumerable houses in the heavens].

Another mythical account states that Ọgún was the first son of Odùduwà, the assumed progenitor of all the Yoruba people. This myth claims an earthly origin of Ọgún. He is said to be the son of Odùduwà, who was sent away from Mecca; wandering about, he eventually settled in Ìlẹ-Ifẹ. According to this myth, in Ìlẹ-Ifẹ, Odùduwà was blessed with many children, among who was Ọgún. Because of Ọgún’s war activities, his father Odùduwà was highly impressed with him. In appreciation, he sent Ọgún to Ìrè to go and rule. He ruled Ìrè and disappeared into the earth there. That is why he is called today as Ọgún-Onímè.⁴⁵⁶ Ọgún in this myth was a warrior and a blacksmith. His exploits as a warrior never allowed him to spend enough time at home. He was often in the battlefield. His son, Ọgúndáhùnsi, had to be brought up by his grandfather, Odùduwà, because his real father Ọgún never had time for domestic affairs. In this account collected from Onímè king by Smith, Ìrè town in Êkìtì was founded by Ọgúndáhùnsi, son of Ọgún, who himself was a son of Odùduwà at Ìrè and not at Ifẹ. On a return from a long war request. See Ïdòwú, (1990:84). The only crown referred to here, is the same Arè crown that can only be found in Ìlẹ-Ifẹ, the source of the Yorùbá race.

⁴⁵⁵ Idòwú, Olódùmarè, 84; Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 112
⁴⁵⁶ Awólálá, Yoruba Beliefs, 31-33
campaign, Ògún lost his temper with his son and killed him. Overwhelmed by remorse, he sank into the earth at the place in Ìrè where the shrine now stands. The Onírè claims descent from Ògún.\footnote{Smith, Kingdoms of the Yorùbá, 61.}

Another account linked Ògún to Ilésà, an important Yorùbá town where Ògún’s worship is very popular. According to T.M. Ilésanmí, Ògún is the Ìjèsà national god,\footnote{T.M. Ilésanmí, “Orin Ògún: War Songs.” Unpublished manuscript, 1982; Túndé Láwuyì, “Ògún: Diffusion across Boundaries and Identity Constructions” African Studies Review, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Sep., 1988), pp. 127-139, see especially page 131. Accessed: 06/08/2013 19:46.} as Sàngó is to the Òyó town. One can understand why Ògún should be regarded as Ìjèsà cultural hero. Ìjèsà people were once known for inciting war all over the Yorùbá kingdom. Ìjèsà people are still being praised as \textit{Ìjèsà omo Arógun yò} [Ìjèsà the children of people who took delight in war]. In essence, Ògún symbolizes the war interest of the people of Ìjèsà. Túndé Láwuyì agrees with Ilésanmí who says that, “every fabric of the society is involved in the rituals for a national hero\footnote{Láwuyì, Ògún: Diffusion across Boundaries, 134.} who also constantly reminded them that their nation was based on military exploits”.\footnote{In John Pemberton III and Fùnsó Afoláyan, \textit{Yorùbá Sacred Kingship}, 159-173 and Jacob K. Olúpònà \textit{Kingship, Religion, and Rituals}, 110-129. Ògún’s festival is a communitywide ritual ceremony in Ìlà Òràngún and Ondó towns. Even though, these two towns claim descent from Ìlé-Ifè, there is no trace that their celebration of Ògún has anything to do with Olójó in Ifè. In fact, in Ìlà, the Ògún worship is commemorated in June and in Ondó, it is commemorated in August, whereas in Ifè, the ritual festival of Ògún is in October. We can make a claim that due to the peripatetic war adventure of Ògún, he must have impacted these various towns during his lifetime. In Sakí as well, Ògún worship is very popular. Sakí people are called \textit{Omo Ògún o ro IKe, ògbède kò ro bábà} [Sakí, the children of Ògún who neither smith plastics nor their blacks mith cast brass].} What is very clear is that, everywhere Ògún’s festival is commemorated; symbols of war are usually present, thus signifying that Ògún is a quintessential war hero. He is the god of the hunt and of ironworking, patron deity of blacksmiths, warriors, and all who use metal in their occupations. Perhaps as a result of this, Robert Armstrong, proposes that “hunting, killing, and
the resultant disorder that killing brings are more likely foundations on which an Ògún concept, and later an Ògún deity, were constructed.\textsuperscript{461}

In another myth, it is Òrànmíyàn whose paternity was shared by both Odùduwà and Ògún who slept at different times with his (Òrànmíyàn) mother named Òlóló.\textsuperscript{462} Chief Matthew Akínyemí, the Erédùmí and the current chief priest of Òrànmíyàn, revealed that Òrànmíyàn is the outcome of the dispute over a pregnancy between father and son. Ògún, a warrior, had brought in a beautiful damsel as a spoil of war. His father, Odùduwà, who was the king in the manner of an imperial power of the time, overruled his son and took the lady as a wife. On delivery, half of the baby was light and the other dark in complexion. Odùduwà was dark and Ògún was light in complexion. Olúpònà claims that when Ògún saw the infant at the time of his birth, he proclaimed Òrànmíyàn, meaning “my thought is true” or “an abomination.”\textsuperscript{463} That is why as it is claimed, that Òrànmíyàn had double skin color of white and red while alive. Òrànmíyàn was considered a fierce warrior in his own right.

Other versions of the myth have it differently. For example, a myth has it that Ògún was the Commander-in-Chief of Odùduwà’s warriors. During one of the wars, he met a beautiful lady who emerged from the forest. Ògún became interested in her and requested her hand in marriage, to which she agreed and followed him to Ile-Ife. In Ile-Ife, Odùduwà also developed an interest in the lady. He asked if his son Ògún had slept with her. Ògún lied and thus paved the way for Odùduwà’s engagement to the lady. Later, when she had a son that was a half-cast, it was discovered, through consultation with the gods that Ògún had slept with her. The marriage broke


\textsuperscript{462} Bascom, The Yorùbá, 83

\textsuperscript{463} Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 114
up and Ògún married the lady. The child was named Òrànmiyàn. He became the founder of Òyó kingdom.

Ògún's wife also had another son for him named Ògúndáhùnsi. He was an excellent cook. Whenever the father returned from war, he cooked for him a delicacy of dog, oil, snail, mice, fish, and other meats. Ògún was so pleased with this delicate dish that he decided to set up a kingdom for him. He went into the forest and searched without finding a suitable kingdom. He decided to go back to Ifè and rest. Upon arrival, he discovered that his people were no longer there. He went back to the forest and continued to search for a kingdom for Ògúndáhùnsi. While still searching, however, he saw a small party of people sitting and drinking. He was hungry and thirsty but nobody would give him any drink or food. In anger he took out his sword and killed all of them. To his chagrin those killed were his people, so he committed suicide.

*Praise Lyrics, Attributes and Song of Ògún*

**Attributes**

Ògún who is addicted to the savage sports of hunting and carnage;
He doesn't adjust easily to community life, so he lived at Orí-Ókè, the Top of the Hill.
After descending from Orí-Ókè he attired himself in fresh palm fronds.
Ògún made the way smooth for the divinities in their spiritual encounters with the world of men.
Iron, steel and any implements made of them belong to him.
He gives the finishing touches to the creative work of Òrísà-Nlá.
In charge of circumcision, tribal marks, tattooing, and surgical operations.
The divinity of war and warriors; artisans, smiths, engineers, mechanics, all engine drivers and machine minders, and all who use anything made of iron or steel.
Presides over oaths, covenant-making or cementing of pacts;

---

He demands justice, fair play and rectitude.
Implement are metal scraps, wrought or graven; pèrègùn; a rock or piece of rock; tusk or tail of an elephant.

*His Praise Lyrics*

Chief among the divinities;
The day Ògùn was descending from Orí-Òkè,
He was clothed in fire and wore a garment of blood.
Ògùn, the king of Ire;
Ògùn, the possessor of two machetes: with one he prepares the farm,
And with the other he clears the road.
Ògùn, the owner of the house of money
The owner of the house of riches
The owner of the innumerable houses of heaven;
One whose eye-balls-are-rare (to behold).
Support behind the orphan.
Whichever divinity regards Ògùn as of no consequence will
Eat his yams with hands (without a knife) times without number.
If one breaks covenant at all, it must not be with Ògùn, the matter is strictly taboo where Ògùn is concerned.

Hard, fierce and terrible by nature;
“Where does one meet him?
One meets him in the place of battle;
One meets him in the place of wrangling;
One meets him in the place where torrents of blood,
Fill with longing as a cup of water does the thirsty.

*His Songs*

There are seven Ògùn who belong to me;
Ògùn of Alárá it is who takes dog;
Ògùn of Onríè habitually takes ram;
Ògùn of circumcision habitually takes snail;
That of Elemona it is who takes roasted yam.
Ògún of Akirin habitually takes ram’s horn (ram)
Ògún of the artisans, it is the flesh of tortoise that he eats.
Ògún of Mákindé, which is Ògún outside the city wall—
He either takes a Tapa, or takes an Àbóókí,
Or takes an Uku-uku, or takes a Kemberi

The attributes, praise lyrics and songs of Ògún only reinforce the fact that he is indeed
the Òrìsà of technology and engineering. So he is the patron of blacksmiths, policemen, hunters,
soldiers, bus drivers, train conductors and railways workers, iron workers and anyone working
with metals, even jewelers, pipefitters etc. No traditional Yorùbá religious worshippers who
engage in all these forms of vocations goes on with her or his vocation without paying due
regard to Ògún. They must feed and propitiate Ògún in order to have a good outcome in their
work, to protect them and also in thanks for a job with a good outcome. He is clearly a lover of
war, wrestling and outstanding feats of strength, ‘Olómi ní lè fì èjè wè’, [One who has water but
chooses to bathe with blood]. The devotees believe that when circumstances in their lives
become difficult, it is Ògún they must supplicate to help them achieve success. This information
will help us to appreciate the place of Ògún and the honor accorded him in virtually all the
Yorùbá communities and especially in Ilé-Ifè, during its worship of Olójó festival.

The Olójó Festival

According to Ifè people, in each calendar year, there are about 201,465 Òrìsà festivals
observed by the people, chiefs, priests and the Awo (the cults) of Ile-Ifè. Oftentimes, people of
Ifè reckon the number of Òrìsàs to be four hundred and one but the Yorùbá cosmos is said to be

Dennis L Thomson (eds.) Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression. London, Portsmouth and NH: Heinemann
inhabited by two hundred and one deities. Abímbólá also agrees with this. Out of all these days, one day is free from propitiating all these other gods. The most important of Ifè festivals is called Olójó. According to the head of Emesès or Ìlárís (the palace messengers) in Ile-Ifè palace, Olójó festival is an annual event in commemoration of Ògún’s abdication of the throne in the interest of the progress of Ifè and in appreciation of his great exploits. Ògún, according to this myth, instructed that all must be present at the annual Olójó festival, because according to him, ‘Olójó ni a a fi ojó fún’ [He who owns the day deserves that day to be dedicated in his honor]. The festival is actually said to be celebrated by humans and the non-humans. Hence, it is a taboo to hunt game during the period of Olójó festival by all hunters in Ile-Ifè. They, in fact, said that the actual place where Ògún entered into the bosom of the earth is the shrine where the Olójó ritual festival has been taking place since that primordial time.

Chief Erédùmí (Chief Matthew Akínyemí) told me in his house during my ethnographic visit in November, 2011 that, as a priest who is also the representative of Òrànmíyàn, his duty is to use kolanut, four lobed àbàtà (kola nitida, one of the divinatory materials used in Yorùbá society) to consult Òrànmíyàn as to when Olójó festival should begin. As a reminder, Òrànmíyàn is said to be Ògún’s son in one of the myths told above. A later addition to the story shows that it was Òrànmíyàn who mandated people to be commemorating Ògún’s worship yearly. That is why it is Erédùmí (priest of Òrànmíyàn) and not Osògún (priest of Ògún) who does the consultation through divination to know the date (s) when Olójó annual ritual ceremony should take place. The timing of the festival depends on the movement of the moon from the West to the

---

466 Markets are also expected to be closed (Olúpònà, 2011:115). Olupona explains this to be as a caution against profiting from Olójó festival by market women. Perhaps this is true, but the truth again is that if the market women do not close up for the Olójó festival, youths might steal their properties and nobody can be held responsible for whatever is missing. The festival boasts of a crowd numbering at least up to ten thousand (10,000) people or more each year. Again, most of the women involved in singing are also market women, so there is no way they could have been able to open the market when their service is very essential to the sanctification of Olójó festival.

467 2011 Olójó festival brochure specifically states that Òrànmíyàn was the son of Ògún.
East over the Òrun of Odùduwà (the sacred stone of Odùduwà). Upon knowing the date, Erédùmí goes to the Oòni, the king of Ile-Ifé—the chief celebrant of Olójó, who would set aside seven days to remain incommunicado with the sole aim of communicating with the spirits and the divinities. Throughout the period of Olójó festival, Erédùmí provides abundant food and drinks for the men and women in his domain. On three different occasions, three rams are killed.

The preparation for Olójó festival from the day of announcement to the very last day of the festival takes about forty days, during which time the shrines of Ôgún are made ready. The shrines and houses of Erédùmí and Osògún are decorated with palm fronds (Màriwò Òpe). The sacrificial materials and objects are sought for and are made ready in preparation for the festival. The Local Government officials (The County) also get the Ôgún’s shrines painted and dressed. The most visible preparation is a daily invocation of Ôgún and Ôrànmìyàn at different locations by the obinrin ilé (family of priests’ women or wives). The three important places the women do the invocation are: chief Erédùmí’s palace, Osògún’s palace and lastly the Oòni’s palace. All these three locations signify the places occupied by the ritual personae connected with Olójó festival. Ôkè Mògún (Ôgún Hill) is located about five to six hundred meters from the palace. Inside the Ôgún’s shrine are found the (akòko) tree, two monoliths (symbolizing Ôgún’s swords), and some iron objects from the blacksmiths.

---

468 The date according to the reliable information I got from the Emesès at the Oòni’s palace, Chief Akínýemí and Osògún respectively, was that the Olójó festival is usually commemorated on the last weekend of October. Once a while, the date may slip into the first week of November if there is a special circumstance warranting the change.

469 The purpose of each ram will be discussed later; however, one of the rams is for the entertainment of the ritual women in Erédùmí family house.
The Role of Women

Women play a very crucial role during the Olójó festival. They actually serve as the preserver of tradition through their unique gift of singing and poeticizing the praise-names of Ògún, Odùduwà and Òrànmíyàn. One is not too surprised about this development though. Annette Weiner has already shown that women are very important in the production and reproduction of society. In her analysis, *hau* and *taonga*, “bring women’s production such as human and cultural reproduction into prominence.”  

Weiner, of course, believes that women contribute immensely to the cosmological authentication of a particular society and partake in that societal *Dreaming*. Weiner talks about Dreaming with particular reference to Australian aboriginal cosmologies (mythological canon), the real meaning of which she also acknowledges that Totemism was never able to adequately capture.

The *Dreaming* for Weiner and Fred Myers consists of myths, sacred sites, ancestors, ceremonies, names, sacred possessions (just like the *Arè crown*), and songs created by totemic ancestors, and these play a central role in the Aboriginal life. My interest in the Dreaming, though, has to do with the fact that it is relevant to cosmological authentication of Australian Aboriginal societies, but I think a similar thing happens in the case of Olójó festival. From the very first day, the women from Erédùmí compound begin to shout *Gbàjúre* and four or five of such *Gbàjúre* may be organized by chief Erédùmí before the Olójó day proper. The women sing familiar songs repetitively and clap their hands; *A s’Olójó, kan ké Gbàjúre e ò!* [We are celebrating Olójó; let us shout *Gbàjúre e ò*]. This song is followed by a long chant by some gifted women who sing to the praise names of Ògún. This is followed immediately by recounting

---

470 Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*, 48
the names and praises of the past Ilé-Ifẹ kings and heroes. These women usually wear a uniform called *Aso Ebí* (family attire or uniform). Chief Erédùmí shared with me the important role women in his domain play with regard to connecting the community with the ancestors. These women, on the Monday preceding Olójó day, are expected to go and “pull up” special grasses (*oko jíjá*). Apart from “pulling the grass”, these women also go to the city gate that leads travelers from Ìbàdàn into Ilé-Ifẹ, to sweep the ground as part of the ritual of cleansing ceremony in preparation for Olójó festival.  

During the “pulling” of grasses around Òrànmiyàn’s shrine, some of the women become possessed by the spirit of Òrànmiyàn, which is expected to descend upon them and in fact, they speak in tongues. These women serve as spiritual mediums through which Òrànmiyàn manifests his presence as a prelude to the beginning of Olójó festival. It is thought that the women often exercise ritual potency, which is frequently attributed to those in structurally subordinate positions, according to Victor Turner. Turner argues that “In most societies, there are other areas of manifestation to be readily recognized by the symbols that cluster around them and the beliefs that attach to them, such as “the powers of the weak,” or, in other words, the permanently or transiently sacred attributes of low status or position.”

Chief Erédùmí told me that the grasses that are pulled up are used to prepare a special concoction for medicinal purposes, especially for people who are looking for healing, and for women who would like to get pregnant and have children, or as they say it, bear fruits of the womb. Part of the grass is later painted with black, red, and white colors in Erédùmí’s house. In

---

472 Chief Erédùmí gave this information in his house in November, 2011 when I went to interview him.
her book, *Women in the Yorùbá Religious Sphere*, Oyèrónké Olájugbù pushes the significance of the Yorùbá women further by showing how femininity symbolizes peace. She argues that, during the ritual festival of Òrìsàs (although her reference is in respect to Yemoja goddess), devotees use prayers and songs to appeal to the female principle to regulate the violent posture of the male principle in the religious setting. The Yorùbás often say; *Kí Odún kí ó ya abo, kí ó má ya ako* [May the festival turn out to be female and not male [hard]). In no ritual ceremonial functions of the Òrìsàs are these prayers and song more relevant than during the worship of Ògún and his colleague, the Òrìsà Sàngó. Olájugbù thinks that because of the active roles of women as priestesses and votaries during religious functions, they constitute a bridge between mortals and the Supreme Being.  

Olájugbù agrees with F. Kaplan by claiming that “Ritual power is used to maintain harmony in the society; while men in principle held political offices and authority, women controlled the ritual base that made political rule possible.”

*Setting the stage for Olójó Festival/Ritual*

Early on the first three days of the Olójó festival and before the fourth day, the Oòni is expected to go incommunicado. He enters spiritual plane which involves an in-depth consultation with the gods who will give him purity to make judicious use of the *Arè* (the special ritual crown) worn once a year for this occasion of Olójó festival. *Arè* is an ancestral legacy and as an *Inalienable Possession*, an ancient crown, believed to have been inherited by the Oòni from

---

474 Weiner actually argues that the Maori believed that women’s miscarriages can become gods, which demonstrates that women provide direct connections to deities and ancestors. Using Hanson in pushing her argument further, she claims that in Maori’s myths, women’s genitals can also be interpreted as divine “portals” through which sacred connections between gods and humans are established contrary to seeing those genitals as polluting. See Weiner, *Inalienable*, 53. See also F. Allan Hanson and Louise Hanson, *Counterpoint in Maori Culture*, (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 88-94.


476 The normal days of seclusion by Oòni are seven days when he is not expected to be seen communicating with any mortals except the spirits, the deities and his ancestors (the past kings).
Odùduwà – father of the Yoruba society who also was the first Oòni. There is controversy surrounding whether the Arè crown belonged to Odùduwà or Ògún. Some of my informants claimed that it belongs to Ògún, while others said emphatically that it is Odùduwà who owns the ritual crown.

Notwithstanding, when the Arè crown is worn, it has been very clear that the Arè is actually not of Ògún; it is indeed the Arè Odùduwà. The Arè crown has a life of its own, as it occupies a whole room in the Oòni’s palace. It is a personified object. The Arè crown is built with a lot of mystery around it and the Oòni wears it to perform special ritual functions. The Arè crown possesses power (àse, authority), it is believed, by which it can perform wonders if properly directed by rituals—conducted by the Oòni. According to Maurice Godelier, “to own objects such as the Arè crown is to be in possession of part of the powers of these mightier-than-human beings, it is to satisfy a desire for power, to show one’s will to control (emphasis in the original) the forces that govern men, to act on the course of events, on fate.”

All my informants said that the Arè weighs more than 50 kilograms, some even say that it weighs about 300 pounds. When I asked how it is possible for a man to carry a crown that has such an enormous weight for a very long time, they told me that there is a special ritual sacrifice that must be performed to lighten the weight of the Arè crown. Interestingly, Olúpònà makes a similar claim that the crown is very heavy. The Ìfè people believe that any prayers offered near the vicinity of the Arè crown would be answered by God and the gods. But the ritual language that could make prayers to be answered can only be understood by Oòni himself. Arè is a personified object because of the authority embedded inside it. People pray to the Arè, and

---

478 see also Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 129
indirectly to Oòni, and oftentimes lie low for it as they would for a human being. Praying to the Arè and Oòni signifies that people are indirectly channeling their requests to the Supreme Being (Olódùmarè). Therefore, the Arè as a sacred object acts on this occasion a great deal of influence on the course of events and places, and at the service of men.

A little discussion of the sacred importance of the Arè crown is in order here. Godelier extends Weiner’s argument that some objects are meant to be kept to perpetuate the family or community’s mythic ideal and ideology. Among the Baruya, Godelier argues, some objects are meant to be kept, which serve as the imaginary representations of life, wealth, and power to become projected onto and invested in it. The strength of these sacred objects, according to Godelier, “lies in their capacity to materialize the invisible, to represent the unrepresentable.” These objects such as we see in the Ifè’s Arè, are symbols which manifest and bring closer to us the Imaginary. These objects, because of their uniqueness, are not and can never be allowed to enter into exchange circulation. Like we see among the Trobrianders, where a paramount chief is set apart and towered higher than other human beings, so is the Arè crown doing in the case of the Yorùbá Ifè. Upon wearing this special crown, Oòni becomes the deity incarnate. There is a very striking similarity between Baruya’s sacred objects especially kwaimatnie (presents given by the Sun to the ancestors) and the Arè crown.

While kwaimatnie are presents given by the Sun to the ancestors of different Baruya clans, the Arè crown is an inheritance from the ancestors, that was believed to have been brought from Àjúlé Òrun (heavenly realm) to Àjúlé Ayé (earthly realm) by the Òrìsàs (the gods). Through these sacred objects, collective identities are constructed and maintained. And, these

479 Godelier, Enigma, 107-180.
480 Godelier, Enigma, 109
481 Godelier, Enigma, 174-175
sacred objects “are the support for and the sign of the relationship of dependence, indebtedness, and gratitude that humans entertain with the imaginary beings,” “true owners of the objects and goods of the world,” who shared their use with people and who, when they gave these sacred objects, also gave the men some of their own powers.” One could certainly argue that the propitiation and ritualization of those sacred objects yearly are part of the reciprocal relationship maintained between the gods (deities, ancestors) and the men who use those objects.

The First Olójó Day

The first day of Olójó festival, which is Friday, is what is called Ìlàgún Day—the ritual of communication between the priests and Ògún—the god of iron. The choice of Friday should be an interesting thing for the reader to know. One reason could be as an effort to maintain the day on which the sacrifice has been held from its beginnings and points us back to the repetitive function of myth as argued by Mircea Eliade. Another reason could be that Friday is known as the day of “setbacks” (Ojó Etì) according to the Yorùbá, when everything is assumed to stand still. Perhaps, in order to remedy this situation, sacrifice is fixed for that day. Another modern way of interpreting it is to simplistically say that, it is fixed for Friday evening, so that there would be larger participations also from public official workers. This is the day that sacrificial materials such as prepared concoctions, two dogs, two hens, palm oil, palm wine, snail kolanuts are taken to the Òkè-Mògún shrine.

Dogs are usually taken (“legally” ritually stolen) by force on the streets for the purpose of this important ritual festival. That is why owners of dogs usually keep their dogs in-doors during the period of Olójó festival. Olúpònà claims that the violent seizing of dogs on the streets

482 Godelier, Enigma, 175.
symbolizes Ògún’s violent nature; he captures his human victims without giving any notice.\textsuperscript{483}

And again, since the ritual is a public one, the animals to be used are meant to be taken from the public space. Apart from the dogs, two chickens, kolanuts, snail, palm oil, and palm wine are given to Osògún (the priest in charge of the worship of Ògún), who will use these sacrificial materials to perform the annual ritual. It is believed that chief Lówá (one of the ritual priests also known as Îsòrò) also plays a very important role in preparing and making ready the special concoction and sacrifices donated by Oòni, for the first Olójó day to be given to Chief Osògún on behalf of the people of Ifè.

The Olójó ritual festival begins in the Oòni’s palace. During the morning period, people socialize, eat, drink, and dance. At exactly 4.00pm\textsuperscript{484}, the Osògún, dressed in red attire and a red head gear, arrives with his entourage from his family house and other devotees to Oòni’s palace where he receives a special pot already ritually prepared by Lówá. After receiving the special ritually prepared pot, he says prayers for Oòni and blesses him.\textsuperscript{485} From the palace, Osògún is led by the lókolókos (the palace messengers) to the Òkè-Mògún (the Ògún’s hill where ritual sacrifice for Ògún is performed). As the ritual procession commences, a loud shout is heard from Osògún\textsuperscript{486}, showing how powerful Ògún is. The invocation goes like this:

\textsuperscript{483} Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 116

\textsuperscript{484} The sacrifices used to be nightly affairs, but because political opponents were using the occasion to attack themselves, Oòni Adésoji Adérèmí mandated in 1936 that the ritual sacrifice be moved to the late afternoon. (see Olúpònà 201 Gods, 123). Another good reason is that oftentimes most sacrifices are offered at night in Yorùbá society, with the assumption that that is the best time sacrifice could be accepted by the deities.

\textsuperscript{485} During this past Olójó festival, Osògún could not collect the small pot by himself; it was one of his aides who received the pot on his behalf and carried the pot to Ògún’s shrine. The reason is that Osògún’s health is already failing him. He told me that he had stroke due to the hypertensive disease he has.

\textsuperscript{486} This past Olójó festival October, 2012, it was one of the Osògún’s followers (one of his household) who first started to give a loud invocation of Ògún, and re-echoed by another follower.
Øgün gbOrí, Øra gbùrèfe
Yesí ló lorí e, Øgün ló lOrí e?
Ori Øgün fi, Ori Øgün fi....

Øgün got the head,
Øra got the carcass,
Who owns the head?
Øgün owns the head
The head of Øgün is heavy…

This invocation can be interpreted like this: At Øra hill, a unanimous agreement was reached to make Øgün the head of all the primordial divinities. But Øra (signifying the remaining divinities) become subordinate. As a result of this, he becomes the owner of people’s heads. An Ifè indigene and a scholar interpret it like this: Øgün ascends the Ora Hill, aura descends on Ora Hill; For whom is the head of the sacrifice meant?; It's Øgün’s; The head hangs loosely, indeed, it hangs loosely.

It is very important to note that Osògún is an Ìsòrò who never prostrated for Oòni. Ìsòròs are the ritual priests and chiefs that are in charge of all principal Òrìsàs in Ifè. The Osògún is not supposed to prostrate for Oòni because the mythic accounts claim that if the Osògún should prostrate for Oòni, the Oòni would die. Some people interpret this to be a reference to the fact that, during his lifetime, Øgün never prostrated for anyone because of his pride and stubbornness. While this has not been advanced as a possible interpretation, one could also think of the fact that all other divinities had agreed in the primordial time to respect Øgün as primus-inter-pares; therefore, there would be no reason why Osògún, who in the ritual performance

---

487 See Olùpònà, *City of 201 Gods*, 118. Olùpònà says that his informants had difficulty explaining the meaning of those words. He however, agrees with Roland Abíódún who claims that whenever Øgün kills his victim, he severs the head from the body.

488 This is my own interpretation based on Ifè’s creation myth. I find it very awkward linking the invocation to the severing of dog’s head as was explained to me by the worshippers. I am not claiming that my interpretation is right.

489 Bùkólà Omígbulé is a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, Obáfémi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifè. I got this information through email exchange on September, 19, 2013.
embodies Ògún, should bow for the Oòni, even though he (Oòni) represents the divinities and especially Odùduwà. Some would also point out that the Osògún is usually referred to as Oba (king) in his own right. I was made to know that both Osògún and Oòni are only permitted to see each other on this singular special occasion throughout the year. Osògún and Emesès told me respectively that, if he (Osògún) and Oòni see each other before Olójó festival, evil things might happen. One Emesè said the Oòni would be dead. A similar belief is shared in Ìrè town, where the Ògún chief priest is not allowed to see the Onírè, the king of the town, at all throughout the year. So Osògún greets and prays for the Oòni standing, before moving to the Òkè-Mògún shrine followed by a teeming crowd with pomp and (circumstance) pageantries.

Waiting for the arrival of Osògún and the sacrificial materials at the Òkè-Mògún’s shrine are other Ìsòròs, namely Obadió, Obawàrà, and Èjió, who usually assist Osògún to pour libation and to pray for the people and the entire community. All the traditional Ifè chiefs who possessed swords usually bring their swords for marking (Sísa Idà). The Osògún marks them, although it is said that Obawàrà’s sword is not done at the Òkè-Mògún shrine but at another shrine at Oríyangí, which is equidistant from the palace and Òkè-Mògún. Obawàrà is one of the rulers of the outlying towns, but also has a special ritual function that connects him to Ògún just like Osògún. Those swords are usually marked with white chalk and red camwood. They do this to rejuvenate spiritually the chiefs concerned. I may add that since Òrànmíyàn the son of Ògún had a skin complexion of both white and red, it could also be the case that what is symbolized in this action is to commemorate the mythical/historical moment when Ògún’s son was born. I was made to understand that not all the chiefs in Ilé-Ifè possess these swords, only a few of them do.

---

490 See J. Omósádé Awólàlú, *Yorùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, op.cit., 32.
One may question, why should some chiefs possess swords and the others do not? Many conflicting explanations were given: some of my informants said because on special occasions like this, only a few chiefs connected with Ógún's ritual should bring out their swords. Others claimed that among all the chiefs in Ilé-Ifé, only first class chiefs possess ritual swords. The second suggestion seems very close to the ritual theorists’ assertion, but can also be linked to the first one. According to ritual theorists such as Catherine Bell, ritual has the strategy of maintaining differences in a number of societies, especially if the ritual is conceived vertically (i.e. to the beginning of things). Yet, she thinks that the ritual can also serve to integrate another community, if it is conceived by the people in a horizontal manner. It can be assumed that those who possessed no sword were likely to belong to the chiefs, who were ritually supposed to have none. They might just be second class chiefs or might be that the Ifè ritual arrangement does not permit them to possess any sword. Even in Nigerian political arrangements, not all ministers possess portfolios. This is one way we can view and understand the hierarchy of power either in a traditional religious or political sense.

At the Òkè-Mògún shrine, the shrine’s altar is well-arranged, according to the pattern that has existed from time immemorial, and has also been prepared on this day for the sacrifice of the “sacred animals” (two dogs and hens). At the time of sacrifice, the Osògún would make a loud noise calling on the clubman to come and club the dog to death. The dog already tied to the stake (moveable), which is left on the shrine’s floor is clubbed to death by the designated man. After

493 J.K. Olúpònà is correct in his observation that the way dog is killed in Ifè is quite different from other Yorùbá ritual festivals of Ógún, where sword is used to cut the neck of the dog with one stroke. Quoting Valerio Valerie (1985:335), Olúpònà (2011:119) claims that the sacrificial victims do not have to be alive at the moment of the sacrifice proper. See a corroboration of Olúpònà’s observation in Òjóadé, J. Olówò ‘Nigerian Cultural Attitudes to the Dog’, in R.G. Willis ed. *Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, 215-221; Ulli Beier, ‘The Yorùbá Attitude to Dogs’ (1959),
the first dog has been clubbed to death, it is lifted from the ground and put vertically on an elevated Ògún’s altar decorated with palm fronds (Màrìwò Òpe). With a sharp knife, the stomach of the dog vertically is ripped open from the neck to below the navel; no organ is to be removed from it. After this, the hen is swung violently one time and knocked against the hung dog.

The stomach of the cockerel is also ripped open and hung on the dog vertically. The blood of both the dog and the hen flow freely on the stones at the base of the Ògún’s (Akòko) trees. Red palm oil is also poured on the ripped open stomach of both the dog and cockerel. The next ritual is the casting of the four-lobed kolanut (kola nitida) to ascertain whether or not the sacrifice already offered is acceptable to Ògún. When the kolanut pieces are cast, if two faces down and two faces up, it is a good sign that Ògún has accepted the sacrifice, otherwise, the ritual is going to be started afresh. On this occasion the kolanut showed that the sacrifice had been accepted. After the casting of the kolanut, on this particular day, the Ìsòròs ritually move round the Òkè-Mògún shrine counterclockwise about seven times, with Osògún leading and muttering some ritual words that no one could hear or understand.

It is after these movements have been completed that the ritual pilgrimage of the first day is complete. After this ritual performance, people began to offer diverse kinds of prayers asking for blessings in form of fruit of the womb, protection from evil and accidents, promotion, preservation and many other needs. Osògún, Chief Erédùmí and the other Ìsòròs will then move to the exterior of the shrine to make another similar sacrificial ritual known as Bíbo Ògún ita

in Wolé Ògundélé (ed.) The Hunter Thinks the Monkey is not Wise, But He has His own Logic: A Selection of Essays of Ulli Beier, (Bayreuth African Studies, 2001), 69

494 Olùpònà claims that Yorùbá considers neither hen nor rooster suitable for Ògún’s sacrifice. Hence, the hen is like giving àdín (palm kernel oil) to Èsù; an object forbidden by him. The conclusive reason according to Olùpònà is because; the sacrificed hen would make Ògún’s anger be roused against whoever may want to hinder the sacrifice from being acceptable. See Olùpònà’s City of 201 Gods, p. 120.

495 We should remember that one of the praise lyrics of Ògún is a god who has water in his house, yet prefers to bathe with blood. Ògún loves blood and plenty of it.
sacrificing to the outside Ògún). The belief of the Ìfè people is that it is the inner Ògún that one should sacrifice to first before one should sacrifice to the one outside. One priest puts it like this; it is the inner enemy which is more dangerous than the outside enemy, so it is the inner one that one needs to placate first.

It is very interesting to note that each material element used for sacrifice has its symbolic meaning. For example, the palm oil and snail share similar meaning; they are meant to calm a hard situation. Yoruba will say àrò (calm or peace) is that of snail and palm oil. When any of the priests or priestess in Yorùbáland is mounted (possessed) (gègùn) by the god or goddess, people offer palm oil to calm the person down. The palm oil is poured into the mounted person’s mouth. Yoruba circumcisers use snail’s slime to stop bleeding. Kolanut is used to clear away evil, hence, when praying with a kolanut, the Yorùbá people will say, Obì ní ó má ŋbì ibi dànù. Ataare or Ata ire (good pepper or Alligator Pepper) symbolizes wholeness. It also symbolizes a good or beautiful outcome of a situation. The dog and Ògún share similar traits: hunters, friendliness, aggressiveness, and most importantly, unpredictability. The Yorùbá believe that the teeth that the dog used to play with her/his owner, is the same that is also used to bite the owner. It is equally often said of Ògún that, Ojú tí Ògún bá maa fì pani kìì fì han nì (Ògún never reveals his dangerous eyes to whom he wanted to kill).

After the ritual sacrifice, it is expected that Oòni would wear an ordinary cap (not a crown) to visit the Òkè-Mògùn to thank and pray to the gods and his forefathers on behalf of the Ìfè people, the entire Yorùbá society and Nigeria as a whole. The Oòni leaves his palace as a chief

---

496 It is not too clear while they call this pepper alligator pepper since it is called ‘good pepper’ by the Yorùbá. Perhaps, the covering shell of the pepper resembles the skin of alligator, which is why they named it so. See details of all the meanings of the symbolic materials for sacrifice in Yorùbá society in J.Omósádé Awólálú, Yorùbá Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites, op.cit. pp.165-170.
497 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 120
celebrant and the representative of the gods and the people and proceeds to the Òkè-Mògún, led by the lókolókos who serve as his guards and as ritually prepared military personae. On getting to the shrine, the Osògún leads the Oòni group such as Lówá, the head of palace chiefs, Obajió, Obadió inside. When inside, the Oòni with his ceremonial sword pays homage to Ògún and then prays for the people. Ooni and Osògún also pray for each other, thereafter shake hands with their left hands. Shaking with left hands is often done ritually by secret cults as mark of brotherhood and children of the same mother (omo Ìyá). After the ritual prayers, the Oòni, Obadió, Obajió and Erédùmí led by Osògún, who is muttering some ritual words that no one could hear or understand, will move round the Ògún’s tree inside the shrine seven times counter-clockwise. It is after these movements are completed that the ritual pilgrimage of the first day is complete.

After this first ritual performance, Osògún, Chief Erédùmí and the other Ìsòròs will then move to the exterior of the shrine to make another similar sacrificial ritual known as Bíbo Ògún ìta (sacrificing to the outside Ògún). The belief of the Ifè people is that it is the inner Ògún that one should sacrifice to first, before one makes a sacrifice to the one outside. Moving to the exterior of the Òkè-Mògún shrine, the second dog is sacrificed with hen and palm oil just like the one inside. The difference in this case is that, unlike the first dog which is sacrificed to the deity and left to rot, in this second ritual Osògún is expected to carry all the sacrificial items (dog, hen and the rest) to his house for his household to eat. Following the Ìlàgún is the night vigil of ceremony at the house of chief Erédùmí and Osògún. The purpose is to celebrate and sing praise of the deity.

The Second Òkè-Mògún Day

The second Òkè-Mògún (Olójó Day) is the day that the king comes out wearing the ritually prepared Arè crown, which only appears once in a year, as earlier said. The king's
appearance to the public space is usually heralded by the lókolókos, also known as palace messengers, who are usually ritually prepared to lead the Oòni (the king), the chief celebrant to the shrine. It is important to call attention to the lókolókos; they act in their capacity here as both spiritual and physical guards. I was told by the palace attendants and the lókolókos themselves that, on this very important occasion, the service of the Nigerian police officers is not as important as that of the lókolókos in protecting the king. One can hardly doubt this claim; the magical paraphernalia worn on the bodies of the lókolókos and the special canes in their hands are enough evidence to think that they are actually up to the tasks that the police efforts might be deemed unnecessary. Another reason given is that the Nigerian police, due to their unreliability, might collude with the king’s enemies to terminate his life, especially in times of political uncertainty.

The lókolókos also embody Òrànmíyàn, who was equally a war veteran when he was alive. These lókolókos appear in the public painted with white chalk on one side and red camwood on the other side, symbolizing Òrànmíyàn’s skin color when he was alive. On this day of the festival, they wore short white pants and carried ritually concocted medicine pots on one hand and whips on the other. According to one of my lókolókos’ friend, the whips are not ordinary, but they are ritually prepared and soaked in the medicine pot (àgbo). The whips, according to him, are hardly used against anybody except very stubborn persons who may be suspected of having malicious intent during the Olójó’s occasion. There is a problem connected with this; how can we know for certain that some people were not already marked by the lókolókos as suspects, even if those so marked had no malicious intent? This is an important question because, on the second day of the Olójó festival which I observed, a young man challenged one of the lókolókos for acting recklessly. The response from the lókolóko was swift.
He beat the young man in a manner that he would have beaten a perceived enemy with his whip. I had to intervene by pleading for the young man.

On this particular day also different ritual personnel are involved. First is the guild of medicine men and women, who protect the Oòni and counter evil forces that may intend to harm him. The guild also ensures that rain does not fall during the time of ritual activities of Olójó festival. Next we have the guild of hunters’ association and taxi and commercial drivers’ association, with their different banners. As earlier hinted, all these people with vocations connected to Ògún have to come and pay their respect and honor to Ògún their patron god. Also present are the noble war chiefs and especially Akogun who is regarded as the custodian of Òrànmiyàn groove. In all Yorùbá communities, Akogun or Balógun is the leader of the warriors. What Akogun stands for here is to epitomize that warrior-like action of Òrànmiyàn. Then we have the Òsírígì drummers who play for the Oòni and his entourage as they move to the Òkè-Mògún shrine. All the chiefs are usually in attendance, the Òtún Ifè, Òsì Ifè, Modéwá and the Ìsòròs. Followed by these dignitaries are the teeming crowds who are shouting Ògún yèè (Ògún is alive). The third day, which is Sunday, is a day of rest from public ritual but ceremonies continued in Osògún’s and Erédùmí’s houses respectively.

Social and Political Dimensions of Olójó

On the fourth day, which is Monday, there are more social activities signifying the social aspect of the Olójó festival than the spiritual/ritual dimension of it. Olúpònà (2011) argues that there is also a sacred dimension of the day, due to the fact that the Oòni has to visit the Ojà Ifè (Ifè market) to propitiate Òrísà Ajé (goddess of money), who is responsible for the well-being

---

498 See also Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 124
499 This is the third Òkè-Mògún day.
of the people, trade, and commerce in Ilé-Ifè.\(^{500}\) It is the day that the king (Oòni) goes to all the royal houses on the entourage of all the chiefs and audience, who usually celebrate with him, to greet the royal princes and princesses and the aged people. The king dances to the drums that are leading in front of him and the people\(^{501}\). It is also a day when elaborate gift giving and reciprocity takes place between the king and the royal families. Of course, the social dimension of Olójó festival really goes on from the beginning of the first Olójó or Òkè-Mògún day to the very last day; eating and drinking, music, dancing, performances and socializing are daily affairs.

There are usually different kinds of entertainments, and a lot of spectacles are meant for the audience’s admiration within and outside the Oòni’s palace. But the social dimension of the Olójó festival culminates on this very last day, which is Monday, when the king goes to the royal houses to thank his people and receive their oath of allegiance in support of him, as long as he continues to reign as the king. Oòni, according to tradition, goes to these various royal families once in a year; only during this occasion of Olójó festival alone. This last day of the Olójó festival is also regarded as the *Odún Oba* [king’s festival], when he makes elaborate feasts with plenty of foods and drinks. In each royal house called Ògbórà compound, the kins and kens of the king would be waiting in readiness for the coming of Oòni. It is an all important day for them. They would have also made large preparation of feasts and would have made ready special gifts to be given to the king (Oòni) when he arrives. Upon his arrival in these different royal houses, the king prays for the people and the people also pray for the king in return, and they pay

---

\(^{500}\) I was not able to witness Oòni’s visit to Ojà Ifè due to the fact that, I missed the Olójó festival of 2011, and in 2012 Olójó festival, Oòni did not come out at all. Some of the chiefs told me that, either he comes out to the open space or not, he must still wear the *Are* crown. A chief told me in annoyance that if Oòni refused to come out, nobody would be affected negatively except himself alone. In view of this, the ritual at Ojà Ifè was not performed during this last Olójó festival. See detailed of Oòni’s ritual sacrifice to Òrisà Ajé in ojà Ifè in his book, City of 201 Gods, 2011: 130-134.

\(^{501}\) The Oòni special drums are Òsírígí drums.
obeisance to him. The visit serves as the Oòni’s reconnection with his patrilineal houses and an opportunity to visit and show honor to his past ancestors.

The last destination of the Oòni is his father’s house, Ògbórù Olódò Olúbúse (the incumbent Oòni’s patrilineal house) in Ìläré quarters, which is built in form of a palace. Crowds, especially women, usually gather outside the house, waiting in readiness for the Oòni. They are dressed in Aso Ebí singing with joy and happiness. The song goes like this, Wolé, wolé, wolé, Sijúwadé, omo Olúbúse, ilé baba omo ki i b’omo lérù, wolé, wolé, wolé (Enter your father’s house, Sijúwadé, the son of Olúbúse, one’s father’s house should not make one to be afraid, come in, come in, come in). A big ram is usually made ready to be slaughtered and the blood flows freely so that the Oòni would step on it before entering into his father’s house. The animal also serves the purpose of propitiation by Oòni to his ancestors, as already mentioned earlier. He uses the occasion to venerate his father.502 There are exchange of prayers between the Oòni and the obìnrin ilé (the elderly women in the family). The Olójó ceremony ends with the veneration of the past kings in the hallowed mausoleum at Igbó Ìjà by Obalúfè on behalf of Oòni.

The political dimension of the Olójó festival deserves a great deal of attention as well. Ògún festival is a whole Yorùbá society ritual affair. Pemberton III and Afoláyan have written a detailed analysis of the Ògún festival in Ìlá-Òràngún, another important Yorùbá city (Îlá-Òràngún) in their book; Olúpònà undertakes a similar study of the Ògún festival Ondó, another important Yoruba city.503 Students at Obáfémi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifè are engaged in researching Ilé-Ifè Òrìsàs (gods and goddesses). In particular, Mórúfù Omígbulé in the

---

502 In Îlá Òràngún town, John Pemberton III records a similar incidence of this ritual when a big ram was killed between the eighth and tenth day of Isúlé (worship of house) by the king of Îlá as he visited his father’s house. He killed the ram on his father’s grave and requested of the blessing of his genitor on him and his family. See John Pemberton III, ‘The Dreadful God and the Divine King’ in Sandra Barnes, Africa’s Ògún: Old World and New, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 134

503 Pemberton and Afoláyan, Yorùbá Sacred Kingship; Olúpònà, A Phenomenological Study,
department of English is looking at the ritual importance of the entire Òrisàs especially Ògún (Olójó) in Ile-Ife. These studies and various others far too numerous to be accommodated here, but only underscore the uniqueness of Ògún in the scheme of the Yorùbá social, spiritual and political life.

Even though there is no single Yoruba town that does not hold the Ògún festival, what is unique in Ifè’s case is the turn it has taken in Nigerian society today. Whereas Pemberton and Afoláyan devoted a whole chapter to the ritual dimension of Ògún in Ilá-Ôràngún, and how that ritual closely incorporates the king (Ôràngún of Ìlá), and the chiefs and hunters in the town; and whereas Olúpònà does a similar thing with respect to Ondó Ôgún (Ekímògún festival), and later carried out extensive research in Ilé-Ifè as an important city of the gods; yet, there is a dearth of extensive analysis of the political dimension of the Ògún festival, especially in Ile-Ife, which one would think should have received scholarly analysis by now because of the religious and political significance of the city. One reason for this lack of political analysis might stem from the fact that these scholars are more interested in the analysis of the sacred dimension of the festivals than with the political dimension of Ògún’s ritual. There is no doubt that the political arrangement of the towns is already part of their overall work.

As an evidence of this, Pemberton’s and Afoláyan’s research highlights the political dimension when they agree that ritual and festival can actually be composed as one of the means of legitimating political power. Olúpònà equally says that “within the Olójó ceremony, the people of Ilé-Ifè attempt to come to terms with social, political, and cultural issues that are at the

---

504 Morufu Omígbulé’s unpublished Master’s dissertation is on Ritual Codification of Òrisà rituals in Ilé-Ife. He got his Master’s degree in the Department of English and Literature, Obáfemí Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife in 2009. He also presented a paper titled: “Ritual as Codification of Collective Socio-Historical Sensibility in Annual Olójó Festival in Ilé-Ife” at the Annual Faculty Conference held at Obáfemí Awólówò University, Ilé-Ife, Nigeria, between 8 and 10 of October, 2012. Omígbulé teaches English and Literature in the same University.
core of their existence as a culture...”505 It is still necessary to provide a brief but sustained analysis of the political dimension of the ritual.

It is good to begin by saying that, Ìlè-Ìfè, according to an oral source from the Oòní’s palace, is where Ôgún’s shrine was first located before it became an all Yorùbá affair.506

Definitely, this is open to a very stiff debate, due to varied myths of Ôgún’s peripatetic activities in many towns such as Ìrè, Ilésà, Oòdó, Sakí and other parts of the ancient Yoruba society and the important role he played in those various places. But the Arè, as an ancient crown, is said to be the only one and it is only Oòní who can wear this crown once in a year; and that is during Olójó festival. The Arè crown serves two important functions in this regard: the ritual/spiritual and the political function. The reason is that the Arè does not only set Oòní apart in the hierarchical plane among the Yoruba kings, it in fact reinforces Ìlè-Ìfè as the most strategically important and primordial city to the collective rites and politics of the whole Yoruba kingdom.507

Just as one can think of the crown and regalia of the Queen of England to embody both the spiritual and political realm of affairs, so one can think of the Arè crown to be serving the same function in this case. Oòní can be said to incorporate the polarity of sacred and secular realms of existence in his own body.

Secondly, according to Weiner, the sacred objects (such as the Arè Crown) function as a “force against change” by authenticating origins and kinship histories, hence these objects are

505 Pemberton and Afoláyan, Yorùbá Sacred Kingship, 5; Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 111
506 The chief of all Emesès at the Oòní’s palace was very emphatic about this, when he was telling me about the narrative story of Ôgún and how Olójó became a more important festival in Ìfè than other Òrìsà worship. According to him, Ôgún first landed in Ìfè before moving to different towns where he is now being venerated. Of course, mythical story has a way of legitimating and validating social order. For example, Bronislaw Malinowski proposes that “The function of myth is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.” See Malinowski, Myths in Primitive Psychology (Westport, Conn. Negro University Press, 1971: 91-92.
not fully dissociated from their original owners.\textsuperscript{508} Weiner also shows that these possessions are not part of everyday use (even though they are of the same kind) but are possessions with prestigious origins, successions, or an edifying authority connected to the past like gods, divine right, ancestors, or high status. This is where hierarchy comes in for Weiner. Oòni confessed in March 2000, during Ife-Modakeke inter-communal crisis that past, present and future presidents of Nigeria are going to be on the Ife’s side. This statement has a very charged political undertone. Oòni’s statement was confirmed to me by at least three high chiefs that I interacted with, who said that many past presidents usually come to Ilé-Ifè to take another secret traditional ritual oath of allegiance of office before Ôgün Lakin Laadin, situated within the Northwest part of the Oòni’s palace and in fact appeal to Are in their oath to help them serve the Nigerian people well. I was told that the present president had already done so. Since I have no access to the present president, there is no way I could confirm this.

If what Oòni said, coupled with the palace messengers’ account is not satisfactory enough, there is need to reflect back on the incidence that happened in 1903. Historians and anthropologists have shown how Oòni’s political power was enhanced by a special invitation given to him by the colonial governor, Sir William Macgregor, to come for a visit in Lagos in 1903, with the aim of settling a dispute between Àkarígò of Ságámù and Elèèpé of Èpé.\textsuperscript{509} The main reason why the governor made this demand was because the governor needed guidance for him to issue his ruling on whether the Oba Elèèpé of Èpé was entitled to wear a crown or not. There was a sharp dispute between Àkarígò of Ságámù (now in Ìjèbú Rémo) and Elèèpé of Èpé

\textsuperscript{508} Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 9, 33
(a town in the Ságámù district) over who had the right to wear the sacred beaded crown that originated in Ilé-Ifè, and thus the legitimacy to rule. By the token of this traditional way of thinking; Ilé-Ifè as the source of the Yoruba would be expected to be a good place to win over the Yorùbá race politically, for the benefit of winning the presidential election.

Thirdly, there seems to be democratization (literary and ritual scholars will interpret it as a dramatization reminiscent of Victor Turner’s Ritual Drama, 1967) of all the more important ritual personae in the observance of Olójó (Ògún) festival, as can be seen in the ritual arrangement. Osògún represents Ògún; Erédùmí represents Òrànmíyàn, while the Oòni is called Àrólé Odùduwà and other deities. Yet by the virtue of the Arè crown on Oòni’s head, and hermeneutically speaking, he seems to embody the political office as well. Oòni’s ritual role during Olójó is fraught with tension: on the one hand he is like a peer to other important priests connected to Olójó ritual; on the other hand, he towers very high over and above these priests and indeed all the Yorùbá society in his grandfatherly (Odùduwà) regalia.

Arguably then, it can be argued that he is representing the entire Yorùbá people politically before Olójó at this latter instance, the role which these other important priests are not playing here. One can also claim that each side of Oòni is communicating something: while the ritual chiefs including Oòni represent the Òrisà Ògún in this case, Oòni actually represents the whole people politically before the Olójó. Abíódún Adédiran’s account also shows that the aboriginals of Ifè town were overrun or taken over by the Odùduwà group, who not only reorganized the aboriginal group but had actually also drawn up a new constitution by which the new group were to be governed. For Adédiran, therefore, “it was obvious that the Odùduwà
group had completely taken over, as Obàtálá permanently lost to Odùduwà the Arè, the symbol of political authority.  

Furthermore, no one doubts that the kingship among the Yorùbá is the centripetal force from where the political authority derives. Just like Abuja is the political capital occupied by the Nigerian president, so Ilé-Ifè is serving not only the spiritual capital but also the political capital of all the Yoruba people as well. Akínjógbìn and Smith agree on this by saying that this happened because the former Òyó Empire that earlier wielded enormous political power had lost the power to Fulani of Ìlorin and Dahomeans. It is not too surprising then that during the Olójó festival, the President, the Vice President and the leader of the Nigerians do recognize this all important festival and they usually make their presence felt through their representatives.

One cannot equally doubt the fact that the Federal, the Osun State and Local governments have been committing some money to the success of the annual Olójó Festival. The important of this festival was clear to me during my last ethnographic visit to Ilé-Ifè when I realized that the two major political parties in Nigeria: PDP and ACN through their representatives, were actually competing for space at the Enuwá square (the triangular communal meeting area, where Odùduwà’s image is situated) to fix their big posters with Oòni’s picture, with the aim of identifying with Oòni and Ilé-Ifè people in the celebration of Olójó.

Olábiyì Babalolá Yayi has pointed out that Sandra Barnes has made a strong case that Ògùn is the paradigmatic West African “globalizer” deity. This assertion is taking roots in Nigeria itself. In November 2011, when I was with Chief Erédùmí in his house, I asked him why

---

many rituals that were carried out in secret among the initiates are now being performed in the open space in Yoruba land? Chief Erédùmí answered by saying that the purpose is to make some of these Òrisàs global, especially Olójó (Ógún) festival, and to show the whole world that the Òrisàs are more relevant to social, political and economic life of the people than the “Western” imported religions such as Christianity and Islam. He further said that most atrocities, immoralities and wickedness being committed today among the politicians, especially in Nigeria, are carried out by the so-called Christians and Muslims.

His belief is that if all the Christians and Muslims who hold one political office or the other could start to swear by Ògún instead of the Bible and Quran; there would be justice and fairness in Nigeria. Quite a number of African Traditional Religious scholars seem to agree with this fact. They claim that “Ógún is a paragon of judicial virtues, which makes him the most powerful among deities.”

Even Chief Theophilus Akínyelé, although a Christian, was very convinced that “Anybody who is going to do PR [public relations] successfully for Nigeria will first call out all the Ministers to swear before the gods of Ògún so that they will not steal our money.”

PR means Public Relation in Nigerian political language parlance. People also use the words with respect to bribes that some contractors usually give to political office holders in order to get contracts.

On the economic side too, Ògún is recognized among all other deities to be responsible for the economic growth among the Yorùbá people. The reason is very simple: Ògún is believed to be the god of iron and technology. Ògún is praised as Onilé owó, olónà Olà. [He is the owner

---

513 Ìdòwù, Olódùmarè, 111; Olúpònà, A Phenomenological Study, 110; Pemberton and Afoláyan, Yorùbá Sacred Kingship, 157.
514 Chief Theophilus Akínyelé, Only Sango, Ògún deities can stop Politicians from being Corrupt, in Vanguard Newspaper April 20, 2013 online www.vanguardngr.com/2013/04/only-sango-ogun-deities-can downloaded on April 20, 2013 at 5.45pm
of the house of riches and a path of wealth]. The reason why the Yoruba praise him like this is that every implement of trade is said to be invented by Ògún: hoe, cutlass, sword, spade, motor vehicle parts and even the pen that the white collar workers are using to write. Soyinka, according to Olúpònà,\textsuperscript{515} actually describes Ògún as embodying “the knowledge-seeking instinct, an attribute which sets him apart as the only deity who sought the way and harnessed the resources of science to hack a passage through primordial chaos for the god’s reunion with man.”

In our global world today, I think, economic power seems to dictate political power. The developed or advanced countries of the world are politically powerful today no doubt, because of their technologies but more importantly due to their economic power too. Hence, they are in control of what goes on in other countries of the world. This is how we should see Ògún in the Yorùbá hierarchical realms of Òrìṣàs (deities) and in the scheme of things. He is at the top both spiritually and politically too, because of his strategic position in the economic life of the Yorùbá people. One should be aware, though, that this last argument is open to a lot of criticisms, namely, questions one may ask are why the Yoruba are still very backward in terms of technological advancement? And why are the Yoruba still economically backward if Ògún has done so much to make them advance economically too? Some could say in response that the problem does not lie with Ògún but with the people who have not been able to give what it takes to advance technologically and economically with what they have been endowed with.

In this first section, Olójó festival has been critically examined and its importance in the sanctification and propitiation of Ògún analyzed. The dimensions such as ritual, social and political of the Olójó are also looked at using the participant observation method and hermeneutic approach to discuss their relevance to the Olójó annual festival in Ilé-Ifé. The roles

\textsuperscript{515} Olupona, \textit{A Phenomenological Study}, 115
of ritual personae and the symbolic meaning of the festival materials are critical for one to get a better understanding of the importance of Olójó and Ògún to the collective religious experience of the Ifè people. Brief mention is made about the role of gift-giving and exchange between humans and the divine. In the next section, I will discuss Christ Way Church by critically examining the beginning, growth, expansion, and discuss how that has had a positive or negative impact on Ilé-Ifè ritual cosmos.

Christ Way Church

This section concerns how Christ Way Church (CWC), a brand of the Pentecostal Charismatic Movement, which evolved as a distinct Christian denomination in Ilé-Ifè, has continued to survive, grow and expand, especially in the city of 201 gods. The burden of this section is to use historical and ethnographic accounts to describe, analyze, and explore the ways in which the culture and traditions of the Yorùbá have impacted the church and enhanced its growth and how the church has adopted these cultural traditions and used them in the reconfiguration of the Yorùbá social values and traditional norms. This section will also explore the extent to which the founding of the Christ Way Church has contributed to the decline of Òrìsà worship in Ilé-Ifè in particular. Using data generated through oral interviews and questionnaires, together with participant observation methods of inquiry, the section investigates how boundaries are contested by the Christ Way Church members with the Ògún devotees, indeed Òrìsà worshippers, and how they strive to maintain their distinct Christian identity in as pluralist a religious city as Ilé-Ifè. The section concludes that the evolution of the Pentecostal

---

I adopt the word Christ Way Church instead of Christ Way Ministries for theological purpose because I believe theologically speaking Church gives birth to ministries and not the other way round.
Charismatic Christian movements represents a synthesis of traditional and modern values with respect especially to the Yorùbá people of Nigeria.

Sociologists, anthropologists and Church historians have already concluded that the church, either as mission-oriented denominations or the Pentecostal Charismatic movements, is an agent of change.\(^{517}\) While some of these scholars, such as Achebe, Àjàyí, Ayandele, Òjó, Kalu and Robbins, believe that the church has an overwhelming influence on the local traditional values, customs and norms, to the extent that some of the traditional belief systems have already been dwarfed by Christian presence, others such as the Comaroffs and Olúpònà think that the local traditional religions are contesting against complete decline. In fact, some scholars claim that instead of Christianity (Mission-oriented and Pentecostalism) simply making over the local traditional religious values, the natives themselves are becoming resilient and getting transformed in the process.\(^{518}\) As we shall soon see, in its attempt to reach the whole world for Christ, Christ Way Church publicly espouses the enlightenment thinking,\(^{519}\) yet because the leaders feel that winning the Yorùbá people is the first task (a kind of starting from Jerusalem mentality) that must be achieved, they equally embrace the supernaturalistic vision of reality.

What this implies is that Christ Way Church leaders teach the discourse about God, Satan


\(^{519}\) The use of enlightenment here implies the scientific ways of thinking about certain events or problems without necessarily explaining them in religious terms such as connection between certain sickness, diseases and pathogenic organisms. Instead of explaining poverty in terms of activities of witches and demons, they addressed the problems practically by teaching people to be hardworking and also get people connected to where they could get jobs. This happens because most of the leaders of Christ Way Church are educated elites, some of whom are trained as medical doctors and many others are trained pharmacists and engineers.
(Devil), miraculous interventions, and understanding of traditional ways of thinking about demons and witchcraft.\footnote{Paul Gifford, \textit{African Christianity}, 327-328.}

\textit{History of Christ Way Church} \footnote{There has not been a serious research study about this group either by church historians or by sociologists. In 1990, three people were commissioned, namely Abímòlá Afoláyan, Níyí Osùnbiyi and Olújídé Gbádégesin to trace the history of HCF to its present status as Christ Way Fellowship. The project was terminated because Abímòlá Afoláyan migrated with her husband to USA; Níyí Osùnbiyi went back to Anglican Church when Christ Way Fellowship was planning on becoming a denomination. Apart from the passing comment Matthews Òjó makes to the church in his book, \textit{The End Time Army}; only Bólájí Ajibádé has carried out a research work on the church. Her first research work was done during her Master's degree program while at University of Bayreuth, Germany. The title of her unpublished M.A. thesis is “A Comparative Analysis of Social Network in Yorùbá culture and Nigerian Pentecostalism: Evidence from the Christ Way Church (CWC), Nigeria”; and from this thesis was published as “Christ Way Church and Politics of Cultural Identity, in \textit{Ife Journal of Religions} vol. 6 (1 & 2) 2010. The account presented here is an insider historical account; I have been a member of Hospital Christian Fellowship since 1983 until it became a church in 1992.}

In his book, \textit{The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria} (2006), Òjó asserts that some Charismatic Christian organizations, as a result of the solitary or visionary leadership of a prominent individual, have grown to become a denomination. In this type of denomination, Òjó says that the life and ministry of the organization centers on the interpretations of the vision of the leader. Members in this organization take for granted the view that the vision of the leader is divinely inspired. Another type of organization, according to Ojo, has a collective leadership, which more or less maintains the initial vision by which the organization was established. This type of organization has guiding principles derived from the records such as the minute books and reports of the Executive Committee, or accounts from the surviving founders.

He rightly observes that growth in an organization with collective leadership may not be as rapid as in the ones with solitary leadership, because administrative procedures and the weight of collective responsibility may slow down progress. In some cases a single leader has emerged from among the collective leadership, either through long term service in a particular office,
charisma, or as the survivor following the dispersion of other leaders to other towns or other concerns. Ojo then discusses the example of Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF), established by a collective leadership in Ilé-Ifẹ. 522

It was the same Hospital Christian Fellowship that gave rise to Christ Way Church. Christ Way Church began as a result of the activities of some young Christian graduates from Universities in Nigeria in the middle of 1970s, who found jobs in the teaching hospital, and began a fellowship group in Ilé-Ifẹ. This fellowship group, which started specifically in 1976, comprised of young people from various denominations (Anglican, Baptist, and Methodist,), who were mainly hospital workers in Ilé-Ifẹ. Their goal was to meet and discuss the Bible and evangelize their immediate hospital environment. The names of these young graduates at that time are: Bádé Nwakpa (a Pharmacist), Níyì Arówolò (an Engineer), Philip O. Ògúnnówò (a Medical Doctor), Christopher Òpápéjú (a Secondary School teacher) and his wife Opé Olúwa Òpápéjú (a hospital secretarial staff) and finally Uche Onwudiegu (a Medical Doctor). At its initial stage, the group adopted a rotational presidency. Níyì Arówolò was the first president; at the expiry of his tenure, Philip O. Ògúnnówò took over from him and was the president until when Samuel Odúnlámì Oròkè joined the group in 1983. In November, 1983, Odúnlámì Oròkè took over as the president after a three-day fast and he maintained the position until 1992 when the fellowship changed its status to a Church.

The hospital group met for their fellowship activities on the premises of the Seventh Day Adventist (henceforth SDA) Hospital, which the Federal Government acquired from the SDA mission and made an extension of the Ife University Teaching Hospital Complex (IUTHC), to

train medical students. The group met on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesdays were for Bible study, while Thursdays were for prayer meetings. The fellowship was meeting inside one of the School of Nursing’s classrooms. When the classroom was in use by the School of Nursing, the fellowship group often moved to other available venues, such as General Outpatient Department (GOPD) or the corridor of the Hospital Laboratory Department. During the early days of the meetings, the hospital management did not oppose the activities of the members of the group nor did they interfere with their meetings, until the group grew.

Until Odúnlámi Oríòkè joined in 1983, the Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF) had just a few members, no more than 15 in all. By the time he joined the group, he introduced radical evangelism within and outside the hospital premises. What is meant by radical evangelism here is the use of different methods such as tract distribution (especially Four Spiritual Laws), bus evangelism, and drama evangelism and so on, to present the gospel to the people. Evangelism was no longer confined to the four walls of the hospital; coupled with bed-to-bed hospital evangelism, there was the house to house evangelism, which took the group out of the hospital premises into the community around the hospital.

Many other Christians employed at the Ifè University Teaching Hospital Complex (IUTHC) joined the group, and with more converts added to the membership, the group became “zealous” about their evangelism tactics and increased their radical approach to house-to-house evangelism. The group soon extended their evangelism efforts to the villages of Ifè and Ìjèsà, such as Ìsáóbí, Alákòwé, Ayórunbò, Eléwéeran, Abà Èyá Gàní and a host of other villages. They organized teachings and seminars aimed at further empowering their members to

---

523 Ifè University and Ifè University Teaching Hospital Complex (IUTHC) later turned Obáfémí A wólówò University and Obáfémí A wólówò University Hospital Complex (OAUTHC) respectively, when the University was named after one of the nationalist leaders in Nigeria after his death in 1987. Apart from being one of the nationalist leaders, Obáfémí A wólówò was the brain behind the founding of University of Ifè in 1962.
evangelize. To make these teachings and seminars more effective, the leaders organized them at locations like the Nigerian Baptist Church’s Women’s Missionary Union camp (simply referred to as Ede camp) at Ede, the Youth Camp in Ìjèbú-jèsà, both in Òsun State, and Youth Resource Camp in Egbédá, Ìbàdàn in Òyó state. The leaders of the Fellowship also engaged the services of more experienced Christians in the work of evangelism and Christian leadership such as Pastor S.G. Elton, Revd. Mike Oyè, Emeka Nwakpa and other well known pastors to come and teach (“fire up”) the members in the technical know-how of evangelism. The camping was always referred to as Prayer Retreat, and or General Retreat.

These retreat programs were not restricted to members of the HCF only; many other Christians from Ifè town also took part. The outcome of the retreats led many younger members to take their faith and the work of evangelism to a level which some thought was unreasonable. For example, some of the young enthusiasts denounced their parents’ churches and called their parents unbelievers who would go to hell. Some of the parents, who did not like this, got into confrontation with their children and some described the conflicts as a persecution of the children because they were members of the HCF at the time. One can only speculate on the reasons some of the younger members in the HCF became more zealous, albeit without knowledge. What do I mean by this? I want to believe that apart from and in spite of the teachings some of those youths received, they did not personally study the bible so as to know how to relate with their parents, who either belong to Òrisàs’ worship or Mission churches. It might also be that they did not understand the consequence of their actions. Another reason

524 This is the same Pastor S.G. Elton Matthews Ôjó makes mentioned in his book, _End Time Army_, who had not only contributed immensely to the teaching about the Holy Spirit and deliverance, but also in developing End Time Church leaders. Elton was a great inspiration to Archbishop Benson Idahosa’s ministry and counselor to many Christian youths in the Nigerian Universities in the 1970s until he died in 1988. See Matthews Ôjó, _The End Time Army_, op.cit, 2006: 33, 34, 44-46, 61 and some other pages in the book.
stems from the fact that the leaders of the fellowship provided “alternative patronage” for the younger members, and told members to break away from their pasts.\textsuperscript{525}

The younger members are those who occupy the age range between 15 and 20 years, who wanted to model their lives after the older members of the HCF. Ruth Marshall puts it very correctly by saying that “True conversion means cutting the link with one’s personal past; not simply the ungodly habits and sinful pastimes, but also friends and family members who are not born-again.”\textsuperscript{526} The fact that members were encouraged to view their past as sin and to build new networks and relationships with other fellow believers, regardless of their ethnic background, paved the way for a latter big showdown against the Yorùbá traditional religious worshippers in the town of Ilé-Ifé. There are at least two ways we can look at the way the leaders of Pentecostal Charismatic groups teach their younger members to break with their mission churches.

First, the Pentecostal leaders, in their perception, assumed mission churches were not teaching and preaching the truth contained in the bible, such as being born again; refraining from drinking alcohol, partaking in pagan worship, and so on. Second, it might also be as a result of what the sociologist Anthony Giddens calls the reflexive self, characteristic of late modern or post-traditional societies. According to Giddens, “in contrast to traditional societies where identities are inherited and fixed, late modern subjects are increasingly free to reinvent themselves and revise their biographical narratives.”\textsuperscript{527}


\textsuperscript{526} Marshall-Fratani, Mediating the Global, 86.

\textsuperscript{527} Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 5
What brought HCF to the limelight and made it more popular was an event that took place in 1985, inside the Ifè University Teaching Hospital Complex (but owned by the SDA Church) premises. The leaders organized a program tagged Love Feast, and encouraged members to bring different cooked food items, snacks, soda drinks, and water. Members were also encouraged to bring at least a gift to be given to their invited friends to the program. The program drew a large crowd both from the town and within the hospital premises. Ambulating patients, staff of the hospital, and important members of the hospital management were present at the “august” occasion. Different kinds of activities were done and the outcome was that many invited guests were converted in the process. The fellowship that used to have not more than fifteen or twenty members spiraled into about one hundred within a month. Even some members of the SDA church became members of the fellowship. This was the beginning of the travail of the fellowship, because the SDA Church’s council rose up and in fact instigated the hospital management to take a stand against the fellowship. The leaders of the fellowship at the time who were also medical doctors in the same hospital pleaded with the hospital management. The matter dragged until the end of 1986 when the fellowship was eventually kicked out of the hospital premises.

Some of the members who were head teachers at the SDA Grammar School (High School) gave the leadership of the fellowship permission to use the school’s class rooms for its weekly activities. In 1988, when the Federal Government of Nigeria returned back the hospital and the school initially taken from them,\textsuperscript{528} the SDA church council served the Fellowship with a note to vacate the premises. This meant that the group was going to lose its identity by striking

\textsuperscript{528} The Federal Government in its first but failed democratic system of govt. between 1979 and 1983 took all mission schools away from the missionary churches but later in 1988 returned those schools back to the mission churches.
out the phrase, “Hospital Christian,” from its name. When the fellowship moved from the hospital premises to the school premises, many non-hospital workers, such as Akin Îgè, T.O. Oyèbísí, Túndé Okùnadé and other influential individuals, had joined the group and also occupied leadership position of the fellowship. Some members of the fellowship who belonged to the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Obalùfòn, Ilé-Ifè, made an appeal to their church’s council to grant permission for the fellowship to hold its weekly meetings on Methodist property. The Church Council granted temporary permission in 1988. The fellowship changed its name to Christ Way Fellowship (CWF) at the end of the year 1988. Because the permission granted the fellowship was not stipulated in writing, some members of the Methodist Church who felt threatened by the activities of the fellowship complained about the inconvenience created by the CWF.

The CWF moved out of the Methodist Church at the end of 1989 and established its home where its present headquarters is located at Temipemi Street, Iredapo Quarters, Ilé-Ifè. The place is a three-acre land with an old church and an uncompleted apartment complex within it. The place was bought from its original owner, who was also using it for the church’s activities. The fellowship leaders, having purchased this property where fellowship activities could be held without any hindrance, began to operate as a pseudo-church. I use the word pseudo here because the organization had already been operating as a church without any official recognition by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Fellowship activities were no longer restricted to two days of the week, but were extended to about four days, namely Mondays, Prayer Meetings; Tuesdays, Bible Study; Thursdays, Deliverance Hour, and Sundays, Home Cell leaders’ meetings (House Fellowship). Home Cell was already a part of the programs of the HCF when they met at the

---

hospital premises. Seeing all these kinds of activities, many church leaders in the town of Ilé-Ifè had begun to insinuate that Odún Oríòkè, the leader of the CWF, was already nursing the ambition to start a church.

This made the members of CWF targets of more persecution instigated by members of the former churches of the new CWF members and their church leaders. The extent of the animosity can be understood from the fact that some of the parents stopped paying the school fees of their children attending High School at the time if they had joined CWF. Some parents resorted to corporal punishments and reportedly stripped their children naked and flogged them in public. The report here is based on an eye-witness account, and not mere hear-says. I know of three young members of Beulah Baptist Church, Ìbàdàn Road, Ilé-Ifè who were tortured, one young man of age 17 was stripped naked and beaten to the point that his flesh was bruised and cayenne pepper rubbed on the wounded spots. A lady of age 20 was stripped naked and exposed to public ridicule, and another man threatened to divorce his wife if the wife continued to attend the fellowship, stressing the fact that he would never tolerate a prostitution of churches from his wife.

True to the initial assumption of the members of various mission churches, including some Aláàdúrà churches and the larger communities in Ifè town, CWF began to develop a denominational orientation from early 1990. For example, because the fellowship continued to expand at a phenomenal rate, and because members now included people who lived in the distant parts of the city, such as Ìlódè, Ondó road in Ilé-Ifè, two other fellowship branches were opened in Ìlódè and Ìláré areas of the town. Within the Obáfemi Awólówò University Hospital Complex (OAUTHC), former members of CWF also formed a church organ known as Chapel of Grace in 1989. The senior pastor (Matthew Oyèlámí) and his assistant (Pastor (Mrs.) Dolápò Uchegbu) of
this new church used to be members of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the CWF before becoming the leaders of the Chapel of Grace church.\textsuperscript{530}

Bólájí Ajíbádé does not get the whole picture of how the Chapel of Grace started. She assumed or perhaps was wrongly informed that the Chapel of Grace was merely another Christian body.\textsuperscript{531} The fact is that, some members the same Christ Way Fellowship were commissioned to begin the church, especially with the fact that the hospital management of OAUTHC wanted a church and a mosque to be inside its premises. As part of the measure taken by the Federal Government to prevent religious crisis and violence in all its properties, it made it mandatory that anywhere there is Government institution, a church and a mosque must be there to cater to the needs of both major religious groups’ members. Actually, in Obáfêmí Awólówò University, Ile-Ife, there is also a provision of land for the Yorùbá traditional religious worshippers to build their house of worship.

The importance of Chapel of Grace to the understanding of the relationship that exists between the Christ Way Church and Ifé traditional religions will be discussed later in this chapter. Meanwhile, it is good to point out that what gave impetus to the growth of the CWF is the reading habit of the key leader/president Odún Oríòkè, influences of many older Christians from United States of America and in Nigeria, and the fact that the leaders of the groups were encouraged to attend outside conferences to strengthen their vision and mission as a church.

\textsuperscript{530} Bólájí Ajíbádé does not get the whole picture of how the Chapel of Grace started; she assumed or perhaps was wrongly informed that the Chapel of Grace was another Christian body. See her article “Christ Way Church and Politics of Cultural Identity”, 24.

\textsuperscript{531} Ajíbádé, “Christ Way Church and Politics of Cultural Identity”, 24
One important conference was organized in mid 1992 at Gbàgádà in Lagos by the Deeper Life Church, led by Pastor W.F. Kúmúyì in collaboration with Professor C. Peter Wagner of the Church Growth Movement based at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.  

The conference was tagged: International Church Growth Conference (ICGC). Five leaders of the CWF were delegated to attend this all important Christian meeting that drew leaders from all over Africa. The names of the CWF leaders that attended are: Odún Oriòkè, the leader of the team, Mike Àjàyí, who was the assistant overall leader of the fellowship, Amos Adéwálé, Fúnso Afoláyan, and Olúfémi Kòyà. These leaders attended the conference for a whole week. By the time they came back from the conference, they had already become different persons. Interestingly, all these leaders who initially insisted that they would not start a church in order to prove that the misgivings of the people about their intentions were not correct, eventually became convinced after they attended the Church Growth Conference, that starting (founding) a church and a separate denomination is an antidote to losing members from the Christian fold and making them truthful and committed Christians. As said earlier, some of the active members of the CWF from the mission churches felt betrayed, and vowed that they would not follow Odún Oriòkè in his inordinate ambition to start a church.  

In order to validate the proposal to become a church and separate denomination, the leaders of CWF proclaimed a 40 day fast for all of their members, which commenced in October 1, 1992 till November 9, 1992. During the 40 day period, they fasted, prayed, and the leaders used the opportunity to admonish people and prepare them for the fact that the church was soon to start. It therefore seemed to observers that the prayer and fast was not to ask God’s will if they

---

532 Ajíbádè, Christ Way Church and Politics of Cultural Identity, 24 does not quote the year of the Church Growth Conference correctly; it was not 1991 but 1992 as rightly quoted by Matthews Òjó, The End Time Army, 94.

533 The brief history of how the Christ Way Church was founded can be gotten from the Church’s website at http://www.christwayministriesinternational.org/index1.htm
should go ahead and start a new church, but was to concretize the decision they had already arrived at, following the Lagos conference.

On November 29, 1992, the Christ Way Church International was founded. The word International was added because of the “holy” and “zealous” ambition of the leaders to take the gospel to the whole world. According to Marshall-Fratani, it is part of the “circulation of images and narratives to connect people with transnational communities….and the indigenous Nigerian Pentecostal ‘missions’ or ‘ministries’ (as their transnationally ambitious leaders now call them, invariably adding ‘International’ to the name, even if the mission comprises only a handful of members).”

As part of this ambitious move, one of the leaders prophesied during the forty days praying and fasting that the church was to have a membership of ten thousand by the year 2000.

In order to realize the vision, coupled with the growth and explosion from ninety (90) members at its inauguration to about three hundred and fifty (350) within a year and a half of the church’s existence, three other churches were planted. In February 1994, some members led by pastor Amos Adéwálé, were commissioned to go and plant a church at Ìlódè area of Ilé-Ife city. By April of 1994, another group of people was commissioned to go and plant a third church along Ìbàdàn road outside of the city, and that church took off in May 1994 under the leadership of the current assistant General Overseer and vice-president, Mike Ajayi. In May 1994, another group of people were commissioned and put under the leadership of Olúwagbémiga Olówósøyò,

---

534 Marshall-Fratani, Mediating the Global and Local, 83
535 For Pentecostalism, the definitive sign or "initial evidence" of receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. They believe that several other miraculous gifts of the Spirit (or spiritual gifts) are available to Christians today. These include prophecy, when a person speaks or gives a message on behalf of God (including but not limited to predictions).
536 Planting is an agricultural metaphor that signifies that a church is like a living organism that can be planted and can result in growth, especially if agricultural cautions are taken into consideration such as right soil, air, water, good seed etc.
who was the General Secretary of the whole Church. The church also took off officially in July 1994. In the first two years, the CWCI had witnessed a significant growth with four churches planted.

To some observers, this growth confirmed theories of the Church Growth experts that starting a church organ instead of fellowship is more rewarding. Currently, CWCI has already planted about sixty-five churches; thirty-five churches in Ilé-Ifẹ city alone and other thirty in about seven states. In all these churches, only a few pastors (not more than 15 out of about a hundred pastors) are on the church’s payroll. This explains why the church has not been able to plant more churches than it presently has, since all other pastors are engaged either in full-time Government jobs or personal projects.

The man Oríòkè

The bible is replete with a few personalities who were born when their parents were a little older such as Isaac (Genesis, 21), Samson, (Judges, 13), Samuel, (I Samuel, 2), and John the Baptist (Luke, 1:57-80). Except Isaac, who was also great in his own way, the Hebrew Bible claims that God used all the other men mightily. For example, Samson was a judge in Israel, Samuel was a great prophet, and John the Baptist was also a great prophet and was sent to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. One could say that all these narratives are similar to the experiences of Odúnlámi Oríòkè and his birth history. Odún, as he is fondly called by his peers, was born into the family of Benjamin Oríòkè, a primary (Elementary) school teacher and Mrs Mary Oríòkè nee Afolábí, a trader. Odún is a medical doctor by training. After they got married, his parents waited for twelve years, hoping that they would have a child, before his
mother became pregnant and he was born to them.\(^53^7\) What is considered his miraculous birth is reflected in his name-Ôduńlāmì (“year is marked by a sign”). He grew up in an Ìjèṣà Yorùbá town named Ìjèbú-ìjìṣà where he studied in an elementary and high school. His father and family raised him up in an Anglican Church that was part of the Anglican Church Communion (CMS). He attended the premier University in Nigeria, University of Ìbàdàn, for his medical training and while there he became a born again Christian in 1973.

He soon immersed himself in Christian activities such as weekly bible study, person-to-person evangelism, village evangelism and counseling of the inquirers. His growth as a Christian was aided by his passion for reading many Christian literatures written by Christians from the United States of America, such as Billy Graham, Norman Vincent Peale, T.L. Osborn, A.W. Tozer, and biographical accounts of G.S. Finney, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards and William Seymour.\(^53^8\) The ideas of these people had great impact in his early Christian life and positively affected his role as a Christian leader till today. Within the Anglican mission, people like Bishops Fálopé and Olájídé, who also claimed that they were born again Christians, contrary to the norm in Anglican Church in Nigeria\(^53^9\) contributed immensely to Odún Òríòkè’s Christian growth.

\(^{53^7}\) Barrenness is regarded as a curse in the Yorùbá society, and the Yorùbá people can do anything to make sure that they have at least a child. It is only in the Western society that one hears some people say that they need nothing to do with children. Women are usually at the receiving end of the blame for childlessness because in the imagination of a typical Yorùbá man, or even Yorùbá society in general, women are the causes of infertility. That is why women are often subjected to open ridicule, abuse and misuse, especially from the extended family of the husbands. See N.A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yorùbá*, Ìbàdàn: Ìbàdàn University Press, 1970

\(^{53^8}\) He was very fond of recommending those books to new converts (newly born again), and always personally enforced reading those books by the youth in the church. Oftentimes after reading the books, many youths out of their unguarded zeal tried to abandon their education halfway; he however in his wisdom always counseled them to finish up their education before taking up the work of mission and ministries.

\(^{53^9}\) The word “born again” in many mission-churches in Nigeria initially had a negative connotation until recently that many priests in all the mission-oriented churches are also claiming to be born again Christians.
While in the Anglican Church, he was co-opted into the evangelical outreach unit; the unit embarked on village evangelism, reaching many Ìjèsà villages for Christ. Because of his love for Yorùbá language, especially his appreciation for many Yorùbá cultural values such as dressings, greetings, friendliness, and discipline, he was successful in reaching many local uneducated Yorùbá people more easily than the elites. Oròkè prefers using Yorùbá language in preaching and evangelizing, to the extent that the CWCI radio evangelical broadcast to millions of the Yorùbá listeners in Southwestern Nigeria is conducted in Yorùbá Ìjèsà dialect. The radio broadcast is titled: *Iyè Lópòlopò* (Abundant life broadcast).

As part of his passion for evangelical work and Christian ministry, he first resigned his appointment as a Medical doctor at the University of Ifè Medical center in 1989. He thought starting a private hospital would give him opportunity not only to have more time for evangelical activities, but also that he would be able to influence many of his patients to make decisions for Christ. At the time he resigned his appointment from the University Health services, many thought he was a fool and that he was being brainwashed. But he had already made his mind up and nothing could dissuade him from his decision. His wife solidly supported his decision but not without a good backup. The solid backup was the private hospital he started in November 1989.

The name of his private hospital was Life Fountain Hospital located at Kòsálábàrò, Ìbàdàn road, Ilé-Ifè. I worked in this hospital as a registered Nurse (RN) from 1991 until April 2000 when the hospital was burned down by the Modákéké warrior during the Ifè-Modákéké inter-ethnic war in 2000. The hospital was being run like a Christian charity organization. Many patients were treated free and all other patients were usually given some percentage discounts on both treatments and medicine. True to his assumption, many patients/clients became born again,
because there was always a morning devotional that lasted thirty minutes every morning before any patients could be attended to, except if there was an emergency.

Orîôkè claimed he had his own share of the challenge often experienced in Christian ministry. The initial challenge he experienced was when he changed his old used Peugeot car he bought in 1980 on becoming a medical doctor, to purchase a used (Mercedes Benz) car in 1992 when the CWCI was still in its inchoate stage. Both Christians and non-Christians outside of CWCI alike passed around rumors, claiming that Orîôkè had stolen church money to buy his new (used) Mercedes Benz car. Apart from different negative names given to him by people in mission churches such as “snatcher” of church members, an opportunist, a betrayer, and so on, calamity also struck in his family; he lost his first child to fire accident in October, 1994. This terribly devastated his family, because many people in Ifè town claimed it was a judgment of God for betraying other churches in snatching their members.

Even within CWCI leadership, a pastor confronted Odún Orîôkè by telling him it was God who decided to kill his son because of his disobedience to go into full time ministry. After recovering from the shock of their son’s death, Orîôkè started to disengage little by little from active private medical practice to create more time for God’s work. In 1997, he fully disengaged from the medical practice and asked some doctors in the Teaching Hospital to take up his private hospital. The choice of Odún Orîôkè as the leader of CWCI stems from the fact of his exceptional charisma, dedication, and commitment to the work of God. He is well-read as far as Christian literature on evangelism, church growth, Christian/Church leadership, home and family, youth ministry, children ministry, women ministry, home cell and financial management are concerned. Ojo is very correct in asserting that “Although the leaders claimed impetus for the change (from Fellowship to Church denomination) to a Church Growth conference they
attended in mid-1992, it was really the stability of the presidency of Orôkè that provided the right environment for the members (of CWCI) to rationalize the existence of their organization."^540

*Doctrinal Emphasis of Christ Way Church International*

CWCI’s doctrine is not too different from the combination of the Apostolic and Nicene creeds,^541 except for few Pentecostal Charismatic doctrinal beliefs that are added. We need to remind ourselves that the people that make up the CWCI have their background in mission churches such as Anglican Communion, Baptist Mission, Methodist and Roman Catholic missions. What the leadership of CWCI just did was to reproduce those creedal statements from those older denominations, and get them enshrined in their constitution. While the CWCI constitution is there just to guide and not to control, according to Odún Orôkè (the general overseer), he claimed that the doctrinal or creedal statements are beyond the control of any mortals.^542 This seems to be the opinion of Pentecostal Charismatic leaders, forgetting that if the creedal or doctrinal statements are that rigid, we are very unlikely to be having a proliferation of churches. The creedal statements go like this: We believe in

1. The sovereignty of God in creation, redemption and judgment of mankind;
2. The TRIUNE GOD consisting of God the father, the son and the Holy Spirit;
3. The Bible as the inspired, the only infallible and the authoritative word of God and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct;
4. The virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, triumphant resurrection, ascension, exaltation and abiding intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ;

---

^540 Ojo, The End Time Army, 94
^541 Alister E. McGrath, Christian Theology: An Introduction (Malden MA, Blackwell Publishing,2005),20-21
^542 The question one may raise is: If it is indeed true that creedal statements could not be changed by any mortals as claimed, why are people breaking away to start their own churches?
5. That all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and that salvation from sin is by God’s grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ;

6. Repentance and restitution in line with the teachings of the bible;

7. That salvation can be maintained only through continuous holy and sanctified living in complete obedience to the Holy Scripture;

8. Baptism of the Holy Spirit for the born again believers with evidence of speaking in tongues as the Spirit of God gives utterance (Acts 2:4);

9. Intensive world evangelization and missionary work in accordance with the Great Commission;

10. Operation of the gift of the Holy Spirit in line with the scriptures;

11. Water baptism by immersion for believers;

12. The Lord’s Supper;

13. Divine Healing by faith and that healing is included in the atonement;

14. The universality of the body of Christ to which all true believers belong;

15. On giving tithes and offerings, and

16. The imminent physical return of our Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the saints, the rapture, the resurrection of the dead, eternal life for the righteous and eternal damnation for the lost.\textsuperscript{543}

These creedal confessions or doctrinal emphases can also be seen in virtually all Pentecostal Charismatic churches’ constitutions in Nigeria and perhaps in the United States of America. Many of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria share some general themes together and express them in creedal statements that are close to these statements.

\textsuperscript{543} See Christ Way Church International 2012 revised constitution and see also Bólájí Ajibadé Christ Way Church and Politics, 2010:26-27. These creedal confessions or doctrinal emphases can also be seen in virtually all Pentecostal Charismatic churches’ constitutions in Nigeria and perhaps in the United States of America. Many of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria share some general themes together and express them in creedal statements that are close to these statements.
States of America. Many of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria share some general themes together and express them in creedal statements that are close to these statements.

CWCI leaders claimed that they are also guided by a philosophy: “We believe there is hope of successful living, happiness and eternal life for all because of the love and power of God as found in John 3:16; 10:10; and 2 Peter 3:9. The church’s motto is: Bible Standard in Living and Service. To be able to achieve both and make the teachings have lasting impact on the members and new converts, they summed up the creedal statements, the philosophy and motto into “4S”: Salvation, Sanctification, Service and Success.

**Salvation:** The leadership of CWCI believes that salvation is the plan of God for every human being in this world. It is an eternal plan of redemption from sin, sickness, and oppression brought about by the devil and his agents. It is the belief that salvation is not something anybody merits, but it is the grace of God. Ephesians 2:8 is often quoted to support this claim. The leadership believes that, although salvation is by grace, it is equally true that only people who genuinely repent of their sins can be saved. Victory over sin is obtained through sincere and genuine repentance. It is after a person has had salvation experience that she/he can become sanctified.

**Sanctification:** Sanctification has its root in Latin word “Sanctus,” that is to be made holy. It translates the Greek word “Hagiasmos” which means to “set apart”, “to consecrate”, and “to separate one thing from the rest”. It is the belief of the leadership of the CWCI that sanctification can be obtained through proper study of the word of God, regular attendance in the fellowship with other believers, praying and fasting and constant watchfulness (Romans 12:1-2). The first two characteristics of Christian experience, automatically lead to the third, according to CWCI, which is service. As part of the teachings of CWCI, it is their belief that it is impossible for a person to be born again (saved) and sanctified without fully engaging in the work of God, such
as evangelism, being active in any department in the church and being devoted to helping people around her/him.

_Service_: Service to God and humanity is believed to be the essence of any person in the world.

The general overseer constantly reminds the members at every special program of the church that they (the members) are saved to serve God and humanity. The concept of service is sung in songs, one of which is:

My life, my life, my life;
My life for Jesus;
He gave his life for me;
My life for Jesus

CWCI counts evangelism, otherwise known as Great Commission, as the first, the second and the last of the service one can effectively render as a sincere and committed Christian, before such a Christian can receive any reward from God. Evangelism in this sense may not necessarily be preaching through words alone but through deeds of the members in their neighborhood, community, at work, inside the bus, inside restaurants, and at all times. Using Paul's injunction to the Corinthians in 1Corinthians 9:19-27, the leaders reinforce the necessity to remain humble in the service to God and humanity.

_Success_: The last cardinal teaching is success. The leaders of CWCI teach that success can be attained through targeted or intended goals and purposeful living. The leaders are sincere enough to note that success is not a preserve of Christians only, as some Pentecostal Charismatic churches often teach, that being born again automatically translates into success, but that every purposeful, hardworking person can be successful in life. The general overseer often uses the case studies of people like Dr. Táí Sóláárìn (an agnostic), Wole Soyinka (a Sàngó worshipper), Felá Ransome Kuti (an atheist) and a host of others to buttress the point that success only come to people who are determined and hardworking. He always, however, stresses the fact that a person
who is born again will not only be successful in the secular aspect of life but also in the spiritual aspect as well.

The CWCI teaches that all that Christians need in this life are already being provided by God in Christ Jesus. John 10:10 is the key according to the general overseer; “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (NIV), in KJV (abundantly). This is where the nickname of the church comes from: the Abundant Life people. Indeed! Many members (about 60%) are doing well, and the people in this percentile are catering to the needs of the remaining 40% according to the general overseer, Pastor Odún Oriòkè, when last I had a discussion with him.\(^5\) I believe the figures he provided are based on his personal assumptions and perhaps his personal interactions with his members.

Apart from the discussion I had with the general overseer, I discovered that most pastors are struggling to move up in the ladder of success by engaging in one business or another so as to catch up with the people at the top. And those in the educational sector are constantly making progress and doing well in their chosen career. For example, the general overseer is a retired medical doctor but runs a private school, while his wife pastor Dùnní Oriòkè, who coordinates the women’s ministry of the church, holds two Masters degrees. The assistant general overseer, Pastor Mike Àjàyí is a professor and deputy vice-Chancellor Administration at Obáfemi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifè, his wife, Láídé Àjàyí, also a pastor has two Master degrees and is the principal Assistant Registrar in the same University. The current secretary, of the church, pastor Oláníyì Onàyemí is a professor of medicine and the Dean of Faculty of Medicine, Obáfemi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifè. The prayer co-coordinator for the entire church, pastor

\(^5\) The general overseer did not give me any book to show concretely any research work that has been carried out to support his point. I believe the figures he provided are based on his personal assumptions and perhaps his personal interactions with his members.
Janet Adélówò, is a woman and has Master’s degree in Education and she is a principal of a State government high school, and lastly the choir director, pastor David Œgúngbilé is a professor of comparative study in Religious studies and a host of others. 80% of the pastors have at least a first (undergraduate) degree, another 10% have an equivalent of community college certificate, and the remaining 10% are successful business women and men.

In order to inculcate the attitude and mindset of success into the psyche of the members, quarterly success seminars and prayers are often organized. Successful educators, business women and men, who are equally pastors from other ministries and churches, are usually invited to come and teach members about how to become successful Christians and in chosen careers. The church maintains that:

Breakthrough, success and fulfillment are natural consequences of every serious commitment. But in our case, breakthrough will not just be natural but divine as well. God will cause our baskets to be full and make us laugh over what have hitherto made us cry. No one will serve God in vain. He is the “rewarder” of them who diligently seek Him. 545

Translocal/International Connection

With the determination to evangelize the whole world, CWCI has partnered and made friends with the Mike-Kelley ministry’s First Assembly of God Church in Iowa, USA. This further enhances the church’s access to trans-national and international connections. Marshall-Fratani agrees with Rijk van Dijk that “Pentecostalism is historically a transnational phenomenon, which in its modern forms is reproduced in its local diversity through a highly accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people.” 546 They are indeed correct, because it seems

that many members from those various Pentecostal Charismatic churches, who have had
opportunity to travel overseas, often create opportunities for other leaders of these movements to
tavel internationally to make connections with their Western preachers/friends. It seems also
that, without an international connection, a local Pentecostal Charismatic church might feel like
they are a loser.

Meeting times and practices in CWCI

As a religious organization, CWCI is an organized group of people who share many
social institutions, including language, economic and political systems, and patterns of belief and
thought. The organization helps members to have the experience of the secondary
socialization. During this process, the members are helped to see, hear, and do what they are
told to do, and in turn members internalize those behavioral patterns and make sense of them.
This kind of socialization process does not only define “in-groups” from “out-groups”, it is also a
means by which group identity is formed and maintained. The CWCI uses meetings and its
various practices to form and maintain its group identity.

Sunday worship service is called a convocation “ceremony” time by CWCI leaders,
whereby members come together in worship and celebration of their “risen Lord-Jesus Christ.”
Sunday worship service is equally regarded as the time when believers come to rejoice, socialize
and support one another in celebrating thanksgivings and in mourning every loss. Sunday
worship is usually full of fanfares; participatory Sunday school (Search the Scripture) time,

547 Anthony J. Gittins, Gifts and Strangers: Meeting the Challenge of Inculturation, (New York and Mahwah, New

548 Socialization is a continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms,
values, behavior, learn social skills appropriate to his or her social position. They are of two types: primary and
secondary. The primary socialization is learned within one’s immediate family, which might involve extended
family in African societal setting, especially for people who are not living in an urban setting. The secondary
socialization is often learned within an organized group in a larger society. Perhaps one can argue that the primary
and secondary socialization have something in common with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, see Outline of Theory
of Practice, 72-95.
electrified and emotional praise and worship’s time, consecrated prayer time, jubilating offering and tithes’ time, expressive choir singspiration and responsive sermon time. All these are packaged together to make members enjoy themselves in the presence of the Lord.

The service time is ordered and timed but pastors of local churches are also advised to allow for variations, not allowing worship schedule to control and direct them. The general overseer in particular often advocates for openness to the unpredictability of worship by members. He often says, “Variation adds spice to ceremony.” This is where Pentecostal Charismatic churches are quite different from older mission churches whose worship service can be predicted based on their ordered and structured worship. The general overseer also makes it mandatory for pastors not to keep their members for more than two and half hours at most in the church, except the first Sunday when there are thanksgivings, children, and marriage dedications.

The working team (Church Workers) of the church is allowed to dress in their traditional attires, as opposed to the formal English dresses which are required in some of the Pentecostal Churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, and Winner’s Chapel. Yet, strict discipline is enforced on the working team by the leaders. For example, a church worker who is caught engaging in smoking, drinking of alcohol and sexual sins such as fornication and adultery are made to confess openly and then suspended for a year when they make such a confession, until a sign of genuine repentance is noticed.549

The disciplinary measures are nothing different from what the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC), Apostolic Faith Church (AFC), and

---

549 A pastor and some deacons who were caught with sexual misconduct were suspended in the past. A few of these leaders left the church to join another church. This past year 2012, a senior pastor (name withheld) in the Church, was suspended for a year for sexual misconduct. Another pastor was suspended because his daughter was pregnant at the age of 17. According to the general overseer, the disciplinary measure is to inculcate discipline not only in the leaders, but to serve as a warning to all the members of the CWCI.
Foursquare Gospel Church prescribed in their constitution. Added to these are the special trainings that are organized for workers and the pastoral team in order to make them better Christians. In all the special trainings, emphasis is laid on sexual purity, moral uprightness and sound and good conduct among workers. According to the general overseer, Odún Oriôkè, leaders are expected to lead by good examples of moral discipline and to be upright in their conducts and not just in the words of mouth.

The new converts are enculturated into the beliefs, norms and value systems of CWCI by making them pass through the Ten Lessons on Victorious Christian Living, baptismal classes, discipling lessons, and weekly bible study. These training programs are conducted using the publications of the CWCI prepared to help both the new and old members to grow into Christ-like behavior. The teachings are also aimed at helping members to be serviceable in the church and the larger society. Added to these trainings is the quarterly workers’ retreat and seminar for those who are already enlisted in the working team of the church. The quarterly workers’ retreat/seminar weekend is a period when the general overseer and other executive leaders teach and emphasize the norms and values of the church.

The leaders use the occasion to get feedback from pastors from various branches where they are located. The feedback includes physical and spiritual challenges that are being faced by those churches in their different localities. Incorporated in the weekly and quarterly programs of CWCI is the constant teaching of the members to be hardworking and industrious. Laziness is detested and completely frowned at. According to the general overseer, a lazy man cannot be a good Christian [Òle kò leè se Ìgbàgbó]. As already hinted above, the leaders are making efforts

---

550 The working team consists of the choir group, ushering department, children teachers’ department, Sunday school teachers’ department, Youth leaders’ department; follow up department and so on.
to live by the good examples of Christians who are very hard-working. All the leaders in CWCI occupy leadership positions in their chosen career. While it is correct to say that leaders in CWCI teach their members about prosperity, success and breakthroughs, the leaders equally believe that laziness will bring poverty, lack and want. They often use bible passages such as Proverbs 6:1-10; 19:24 to support their claims.

There are monthly programs in the church that are aimed at teaching the members about spiritual warfare. The second Friday of every month is tagged Abundant Life Vigil. It is an all-nightly prayer vigil, which normally commences at 9.00pm on Friday and lasts till 5.00am on Saturday. The reasons for having a night vigil according to the leaders of CWCI are two-fold: to emulate Jesus Christ who also prayed throughout the night during his life ministry as recorded by Luke chapter 6:2; and to engage in spiritual warfare against demons and the devil’s agents that are very “active” during the night. Those devil’s agents that are very active during the night time are witches and wizards. This is one of the areas where African worldviews continue to influence CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in Africa. The idea that there are personal malevolent spirits assigned not only to monitor one’s life but also to destroy one’s destiny is one of the reasons why the traditional Yorùbá people sacrifice at night or midnight.

Added to this monthly night vigil are three-day early morning warfare and breakthrough prayers scheduled for the first three days of each month of the year. The prayer time commences at 6.00 am in the morning and ends at 7.00 am. This three-day prayer time attracts more crowd.

---

551 The problem connected with this belief, assuming there are witches and wizards, is that of consigning the activities of these (wicked) spirits to the nightly time. The question one may ask is: Can these evil powers be exercised during the day time as well or at any time at all? The answer lies in the fact that Yorùbá religious belief system link night or darkness with the works of the evil doers. Hence, they think that a sacrifice that will counteract the effect of evil should be offered at night or midnight. Again, belief in demonic powers seems to be pervasive in North America among some Pentecostal Charismatic church’s pastors or evangelists. See for example, books written by Bill Subristsky, Demons Defeated, Chichester, 1986; Lester Sumrall, Three Habitants of Devils, South Bend, 1989; John Osteen, Pulling down Strongholds, Houston, 1972; Rebecca Brown, He Came to Set the Captives Free, Springdale, PA, 1989. All these books are available in virtually all Nigerians Christians’ Bookshops.
from within CWCI and from other Christian denominations and interestingly too, a few Muslim men and women come for the early prayer meetings. Historically, the Early Christian Church placed greater emphasis on prayer as means to get favor and help from God. But while the contents of the Early Christian Church’s prayers are petitions, the modern day Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatics make their prayers more like an opportunity to command God to do what the Christians desire.

Quoting the scripture out of its immediate context from the book of Isaiah 45:1, they justify their compulsive and strong-willed spirit of name it and claim it attitude, even if what they are asking for does not align with the will of God. These prayer times are led by the pastors just like the Yorùbá traditional religious cultic worship is led by the chief priests. The only difference is in their approach; while the Yorùbá traditional religious priests say prayers on behalf of the community, the Pentecostal Charismatic priests (pastors) allow for spontaneous free prayer of every individual which makes it rather an eclectic approach to praying.

There are other meeting times such as monthly Women meeting tagged Ladies Resource’s meeting headed by the wife of the general overseer, pastor Đùní Oriòkè; waiting

---

552 Nigerian Pentecostal Charismatic patterns of prayer seem almost the same, and it is very interesting to note that even in the diaspora, especially in North America, many Redeemed Christian Church of God’s chapels (RCCG North America) have taken not only monthly Holy Ghost Vigil to be very important, the very first Saturday of every month is equally very important, which is tagged “Command the Month.” In the local RCCG church I am attending in Houston, Texas, the prayer time on Saturday starts by 6.00am and ends by 8.00am. The monthly night vigil starts by 11.00pm and ends by 2.00am or 3.00 am depending on the move of the Holy Spirit according to the Pastor in this local assembly. Bólájí Ajibádé claims that some churches under CWCI hold their Monthly morning prayer on Saturday only to deal with powers of hindrances and indecisions barring people from making appreciable progress. Ajibádé correctly interpret Saturday to be a day of indecision (Ojó abáméta) according to the Yorùbá religious interpretation.


554 The women do not want to use the word women to describe themselves, they prefer instead to use the word ladies, saying that the word ladies is more acceptable and more respectable way to address women folk. Felá Ransomed Kútì once recorded a song: If you call an African woman, she no dey answers you, she go say I no be woman, she go say, I be lady oo. See "Lady" as written by Obie Trice, Marshall B. Iii Mathers, Luis Edgardo Resto Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, EMI Music Publishing, Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., Sony/ATV
couples’ and pregnant women’s prayer meetings holds every third Tuesday of every month also coordinated by the wife of the general overseer; pastors’ forum meets every second Tuesday evening of each month is coordinated by the general overseer or his assistant if the general overseer is not present. The pastors forum is designed to be an important meeting where pastors from all the branches in Nigeria come together to pray for their church members, their families, themselves, Nigeria, other Christian bodies and to warn against the demonic strongholds hindering the work of the gospel. Added to the prayer time are the two different teaching/seminar sessions to teach pastors deep things about the Christian ministry, the family, the society, and moral conduct. It is also where churches give feedback on a monthly basis. The forum also serves as a space where major decisions that have been taken by the leaders (Central Executive Council, CEC) are communicated to the pastors, in order for them to go and carry them out in their various local assemblies.

**Ritual Festival and Convocation Ceremonial Time**

CWCI members commemorate and celebrate the time of their beginning in a grand style.

The event is usually preceded by the annual ritual of 40 days of praying and fasting. The 40 days annual praying and fasting follows the pattern of ritual rigidity articulated in the studies of Mircea Eliade. He argues that every ritual has a divine model, an archetype. Ritual is equally for him a re-enactment of this primal myth, bringing the past continuously into the

---

555 I was informed by my wife that starting from January, 2013, the Pastors’ forum meeting has been moved to the first Saturday of every month. The reason given according to her is that many pastors have not been able to attend the Tuesday meeting because they usually go to their work place on the Wednesday after the meeting. Meanwhile, pastors are expected to come from other cities beyond Ilé-Ife.

556 The idea of forty day is symbolic of Moses, Elijah and Jesus praying and fasting for forty days during their own leadership/prophetic ministries. It is not out of point to argue that the same idea runs in the minds of Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches who are observing 40 day lent fasts before Easter every year.

present. Roger Schmidt, who accepts this model, asserts: “The repetitive character of ritual is necessary because gestures communicate best when they are familiar, and because rites are linked to the past.”\textsuperscript{558} He nonetheless believes that in spite of their repetitiveness and compliance with tradition it is open to modification.\textsuperscript{559}

This is very true of CWCI. The 40 days prayers and Fasting initially declared, that led to the inauguration of the church in 1992, has continued to be practiced. All members (except those members who are pregnant and those who have one ailment or the other) are asked to fast from 12 am till 5.30pm every day before they break their fast, they are expected to go to their local churches to pray from 4.30 pm till 5.30 pm. Meanwhile, the coming together is part of the communal and corporate ritual, which the leaders believe will help in making prayers to be answered faster than private individual prayer.\textsuperscript{560} During communal praying and fasting, speaking in tongues, prophesies and visions are recurrent patterns. Just like the women in pre-Olójó festival, women in CWCI are the major vessels who are often seized by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{561} Just like it has been said above, here is another example by which women manifest themselves as the “power of the weak.” That women are the special vessels of the divine voice or presence is ubiquitously a marker or symptom of their structural subordination.

The general overseer often uses the broom metaphor to stress the point of communal worship. According to this broom metaphor, a stick of broom can easily be broken into pieces,

\textsuperscript{558} Roger Schmidt, \textit{Exploring Religion} (California: Wardsworth, Inc. 1980), 156
\textsuperscript{559} Schmidt, \textit{Exploring Religion}, 156
\textsuperscript{560} This point is necessary because individual prayer time is encouraged through prayer guide booklets that have been made available for all members to guide them in prayers (the booklet is not rigid but just a guide), yet the communal prayer meetings are often seen as more beneficial than prayer prayed all by oneself.
\textsuperscript{561} One of the means by which women in the Yorubá religious spheres make themselves visible and recognizable is through spirit seizure, prophetism, and visionary experiences. One can think in this manner of the importance of the visionary experience of Christianah Abiódún Akánṣówóó to the founding of Cherubim and Seraphim in the Yorubá society in 1925. See detailed story in Joseph O. Omóyájowó, \textit{Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church}, (NY: NOK Publishers, 1982). See also Oyérónké Olájugbú’s book, \textit{Women in the Yoruba}, 54-64.
whereas the entire broom that is tied together as one bunch cannot be broken easily as a broom stick. Here is one area where Pentecostal Charismatic Churches continue to perpetuate the concept of Yorùbá traditional sense of community. Much emphasis is laid on communal actions and ritual practices among the Yorùbá and they are much reflected in their proverbs, aphorisms and their sayings such as, Àílè kó òwó rìn ejò, ní ó má se ìkù pa wón [Because snakes do not crawl in communal fashion, they are easily killed by humans]. Another one says, Èrò yèè, ní jé pé Ògún dé [Too much noises of people indicate an imminent war] and last but not least, Àgbájo owó ni a fí ìsọ àyà, àjèjè owó kan kò gbé erù d’órí [This can be translated to mean, United we stand, divided we fall]. There is no doubt too, that the inspiration of coming together in a communal fashion is gotten from Early Christians, especially during the times of persecution, as recorded by Luke in the book of Acts of the Apostles 2:1-5; 4:23-3.

The forty days of praying and fasting by all members culminate in an annual big convocation celebration in commemoration of the inauguration of the church. This celebration is called Annual Joint Service, when all members of CWCI from different local assemblies in Ilé-Ifè and other states come together to worship God in praise and thanksgiving. The day for this celebration is the last Sunday of November of every year. It is a day when the general overseer reports on the state of the church and gives them information on the progress the CWCI has made in the previous year, in terms of churches that have been planted, marriages that were conducted, and new babies born into the members’ families. It is equally the period when losses in form of deaths of some members in the previous year are made known to all the members from different cities that have come to celebrate the annual occasion. The financial statement of the Church is read openly and members who want copies are asked to go to the church’s secretariat to collect them. As part of the programs for the day, people are asked to rededicate
themselves to God and to the work of the ministry. Special monetary donations are asked from the members for the following year’s church projects. The church closes with fanfares by the members.

There is however, another annual CWCI program that resembles the annual Olójó festival, which is called Easter Annual Convention and Retreat. The only difference is that while the Olójó festival commemorates Ògún, the god of iron and war, Easter festival commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus. This Easter annual commemorative ritual worship, just like the Olójó festival, brings people from far and near Ilé-Ifè; all members from different cities where all the CWCI members are worshipping in their local branches also come to Ilé-Ifè, the headquarters’ city of CWCI, for a period of four days to celebrate Easter. The similarity of the Olójó ritual festival and CWCI’s celebration of Easter with regards to preparation is very striking! While the Oòni, in the case of the Olójó goes incommunicado for a week to communicate with the spirits of the ancestors and the gods, the CWCI members also declare a week of praying and fasting to call on God for the success of the celebration of the Easter.

During the convention/retreat days, leaders focus their teachings on the sacrifice Jesus made for them on the cross, which is regarded as the ultimate and only sacrifice acceptable to God. The leaders of the CWCI use the occasion of the Easter convention and retreat to teach their members polemically against sacrifice to idols and “useless” gods and goddesses like Olójó festival, Ôsun, Sângó, Edì and the rest of the gods and goddesses, that it is not only a

\[\text{CWCI embarked on some capital intensive projects that can bring money for the purpose of furthering the work of God (evangelistic campaigns and church planting). These projects are Palm Tree, Tick tree, and cocoa plantations, schools (Elementary and High School), and especially the Camp Ground project.}\]

\[\text{The word man-made god is interchanged for useless gods and goddesses by many Pentecostal Charismatic churches.}\]
waste of time and energy but a sign of “blindness of the spirit (mind).” 564 Webb Keane is right in claiming that “One of the central things conversion does is change the relations of agent and patient, and of subject and object.” 565 The attempt the CWCI leaders are making is to engage in the work of purification, which according to Bruno Latour never entirely succeeds. 566 We need to be aware that St. Paul’s sermon text, drawn from Acts 17:16ff to the Athenians already gives impetus to the boldness of CWCI leaders to speak of and against idols (Òrisàs) in a city wholly given to idolatry like Athens. The message also has a very important function it serves; some of the members, especially those converted people from Ifè, have direct relations to one Òrisà or another. The message then becomes necessary as a form of warning to the people who might be tempted to go back to the evil of the idolatrous past.

The Easter convention and retreat messages also focus on the suppression of the ancestral spirits often implicated in matters such as protection, preservation, production and reproduction, but the exaltation of the supplied categories such as God, Jesus, Holy Spirit. The attention of CWCI members is diverted from thinking that ancestors and Òrisàs can offer any benefits to humans; the leaders teach instead that only God through Jesus Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit can any woman and man achieve either spiritual or material success in life. We can see a good reason why deliverance time is also built into the Easter convention/retreat period; it is with the aim of purging the members from their alleged evil and demonic pasts. The problem with this thinking, though, according to Birgit Meyer is that “by creating room for the expression of the satanic in the context of deliverance, Pentecostals are allowed to enact otherwise forbidden

564 This phrase is taken from the Pauline letter to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 verses 3 and 4, where he says, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds (spirits) of the unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
566 See Keane, Christian Moderns, 80
or muted aspects of themselves. The problem connected still in thinking that Satan and demons are responsible for many atrocities and sinful behaviors committed by the CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatic members is the projection of personal responsibility unto other agencies outside of the self.

In spite of all the polemics used against the Òrìsà worshippers, there are certain symbolic similarities that one can easily see in the celebration of Olójó festival and that of Easter celebration. As mentioned earlier, from the knowing of the date of Olójó festival by Chief Erédümí to the celebration of it, there is a gap of forty days, when various preparations and pre-Olójó cleansing ritual activities are going on. This similarity with Easter period is very striking, since Roman Catholics and Protestants all over the world engage in ritual cleansing of praying and fasting for forty days. Christians who could not fast deny themselves of eating meat and engage in eating bitter herbs. Besides this, there is the symbolic ritual of the death of Jesus on Friday and his resurrection on Sunday. The dog is equally sacrificed to Ògún, especially during Olójó festival on Friday and not any other day. In the Yorùbá signification of days, Friday is Ojó Eti (the day of inactivity or failure), and sacrifice is needed to make the day active and successful. The next day of sacrifice is Saturday, known as Ojó Àbáméta (the day of three decisions). According to this interpretation, it is a day when the wicked spirits are always making plans to either maim persons or render ineffective people’s plans or kill them.

---


568 Quite a number of my Roman Catholic and Protestant friends both in Nigeria and in the United States of America usually refrain from eating meat during the forty day Lent fast. Some people in the USA even claim that the Lenten period is a time they refrain from their favorite foods and drinks such as gluten-laden foods, wines and coffee.
A Pentecostal preacher showed the same similarity while expositing the Bible. He explained that, after Jesus Christ was crucified on Friday, the Pharisees and the chief priests went to Pilate to remind him that, the impostor (referring to Jesus) claimed he would rise on the third day (Matthew 27:62-66). In order to prevent this to happen, they took three decisions: to secure the tomb with a big stone, put a seal and then to place a guard. All these precautions were put in place, according to the evangelist, so that the purpose of God for mankind would be frustrated.

The Saturday is the day when the Arè crown is worn by the Oòni, during which he blesses the people through the àse (authority) that emanates from the Arè crown.

Yet it is believed that there are wicked spirits that act like guards against the plan of God, who always cause problems and render ineffective the sacrifices and blessings that are meant for the people. It is a day when some Ajogun might want to cause the rain to fall on the Arè crown, which is a taboo. Sunday is the day the Lord Jesus rose (resurrected) from the grave, in Yorùbá conceptual language; it is the Ojó Àìkú (The day of Immortality). As Easter Sunday is for all Christians all over the world for celebrating their Risen Lord, so is Sunday meant for all traditional religious worshippers in Ilé-Ifè to be a day of jubilation in appreciation that their collective sacrifice has been accepted by the gods on behalf of Olódùmarè. And finally, just like

---

569 Evangelist Job Àlàbí claims that he was once a member of an Awo cult before he was converted and was called into the Christian Evangelistic ministry. He preached for a whole week at Beulah Baptist Church, Ilé-Ifè, during the church’s annual revival service in June 1988, exposing the works of evil powers and demonic influences in the lives of people. Job Àlàbí’s hermeneutics in comparing the resurrection of Jesus with Òrìsàs in respect to the days of the Yorùbá week might not be acceptable to many Pentecostal Christians but I find his interpretations very fascinating and informative.

570 Wándé Abímbólá asserted that there are two pantheons of supernatural powers that compete for the domination of the universe. They are Òrìsà, who are also known as irinwó ‘molè ojúkòtún [four hundred supernatural powers of the right], and Ajogun, who are known as igbàa ‘molè ojúkòsí [two hundred supernatural powers of the left]. The two hundred supernatural powers of the left are the Dues de Mal that is always seeking for the downfall and destructions of human beings in the Yorùbá cosmos. See his article titled: ‘Ifá: A West African Cosmological System’ in Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E.A. van Beek & Dennis L Thomson eds. Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), 102-106.
Jesus Christ showed himself to his disciples on Monday, the similarity is that Oòni also used the Monday after Olójó sacrifice to show himself to his Patrilineage.

**CWCI, CAN and PFN** in Ilé-Ifè

As a Christian denomination, it is expected of CWCI to be a member of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), but because of the initial verbal attack and open confrontation on the person of Odún Oríòkè, the general overseer of the CWCI and the church, the church initially was reluctant to join the organization. Apart from this reason, the leadership of CWCI believes that there are some members of the Executive Committee of CAN who belonged to one secret cult of the other. Due to the influences, however, of some well-meaning individuals in Mission-Churches, who believed in what Oríòkè stands for and what he had contributed to their lives and ministries, he was persuaded to allow CWCI to become members of the CAN. Upon joining the CAN, Ilé-Ifè branch, the executive members of the organization wanted to make him a general secretary, which he politely turned down. According to Oríòkè, he made a promise to support whatever noble program the CAN is organizing to advance the kingdom of God in Ilé-Ifè. True to his promise, when in early November of 2002, Reinhard Bonnke’s Christ For All Nations Ministry came to hold a Crusade in Ilé-Ifè, fully supported and hosted by CAN, Oríòkè and CWCI Ifè branches were actively involved in providing human resources who belonged to praying, counseling, choir, organizing and planning Departments.572

---

571 CAN means Christian Association of Nigeria, this is the umbrella organ for all Christians in Nigeria that was formed in 1976 during the General Yakubu Gowon military era while PFN means Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, an umbrella organization for all Pentecostal Charismatic Christians in Nigeria that was formed in 1986 during the General Ibrahim Babangida era in response to registering Nigeria as a member of OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference). See Tóyìn Fálólá, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*, (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998) and see also some articles in Julius Adékúnlé ed. *Religion in Politics: Secularism and National Integration in Modern Nigeria*, NJ: African World Press, 2009

572 As an active member of CWCI, I belonged to the Counseling department of the Reinhard Bonnke’s Crusade in Ilé-Ifè in November, 2002.
As far as the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) is concerned, CWCI joined PFN and was active because they were skeptical of the actions of some of the leaders of CAN. CWCI also joined PFN to further the Pentecostal Charismatics’ agenda of not only re-Christianizing Mission-Churches and “unbelievers” but also to become part of the Umbrella organization of the PFN at the National level. Within the PFN in Ilé-Ifè, the influence of Oríòkè and, by extension, the CWCI is enormous. Oríòkè and the church are involved in nearly all special Christian programs in the city. Interestingly, this is one of the ways by which Oríòkè become interested in the work of the current Oòni, Oba Okùnadé Síjúwadé Olúbùse II. Oríòkè is also connected with Oòni through one of the Oòni’s wives, Olorì Odún, who is an active member of CWCI, of whom little or nothing has been said by scholars.

Even Olúpònà only makes mentioned of Olorì Odún with respect to the praying group of the palace chapel built by one of the senior wives, Olorì Mori. Nothing more was said about her. My interaction with Olorì Odún revealed that she is a silent Christian voice that has not been heard, but which has contributed immensely to the positive effect Christianity is making in the life of the Oòni today.573 The reason for this can be as a result of the Yorùbá cultural belief system that accords a pride of place to a senior wife in a polygamous marriage setting.574 The truth is that the contact Oríòkè made with Oòni has also impacted the ‘born-again’ culture in Oòni. Oftentimes Oòni sends for Oríòkè, and has also attended CWCI and openly said that he (Oòni) is a fan of CWCI.575 Just like the kings of Israel depended on the prophets of God, so is

573 See Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 282-297. Whatever the case may be, it is obvious that women, either within or outside the palace have contributed immensely to the effective Christianization of Ilé-Ifè.
574 Fadipe, Sociology of the Yorùbá, 89-91 and 114
575 Oríòkè told me that Oòni gives him gifts on a regular basis, an issue that I will elaborate upon in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
Oríòkè among the prophets of God that Oòni relies upon for guidance and prayers on certain issues, especially now that Oòni is also claiming to be a born again Christian.

As part of Oríòkè’s Pentecostal Charismatic Christian agenda to evangelize Ilé-Ifé and all the Yorùbá cities and villages, he established the Ifè City prayer group\textsuperscript{576} that meets every first Friday of the month between 6.00 am and 7.00 am in the Chapel of Grace\textsuperscript{577} to pray for the city of Ilé-Ifé, the Oòni, and the total eradication of Òrìsàs in the Ifè and the entire Yorùbá cities. The first day of October’s early Morning Prayer\textsuperscript{578} every year added another dimension to the way Ifè continued to be influenced by the Pentecostal Charismatic Christian ethos. The Oòni had come to the October first early Morning Prayer about two or three times with some of his chiefs and Olorì Odún in the past. Keane is right in saying, especially with respect to the converts in the Sumbanese city that:

The missionary seeks to change the convert’s self-consciousness so that, in Thomas Hooker’s words, “things may appear as they are.” Evangelism is thus, in part, an assault on the explicit contents of what is construed as false knowledge. But the church also seeks to transform local practices, with the implications that may exceed the range of explicit doctrine.\textsuperscript{579}

This similarity is no more apparent than the Ifè’s case, what the Pentecostal Charismatic Christians are doing is to engage in the work of purification and transformation of traditional religious people of Ifè’s values and belief systems. Part of these transformations is reflected in people’s including chiefs of Ilé-Ifé’s religious discourse during the last 2012 Olójó festival. The

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{576} The Ifè prayer group is open to all Pentecostal Charismatic Christians in Ilé-Ifé, especially the Ifè indigenes who also are born again Christians; their presence is to serve as points of contact with Ifè city. The prayer group started in 2003 but there is a sense in believing that praying for Ilé-Ifé has been part and parcel of HCF turned CWC in the late 70s.
\item \textsuperscript{577} Chapel of Grace is a Pentecostal Charismatic church, an offshoot of Christ Way Fellowship that was founded in 1989 within the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex (OAUTHC).
\item \textsuperscript{578} Before leaving for the USA in September 8, 2006, I was the general coordinator for prayers and Mission and Ministry for CWCI, so it is an insider’s information that is being reflected here.
\item \textsuperscript{579} Keane, \textit{Christian Moderns}, 223-224
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Christian language of *Jésù O seun* (Thank you Jesus) was very rampant; a language that would have been a taboo during Òrìsàs’ worship, a few years back.

**Maintaining and Transforming Boundaries: the Politics of Religious Identity**

The boundary between Òrìsà worshippers and CWCI members seems fixed and strictly policed by the symbolic system that clearly separates the insiders from outsiders. There is nothing that separates one group of people from other more than ethnic, political and religious identities. In recent times, gender identity has added a radical dimension to the discourse on how identity constructs can be a means by which one particular group is differentiated from the other. Religion, in particular, contributes more to the defining of the self from other selves. Religion has the capacity to set boundaries between those who belong to a particular faith and those who do not. But while the religious boundary marking one faith from the other may not be physical as the Berlin Wall and Iron Curtain that separated the citizens of communist Eastern Europe from the democratic states of the West, it is nevertheless a means by which boundaries are contested, maintained and transformed. Religion creates boundaries through the conceptual symbols expressed in ideas, rituals and belief systems.

One of the sociologists who touch on the issue of the sacred as it affects the question of identity is Hans Mol.580 His argument rests on the premise that individuals, groups and societies have a need for identity, "a stable niche in a predictable environment".581 Theodore E. Long helps in showing how Mol argues that, “Identity is thus allied with the forces of order and integration, which stand in a dialectic relationship to the countervailing processes of

---

580 Mary Douglas’ book *Purity and Danger: Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992 [1966]) is another important epic book that shows how boundary can be created by one religious community against another. Dwelling extensively on the concept of pollution she shows how Israel as a nation differentiates herself from other nations of the world with regards to the rules of hygiene and regulations guiding foods’ preparations and of eating them.

differentiation and adaptation. Both sets of forces are endemic and necessary to social life, human survival and fulfillment, but the constant (though variably strong) pressure of disintegrative forces renders the boundaries of identity fragile and precarious.” Accordingly, “man secures and solidifies identity by sacralizing it, wrapping it in sentiments of awe and untouchability. Sacralization is accomplished by the objectification of meaning, the mobilization of sentiment in commitment, the ritual reinforcement of identity, and the crystallization of symbols in myth (emphasis mine”). There is no doubt that these four characteristic components of sacralization of identity reveal how a CWCI is distinguished or differentiated from Òrisà worshippers, especially the Olójó (Ògún) festival community of faith, as we shall soon see in the next few paragraphs.

Creating Ritual and Social Boundaries: CWCI and Ògún Worshippers

Weiner’s notion of inalienability as I have already noted in the general introduction shows how a group identity can be created and reinforced through inalienable objects. According to her, these objects function as a “force against change” by authenticating origins and kinship histories, hence these objects are not fully dissociated from their original owners. They in fact, affirm the existence of differences of identity between individuals, between groups which make up a society or which want to situate themselves respectively within a set of neighboring societies linked by various kinds of exchanges. The bible in particular acts in its capacity as an inalienable possession though which Pentecostal group identity is authenticated.

Various other ways by which Pentecostal Charismatic Christians strive to create boundaries between the ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ are the conceptual symbolism expressed in

---

583 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 9, 23
ideas, rituals and belief systems, as already mentioned above. The idea that a person who is not “born again” cannot be part of God’s children is first and foremost a defining category that Pentecostal Charismatics use to exclude other people of faiths from themselves. Just like using sacred languages such as Hebrews, Arabic and Aramaic as means of excluding some who do not belong to the speakers of those languages, is a special form of charismatic speech of speaking in tongues (glossolalia) as well.584 The idea of being born again and other ideas such as the infallibility of the word of God (the Bible), salvation through Jesus Christ alone, death and resurrection and a host of others are used in Pentecostal charismatic religious discourses to demonize the “religious others” who do not hold the same ideological views with them.585 Anthony J. Gittins is right when he argues that, “If a particular group judges certain beliefs or behavior unacceptable, that is, “meaningful but no longer approved” (and the processes whereby this may occur are several), it may institutionalize, stigmatize or ostracize any “deviants,” thereby maintaining boundaries.”586

Perhaps Gittins is right, all the respondents to one of the questions I asked in my questionnaire, which inquired: what will your reaction be if any of your organization’s members

584 Unfortunately, the concept of glossolalia (speaking in other tongues) is also a contentious issue between the Pentecostal Charismatics and the evangelical Christians. While the Pentecostal Charismatic Christians use the examples in Acts 2 and I Corinthians 14 to buttress their point that a mark of genuine presence of the Holy Spirit on a believer is to be able to speak in tongues, the evangelicals believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit does not necessarily imply speaking in tongues. See McKenzie, The Christians, 136-138. Faith ideas and ideologies can be means by which boundaries are set and contested. This example is seen first and foremost between Judaism and Christianity, and later between Liberal Protestantism and Evangelicalism in America since the mid-twentieth century (see Richard Quebedeaux, The Worldly Evangelicals: American Born Again Christians and where they’re headed, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980), 132-141.

585 Marshall-Fratani, Mediating the Global and Local, 87

586 The experience I have with some of the CWCI members and other Pentecostal groups in Ilé-Ife showed that, my research work is not too welcome by people who already know me to be a pastor. Some asked me whether there are not enough projects that can promote the cause of Jesus and Christianity more than researching Òrìsà cults, which are meant to die off. Some of the leaders of the Pentecostal Churches even gave me a name of Bàbà Olórìsà (father of the worshippers of Òrìsà). Either they were just joking about this or they meant this, the point has already been made; no genuine Christian ought to engage in a research that has anything to do with Òrìsà religion. See Gittins, Gifts and Strangers, 6
were to join the activities of the above (referring to Olójó worshippers) you have identified?

Ninety percent of my respondents claim they would regard such a person as a backslider, an apostate, an unbeliever, a fresh persecutor of Jesus who needs urgent prayer and deliverance. A few others claim they would pray for such person for a change of heart, while the rest claim that they would scold the person very severely and then counsel her or him to repent. This kind of prejudicial behavior is constantly manifesting in Pentecostal Charismatics’ (CWCI inclusive) relationship to people of faiths other than themselves. They often assume that their own frames of reference are obviously the right ones, or the only ones. CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatics have the notion that by imposing their own ideas and ideologies on the Òrisá worshippers they are not only helping them to see the light of God, but to also help these Òrisá worshippers convert their emptiness in worship to a meaningful, rational and more acceptable way.

Rituals as one of the primary modes of religious expressions are particular means through which CWCI distinguishes itself from the Ògún worshippers. CWCI members polemicize against the Ògún worshippers by calling them ajebo (eaters of sacrifice), abogi (worshippers of trees), and abòpe (worshippers of palm tree), because they (Ògún worshippers) worship concrete materials and inanimate objects. They often use Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans chapter 1, verses 21-22 to teach their members how vain the Òrisá worshippers and their objects of worship are. In reacting to many of these negative names given to the Òrisá worshippers by the CWCI, the Erédùmí, Chief Matthew Akínyemí, claims that the members of the Amen and Hallelujah church (obviously referring to the Pentecostal Charismatic churches) are not being sincere to themselves. According to Erédùmí, many of them come for Ìpèsè or Ètùtù (ritual sacrifice) that would make their churches very big and make the pastors popular, that would make the
members’ businesses to boom and that would make them get pregnant and have children.\textsuperscript{587} Wándé Abímbólá actually claims that “the traditional African religions are still relevant and meaningful to a good number of the Yorùbá, Muslims, and Christians alike in contemporary Yorùbáland as it was in the pre-Islamic and Christian era.”\textsuperscript{588}

CWCI strives to create a separate identity from Òrìsà worshippers in regard to rites of passage connected with burial, marriage and naming ceremonies. While the Òrìsà worshippers see nothing evil or bad in using some symbolic food and fruit items such as kolanut, salt, schnapps, alligator pepper, and water and so on to present during those rites of passages, the CWCI reject these objects as relics of pagan ideas. Not only this, but also the leadership constantly warns all CWCI members to be careful not to attend pagan rites of passage because of their contaminating effects.\textsuperscript{589} Paradoxically, while CWCI members are encouraged to invite people of other religious faiths or groups to come to the church for members’ social functions, the CWCI members in turn are not expected to attend Òrìsà cult house of worship for any reason at all.

\textsuperscript{587} What chief Akinyemi says might sound unbelievable, yet my interview with his last wife who happens to be one of the lead singer of Olójó Ògbàjùre, told me she is a member of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and that there were many other women in the women singing group who belong to the Pentecostal Charismatic churches. Even though, the truth or falsity of the claims about whether some CWCI members were patrons of Erédùmì could not be ascertained during my ethnographic field research, evidences abound of many Pentecostal church pastors who belong to one secret cult or another and who constantly visit with the Òrìsà priests to get power. A very good example is a popular Nigerian pastor, prophet Àjànákú who died recently but was found to belong to a powerful Ògbólní secret cult. See nigeria.org/.../shocking-revelation-prophet-ajanaku-cult-member.html of August 23\textsuperscript{rd} 2013 downloaded on August 24, 2013.


\textsuperscript{589} The two Olorís (Morísádé and Odún) of Oòni Síjúwadé have refused to participate in all the Òrìsà worships and have refused to touch any of those symbolic foods and drink elements used by the Olórisàs during their rites of passages. A good example is when Olorí Morísádé was to be made the Yeyélùwà (the chief consort of the king), she refused to participate in the traditional rites of passage that should get her enthroned at the Òrísà Lákin Ládìn shrine within the palace. Instead she brought her Holy Bible to the shrine, which has never happened before in Ìfẹ ’s ritual history. See a detailed interview granted by Olorí Morísádé to Olúpònà. See his book, City of 201 Gods, 274-277.
The irony still is that Erédùmí told me that, although many of the Pentecostal Charismatic churches in Ilé-Ifè condemn Òrìsà worshippers and denounce them as evil, they are not ashamed to collect money from him, during their fundraising ceremonies in the church. He also claimed that he has donated bundles of corrugated iron roofing sheets to many of the Pentecostal Charismatic churches and they shamelessly accepted them. I confirmed this claim; some Pentecostal Charismatic members from some of the branches in Ilé-Ifè, collected money from their family members who are Olórìsàs during their churches’ fund raising activities.

_Taking the Battle to the Gate: The Earth is the Lord’s_

Even though CWCI leadership claims they strive not to have any physical encounter that would lead to religious violence between it and the Olórìsà in Ifè, yet, some of its “Spiritual Warfare” strategies are provocative enough and could engender such violence. The prayer department of the CWCI on many occasions had visited some of the Òrìsà shrines in Ilé-Ifè to pray warfare prayers against them. The prayer coordinator always organizes such prayer journey (as also being called) at every quarter of the year. Books and Christian literatures written by an American Spiritual Warfare and Church growth specialist, C. Peter Wagner, have influenced and encouraged many Pentecostal Christians in Nigeria including CWCI and perhaps in Africa to embark on prayers of warfare, spiritual journey and pulling down of strongholds.

Some of Wagner’s books are: _Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies for How to Crush the_

---

590 Here also, the prayer coordinator for CW CI is a woman named Pastor Fúnmi Olárìnóyè who enthusiastically believes that Òrìsà worship could become the thing of the past in Ilé-Ifè, if Spiritual Warfare Prayer is seriously embarked upon. Fúnmi Olárìnóyè was the former prayer coordinator and has been moved to head the youth department of the whole CW CI churches. The new prayer coordinator is an Ifè indigene, Pastor Janet Adélówò. I believe the choice is strategic; she would be able to get some more information about the names of remaining Òrìsàs and their chief priests so as to pray against their functionalities. I am not only a member of the Praying team; I have also followed the praying team on many occasions to those Òrìsà shrines to do spiritual warfare prayers. See also Marshall-Fratani ‘The global and local, 87. Here Marshall-Fratani is quoting from the speech delivered by Emeka Nwakpa titled: ‘Territorial Spirits,’ Address given at Pentecostal Conference on ‘Confronting the Powers of Darkness,’ National Theatre, Ìgànmú, Lagos, April, 1993.
**Enemy through Spiritual Warfare; Spiritual Warfare Strategy: Confronting Spiritual Powers;**

*Breaking strongholds in your city: How to use spiritual mapping to make your prayers more strategic and effective, etc.*

The spiritual steps taken by CWCI in prayer serve spiritual and psychological functions, even if immediate physical result is not realized. The leadership of the church even thinks that action such as this is justified because God is the owner of the land. Psalms 24 is often used to prove that God is the owner of the earth and not Òrisàs and demons. As a result of this, the earth, which had been stolen by those thieves (John 10:10), is to be wrestled from them and then governed by the children of the rightful Owner—the born again Christians.

During my last interview with Pastor Odúnlámì Òròkè, I was told that many Òrisà devotees are getting converted by the day. When asked how much result has the spiritual warfare been able to achieve since CWCI has embarked on it? The elated general overseer (Òròkè) told me that a lot has been achieved in terms of putting an end to the Òrisà worship. He said first, the Oòni and many of his chiefs are already tired of propitiating Òrisàs because they have been influenced by the born again culture. Second, one young Ifè man who belongs to the Pentecostal movement recently physically pulled down one of the Òrisà shrines. Òròkè told me that, even though the young man was arrested and tortured, he was eventually released when the Oòni intervened and asked why the Òrisà could not take vengeance on the young man, if it was that powerful.\(^5\) This last statement by Òròkè makes me doubt the truthfulness of Ifè chiefs being...

---

\(^5\)This episode reminds us of the case of Gideon in the book of Judges in the Bible, Chapter 6. The same statement that Gideon’s father made was repeated here by the Oòni who thinks that Òrisà should be able to avenge himself or herself on whoever transgresses it if they were so powerful. The action of Oòni is pardonable in part because of the influence of modernity and because of his own influence on the people who could have brought the young man to serious judgment.
tired of Òrisà worship. If indeed the chiefs are already tired of Òrisà worship, having that kind of the crowd during the last 2012 Olójó festival would not have been possible.

When asked whether Oríòkè was in full support of his members to go and pull down Òrisás’ shrines, he replied by saying that he would never ask any member of his church to go and pull down any shrine. According to him, the weapons that Christians fight with are not carnal (physical) but spiritual. But he quickly added that the reason the young man gave in and carried out the actions was because he was prompted by the Holy Spirit, after which the man went on three months of praying and fasting before embarking on his “spiritual action.” The concept of space as it relates to religious empowerment is nowhere better captured than Paul Tillich’s analysis of it. According to Tillich, whom I will quote at length:

The power of space is great, and it is always active both for creation and destruction. It is the basis of the desire of any group of human beings to have a place of their own, a place which gives them reality, presence, power of living, which feeds them, body and soul. This is the reason for the adoration of earth and soil, not of soil generally but of this special soil, and not of earth generally but of the divine powers connected with this special section of the earth. But there are many soils and many sections of the earth and each of them has creative force for some group of people, and consequently claims divine honor by this group…. But every space is limited, and so the conflict arises between the limited space of any human group, even of mankind itself, and the unlimited claim which follows from the deification of this space. The god of the one country struggles with the god of the other country, for every spatial god is imperialistic by his very character of being a god. The law of mutual destruction, therefore, is the unavoidable fate of the powers of space.\footnote{Paul Tillich, \textit{Theology of Culture}, edited by Robert C. Kimball, (London, Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 32.}

Now, if space is very important to all religions of the world and not necessarily only the Christian religion (especially Pentecostal Charismatic Christians), which arrogates special privileged knowledge of God to itself, then it is necessary to analyze briefly how physical space can be a source of contestation leading to violence as rightly pointed out by Tillich. In the
Pentecostal Charismatic notion of space, everywhere belongs to the only living God and they have always claimed every space in the name of their God in order to build their places of worship. In attempts at doing this, they neither care nor have any concern about what happens to the space they are claiming. More than anything else, one can say that the pronouncement made by some Christian leaders of Pentecostal Charismatics especially, the leader of *The Redeemed Christian Church of God* (RCCG) that each branch of the church should be planted within a 10 minutes walking distance in Nigeria, and within the 10 minutes driving distance in developed countries, might also serve as a great challenge for other Pentecostal Charismatic churches, which have entered into this kind of competition. While this declaration could be interpreted as the prompting of ‘the Holy Spirit, “one of the effects of this is that other Christian denominations would want to copy such an idea blindly.

This triumphalist understanding of history on the part of the Pentecostal Charismatic Christians, especially in Nigeria, often beclouds their judgment and threatens the local culture, a threat that may provoke renewed efforts at purification. As part of this purification, from the Pentecostal Charismatic religious leaders’ vantage point, every space should be conquered for God because the entire landscape is the property of God—to be captured by planting a church within a certain distance. The problem connected with this kind of attitude in the Nigerian case, is that there has been unhealthy contestation, which has always been part of the human instinct to survive. This attitude on the part of the Pentecostal Charismatic Christians, has led to the violent reactions on the part of the Muslims, who have also begun to engage in space contestation.

Olúpọnà succinctly puts it this way, “Today, the advances of Christianity, Islam, and modern

---

593 The mandate is part and parcel of Redeemed Christian Church of God’s Mission Statement and vision. See the RCCG blog on http://rccg.org/index.php/about-us-2/mission-and-vision/
594 Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 115
secular ideology challenge the plausibility and structure of age-old beliefs, setting the stage for conflict between deeply rooted and newer belief systems in contemporary Ilé-Ifè.”

Conclusion

This chapter began with the historical analysis of the Olójó festival and its relevance to the memorialization of Ògún, the god of iron and war. It has also hermeneutically demonstrated that Olójó festival is not only becoming more popular in Ilé-Ifè than other Òrìsàs, but that it is becoming an international traditional Òrìsà religious festival, that is bringing many people from all over the world, especially from the North America and the Caribbean. The second section of this chapter traced the history of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and how it has expanded over time. It particularly traced the history of CWCI and its relationship to other Pentecostal Charismatic groups in the city of Ilé-Ifè and how that relationship has contributed to the further growth of the church. On the other hand, the chapter was able to examine the doctrinal beliefs of CWCI and how those beliefs have created spiritual, moral and ethical boundaries between it and the traditional Òrìsà worshippers in Ilé-Ifè.

The chapter showed how Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity (especially CWCI) has concluded that they have a better moral framework by which the larger society could be run and transformed. This is very explicit in the ways the CWCI polemicize against the Òrìsà worship and their worshippers. This moral and spiritual transformatory action is even further carried into interpersonal relationships in the area of gift-exchange, a subject to which chapter four of this dissertation will extensively be devoted.

595 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 283.
Chapter 4

Dimensions of the Gift-giving in Yorùbá Society

This chapter critically examines, within a cultural-historical perspective, the conceptual, social, and ritual dimensions of the Gift among the Christ Way Pentecostal Christian group and the Ògün (Olójó) worshippers in Ilé-Ifé. The purpose of this chapter is to show how the idea and practice of gift-giving is part of social networking in the Yorùbá society generally and how both religious groups perceive gift-giving. The study here includes a consideration of the symbolic or meaning-giving process, and analysis of the main features of ritual implication of the gift. It considers a discussion of different types of gifts that are being practiced by the two communities of faith. In the first section, I explore the logic and practice of gift giving in Yoruba society by analyzing the motives, norms, and occasions of gift giving.

The second section considers the practice of gift giving in society and its positive or negative impact on the two religious organizations under consideration. As part of the broad analysis, I will also analyze the idea of giving and taking, what can be given and taken, the notion of guilt and debt instantiated by the gift or lack of return, gift as a creation of kinship, friendship bonds, and the role of gift giving in forging social integration. In the third section I analyze an elaborate practice of ritual exchange, namely the concept of sacrifice and how sacrifice has helped the two religious organizations to respond to supernatural beings. This analysis is carried out in critical dialogue with the work of Marcel Mauss, Annette Weiner’s concept of inalienable possessions. In this chapter, I will employ methodological pluralism by engaging in a hermeneutics of indigenous thought and practice, and comparative analysis to understand gift and gift giving as it is conceived and practiced. This chapter concludes with the description and analysis of the sacred rites.
I have argued that Mauss opens up a fascinating, yet very complex subject of the gift in his *Essai sur le don*, which he theorizes among the Polynesian societies especially Samoa, where he writes about the spirit of the gift (*hau*) in comparison with other societies such as Melanesia and the American Northwest.\(^{596}\) He claims that gifts are a primary source of social exchange within a society and valuable for the formation and maintenance of bonds in social networks. The Maori, Trobriand and Samoan people, according to Mauss, consider gift giving as a social obligation. He argues that the exchange of gift is the manifestation of an economy of reciprocity, which is fundamental to the ordering of society and its social relations. This reciprocity entails a moral obligation to return the value of the gift to the donor, either immediately or in the distant future. Mauss contends that gift-giving is an all too familiar practice in all the societies of the world and it is marked differently from the capitalist market exchange principle.

In the former, there are mutual alliances that reduce the distance between exchangers of gifts in any given society, whereas in the latter, people are merely connected through economic exchange of materials and transfer of goods, which can be personal or impersonal. Sahlins goes a lot further by arguing that “Every exchange as it embodies some coefficient of sociability cannot be understood in its material terms apart from its social terms.”\(^{597}\) Here Sahlins is claiming that no great divide separates the gift economy from market economy, but rather that even market exchange involves a “coefficient of sociability.” If Sahlins is understood quite well, it is not the object itself that is of priority, but the agents of exchange involved are more important than the material objects that are constantly being exchanged. At least, a giver and a receiver of an object are more important than the object they give and receive one would think, except in a society

---

596 Mauss, *The Gift*, 4  
where objects are personified and persons objectified. For example, in some selected societies that Mauss examines, objects (things) are extensions of the persons who own them, and he even argues that this could be generalized for every society.\textsuperscript{598}

Gift-giving is practiced at the social and religious domains by the Yorùbá of Nigeria. To this community, certain forms of giving, receiving, and returning of gifts are anchored by certain mythic narratives and ritual practices. Among the Yorùbá people, irrespective of their religious organizations, the idea of the gift, which has many meanings, can be voluntary or involuntary. They even have the notion that a gift sometimes connotes the quality, trait, or endowment bestowed on humans by the Divine. Such endowment ranges from artistic ability, musical ability, craft works, and other areas of human activity. All these qualities could become part of the gift economy because people so endowed see an obligation to make return to the god who has given them. Good examples here are blacksmiths who believe that they have been endowed by Ògún to make their implements. In appreciation, they not only venerate Ògún but their implements which are symbols of Ògún are placed at Ògún’s shrine.

They also believe that gift-giving involves the sharing of material objects or hospitality among people. Gift-giving can be obligatory or voluntary. At the superficial level, it is looked upon as something informal and unbinding, but at the social level, it is formalized and institutionalized. In general, and from the perspective of the society as a whole, the gift becomes important because it involves human and divine relations. It is crucial, precisely because it is simultaneously sacred and mundane, even as it remains social. There are, it seems, some propelling socio-religious forces that make this seemingly voluntary phenomenon obligatory; yet it seems this is far different than Mauss’s claim that objects take the nature of their owners.

\textsuperscript{598} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 43-44
Objects are spiritual in so far as people attribute supernatural forces as the source of those objects. For example, in some Yoruba communities\(^{599}\), when a person is being greeted: *E onile onile yiyo*, [Hello, the owner of this house!] The reply is always, *Olórun l'ónií o* [God is the owner].

In Yoruba society, gift-giving and reciprocity define the various levels of the persons’ identity: religious, social, economic, political, and gender. The notion of reciprocity is expressed profoundly in some of their aphorisms, pithy sayings, proverbs, and songs. For example, one of their proverbs says: “Give me and I give you is what the toads are saying underneath the river.” Mauss’s work seems to resonate with the Yoruba idea of gift-giving, except that he dwells more extensively on the asymmetrical form of exchange in the Polynesian society, in which he thinks that the contractual exchange is different from gift exchange, yet may be preceded by various contractual exchanges or carry contractual exchange along with it in its tide. That is, for Mauss, gifts are “in theory voluntary, in reality given and returned obligatorily”; “apparently free and gratuitous, they are nevertheless constrained and self-interested and with interest and profit too.”\(^{600}\) Mauss thinks, and rightly too, that this form of *total services of an agonistic type*, which is called potlatch, can only be found among the tribes of the American Northwest, Melanesia and Papua.

By “total services”, he means that the gifts were not between individuals, but between representatives of larger collectivities. Mauss is pointing to two different dimensions of totality: one, that gift exchange is institutionally total, involving the moral, the aesthetic, the economic,

\(^{599}\) Among the Òyó Yoruba dialect group of people, objects are very important to the owners, but the people still believe that whatever a person has belongs to God first and He (God) can take it away anytime, if He wishes. So they say, we meet things (objects) in this world, and obviously we shall leave them when we depart from this world.

\(^{600}\) Mauss, *The Gift*, 39-42
and the political and two, that gift exchange engages the collectivity as a whole, even if only a small part of the collectivity may actually be actively engaged (or entitled to be engaged) in it. It is on that basis that he argues: “everywhere else, in Africa, Polynesia, Malaysia, South America, and the rest of North America, the basis of exchanges between clans and families appeared to us to be more elementary type of total services.” 601 In the Yorùbá society, there seems to be no such thing like communal imposition of gift practices on individuals; individuals exchange gifts among themselves and communities might do so with other communities if they want. But there is no rigid law stipulating how, when, and who should engage in gift-giving practice.

In Polynesian society, especially among the Samoa, Mauss argues that contractual gifts accompany every aspect of social life, namely the birth of a child, circumcision, sickness, a daughter’s arrival at puberty, funeral rites, and trades. 602 He goes further to show that:

Two essential elements in potlatch proper can be clearly distinguished here: the honour, prestige, and mana conferred by wealth; and the absolute obligation to reciprocate these gifts under pain of losing that mana, that authority – the talisman and source of wealth that is authority itself (emphasis mine). 603

In this gift exchange type that Mauss devotes greater attention to, “the actors….were virtually always described as men, sometimes men exchanging women.” Mauss’s position here only prefigures Claude Levi-Strauss’ model, in which women are the irreducible element of exchange in his “so-called primitive” societies. In the society where Annette Weiner carried out her research, women are not mere objects of exchange, but were essential actors in their role as the creators and the representatives of objects that cannot be exchanged. She says this with respect to taonga, the cloaks that women make and are regarded as the “greatest treasures of the land” by the Maori and also with respect to the female reproductive capacity. This is according to how

601 Mauss, *The Gift*, 7
602 Mauss, *The Gift*, 8
603 Mauss, *The Gift*, 9
“the relation among women, reproduction, and mana is as central to high-ranking women’s access to power and authority as it is to high-ranking men’s political achievements.” She equally thinks that Sahlins does not recognize the value of hau, and hence, does not value women’s production.

Sahlins, however, touches on a very important concept of the gift by going a bit further than Mauss’s simple model, which one finds not only very compelling but also relevant to the Yorùbá social life too. For instance, the Yorùbá separate gift-giving practice from economic or market type exchange in which two people exchange objects for money. They also make a marked distinction between gift-giving and the barter system, in which one object is exchanged for another. Sahlins agrees with claims that exchange in primitive communities does not have the same role as the economic flow in modern industrial communities. He thinks “reciprocity in the primitive communities is a whole class of exchanges, a continuum of forms.” The Yorùbá societal gift-giving practice poses a challenge to at least the last two of Sahlins’s mode of the reciprocities, which he tags “Spectrum of reciprocities.” A careful study of the gift-giving practice among the Yorùbá shows that Sahlins’s first spectrum is more relevant than the remaining two spectra, which he thinks could be generalized for all the primitive societies. At one end of his spectrum, stands “generalized reciprocity,” the assistance freely given, the small currency of everyday kinship, friendship, and neighborly relations, regarding which an open stipulation of return would be unthinkable and unsociable. This is the “pure gift”, an ideal type for Malinowski.

---

605 Weiner, *Inalienable*, 46  
606 Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 191-196
The second spectrum is what Sahlins calls “balanced reciprocity”, so called because it refers to direct exchange. In this, the precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay. Referring to the work of other scholars, Sahlins demonstrates how this is perfectly balanced reciprocity:

The simultaneous exchange of the same types of goods to the same amounts is not only conceivable but ethnographically attested in certain marital transactions (e.g. Reay, 1959, pp.95f), friendship compacts (Seligman, 1910, p. 70), and peace agreements (Hogbin, 1939, p.79; Loeb 1926, p.204; Williamson, 1912, p.183). “Balanced reciprocity” may be more loosely applied to transactions which stipulate returns of commensurate worth or utility within a finite and narrow period.607

Sahlins sees the first two spectra to be notably positive and negative in a moral sense. For him, the intervals between them are not merely so many gradations of materials balance in exchange, they are intervals of sociability. This practice seems very strange to the Yorùbá society, where gifts need not be the same and need not be of the same worth in monetary value. Yorùbá will consider the attitude of exchanging the same object for object or the same value for value as ridiculous and annoying. For them, it goes with a sense of shame to engage in such a strange practice. It amounts to receiver returning the initial gift to the giver. They would conclude that the receiver is rejecting the giver’s gift and her/his person.

While a barter system of exchange was clearly manifested in the ancient Yorùbá society, it was markedly differentiated from gift-giving practices among them.608 Barter form of trade seems to be the third spectrum of Sahlins’s reciprocal model. In bartering, ancient Yorùbá people ensured equivalence in terms of weight and amount. This is at the extreme pole of Sahlins’s spectrum called “negative reciprocity” (the unsociable extreme), which is characterized by self-

---

607 Sahlins, *Stone Age*, 194
interested seizure, appropriation by chicanery or force required only by an equal and opposite effort on the principle of *lex talionis*, “negative reciprocity.” It is an attempt to get something for nothing with impunity, the several forms of appropriation, transactions opened and conducted toward net utilitarian advantage.

Sahlins sees negative reciprocity to be the most impersonal sort of exchange. Sahlins argues it is “most economic.” The participants confront each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximize utility at the other’s expense.”

We can conclude that because of Mauss’s idea of the gift, theorists across disciplines were provoked to examine the concept further, especially as it is being practiced in different societies. That is why this dissertation is equally important and relevant to the ongoing academic discourse about the gift. It is hoped that, in looking at the motives, norms and occasions of the gift among the Yorùbá, better understanding will be gained about this people’s social, religious, economic and political life.

*Motives for Gift-giving among the Yorùbá*

There are different reasons why people do every sort of things the way they do it in any given society. This takes us to the question of value. What a particular society values will go a long way to show what is to be believed (question of epistemology), how to behave and what to care about (questions of ethics, Frankfurt, 1982). Harry Frankfurt claims that, “Ethics focuses on the problem of ordering our relations with other people. It is concerned especially with the contrast between right and wrong, and with the grounds and limits of moral obligation.” We can think of this with respect to gift-giving practice. According to Helmut Berking, “the

---

609 Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 195


611 Harry Frankfurt “The Importance’ of What We Care About.” *Syntese* 53 (1982), 257-272, see 257
sociology of gift...offers a promising way of tracking – where the conditions of knowledge are reflexive and forms of life pluralized – the initiation and institutionalization of relationships, the interactive modulation of norms of reciprocity, cultural shifts in the expressive behavior of subjects and collective feelings of responsibility."  

Arlie Hochschild proves that there are at least four structural components of gift-exchange: the gift itself; the action sequences of giving and taking; the actors’ own understanding of the object, action structure and motives; and the ‘feeling rules’ that control the expressive behavior of the interacting partners. When we reflect on Hochschild’s structural components, we will be able to see that in a particular setting, things are not just being done at random, since actions are often governed by motives. All gift actions are motivated by reasons in the Yorùbá society; perhaps in every society too. There are reasons why Yorùbá people give gifts. They do so to create a social network, create and maintain friendship, and establish moral and spiritual obligation with one another.

As said above, the Yorùbá gift-giving practice is quite different from the Melanesian potlatch that Mauss gives as his example. For example, in the Yorùbá society, a marriage ceremony is a thing of joy, an occasion for a happy celebration among and between the groom’s and bride’s families. During marriage ceremonies for their children, either in the ancient or in the modern day Yorùbá society, the families of the grooms to be, if they are well-to-do, often try to impress the parents of the brides, by displaying a lot of wealth, especially during engagement (traditional marriage) and the real wedding ceremony. But the motives are not to crush or to

---

612 Berking, *Sociology of Gift Giving*, 4
deem. Yorùbá generally believe that, no matter how poor or unpopular one’s in-laws may be, one who gives one a daughter to be married has given the ultimate gift, and therefore must be honored and respected. If we look carefully at this exchange practice, the receivers of a gift (namely a wife) stand at a subordinate position to the giver. What I doubt is the question of status; at the end of marriage ceremony the two families have become one, with no hierarchy created.

Strangely, if one were to follow Mauss’s articulations, the motive of giving gifts in Melanesia is to crush, demean and promote one’s family in order to put down and ‘flatten’ the opponents in exchange. Mauss thinks that the reason behind this is to enhance one’s status politically and that of the clans in this ‘war of property.’ The examples of marriage and of brotherhood that Mauss gives in connection with this kind of gift-exchange practice are particularly very telling. According to this practice, marriages for one’s children and places in brotherhoods are only won during the potlatch, where exchange and reciprocity rule.

In the Yorùbá society, apart from the groom’s parental task of bringing all the engagement materials to the family of the bride as gifts, there is also an occasion when the family members of the groom often show solidarity with their kinsman, the groom’s father. In Yorùbá society, (and in other African communities), relatives and associates of the groom often contribute to the dowry and engagement materials to be taken to the family of the bride. There are similar patterns of the gift-giving practice during the marriage ceremony among traditional worshippers of Olokó and Christ Way church in Ilé-Ifè.

The only difference is the outright rejection by Christ Way church of engagement materials such as kolanuts, alcoholic wine, bitter-kola, and alligator pepper (Ataare), which

---

615 Mauss, *The Gift*, 36-37
616 Mauss, *The Gift*, 37
traditional Yorùbá use to pray for the groom and the bride because of their symbolic significance. Christ Way church and Pentecostal Charismatic groups believe that all those materials are not necessary because they can be avenues where evil can be brought into the newly wedded family. This attitude has always been part of the Pentecostal Charismatic way of demonizing anything that is a part of traditional practices because the Pentecostal Christians perceive them to be the avenue for the demons to come into a redeemed, born again Christian.  

Wealthy people among the groom’s families give out expensive gifts to all attendees on the wedding day as souvenirs. Those gifts serve two purposes; enhancement of the alliance between groom’s and bride’s families on one hand, and a proof that they are capable of taking good care of the bride on the other. The bride’s family on many occasions, though, also contributes to the gifts that are given to all well-wishers on the wedding occasion; a practice that interestingly corresponds to the sixteenth century French practice of marital gift-exchange. According to Natalie Davis, whom I will quote at length:

The multiple gifts reinforced the perception of marriage as an alliance with varied possibilities for the future. There was to be an alliance between the new couple and the community and between the two sets of kin. There was to be an alliance between the new couple and parents on either side, who might look to them one day for help when they were old or widowed. There was to be an alliance between husband and the wife, who if their marriage prospered, might one day redraw the customary or expected gifts at the marriage’s end to favor more fully a “dear and much beloved” spouse. Gifts added festivity and courtesy to the formalities of contract.  

Davis’s good observation shows that engagement and marriage are not merely to bring about mutual alliance between groom’s and bride’s families; it also shows the rich symbolisms of marriage in cross-cultural perspectives. Yet, in Yorùbá society, in spite of all the wealth that the

---

618 Davis, The Gift in Sixteenth Century France, 29
family of the groom lavishes on the family of the bride, they are still very courteous with the bride’s family. One of the peculiar experiences is that all the groom’s family members and the parents often bow down for the family of the bride’s family as a mark of deference. But in the end, kinship relationships have taken an expansive dimension beyond the narrow confines of immediate groom’s or bride’s family; the two families are now one through the symbolic and ritual of gift-exchange.

Among the Yorùbá the gifts function as ‘relationship signals.’" 619 This is well-captured by a Yorùbá proverb, which says, *Eni tí ó fúnni n’ílé kò fè kí àkú, eni tí ó fúnni l’ómo ni kò fè kí àkú àkúrun bí isu.* [He who gives one a land to farm does not want one to die of hunger; he who gives one her/his daughter for a wife does not want one to go into extinction]. This proverb already presupposes a mutual relationship between a giver and a receiver. A person who gives a piece of land to another person to farm obviously does not only want the person to die but also wants to establish a long-lasting relationship. Or take the instance of giving out one’s daughter in marriage to a man. The meaning is already made clear, that the family who gives its daughter in marriage to another family seeks for an alliance, as already said above. 620 The relationship signals are conventional means of expressing love, caring and trust, according to David Cheal. 621

It is a way of maintaining social solidarity; a kind of glue that keeps people together, whether by mutually identifying and sharing certain norms and values, or by contributing to


620 All alliance theorists such as Claude Levi-Strauss and A.R.W. Radcliff-Brown believe that marriage is the best way an alliance were being forged in the primitive societies. See Levi-Strauss’s *The Elementary Structures of Kingship* (1969) which one can convincingly argue was influenced by Radcliff-Brown’s *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1952).

some common good, or both, according to Aafke Komter.622 There are scholars such as Mark Osteen who argue that some gift-giving and reciprocity are altruistic, others are not and yet solidary contrary to Mauss’s classical view that every gift must eventually rest on the principle of “I give you so that you can give me in return.”623 A keen observation of how a gift that is received is perceived among the Yorùbá, however, shows that Mauss’s view is correct; it is often said among the Yorùbá that, “gift is a debt.” So when a person receives a gift, she has already entered into an obligation of paying back when any occasion to do so arises.624

Gifts create social ties between humans in Yorùbá society. One can think in the guise of friendship ties or kinship ties. In this society, while friendship ties can be thought of as part of egalitarian relationships between peers, kinship ties are part of family or community sharing. Ironically, both friendship and kinship ties are not easy to disentangle from each other. Both can be put into the same category. What is inherent in this model social ties, though, is that gift-giving to one another “is conceived as a relationship of equivalence (not rigidly so, my added emphasis here) in which people attend to group membership, while the individuality and separate identity of persons are not very marked.”625 A.P. Fiske sees it as “a relationship based on duties and sentiments generating kindness and generosity among people conceived to be of the same kind, especially kin.”626 We need be aware that Komter and Fiske are making their claim with respect to a particular society, that of Indo-European society. It is inconceivable that what they say here can be generalized for all societies.

622 Aafke Komter, Social Solidarity and the Gift (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2
624 Anytime I talk with my wife on phone, she often reminds me of friends and members of the church who gave her gifts, so that I could call to greet them. I quite understand and get the message very clearly; I will have to reciprocate the good gestures when I return back in Nigeria.
625 Komter, Social Solidarity, 22
In the Yorùbá society, the concept of friendship and kinship are sometimes so closely interwoven that one might find it difficult to separate them. There are instances when friends are treated as members of one’s family and family members treated as friends. There is a proverb which seems relevant but a bit complex to show clearly how this works among the Yorùbá. Òré kítíkítí, iyèkan kàtàkàtà, ojó tí òré kítíkítí bá kú iyèkan kàtàkàtà ni yó gbee sin. [Close friend, distance kin, however, the day a close friend dies, it is the distance kin who will (still) bury her/him]. In a simple explanation, no matter how far distanced one’s kin might be living; one’s close friend can never take the initiative of burying one, when one dies without the consent of the close kin. This practice can be said to resonate with Robert Paine’s, who agrees with Morton Fried’s claim that, “friendship complements kinship by giving dissipating shocks (to the kinship group) of economic, political or even psychological nature.627

Following directly this last point is the concept of Yorùbá people using gifts to gain a close friend or confidant. It is common knowledge that people are closer to certain people than others. When we are very close with someone, there is nothing we cannot share with such a person. That means closeness presupposes confidence and reciprocal responsibility according to Cora Du Bois.628 Du Bois claims that “in respect to responsibility, stress is on the reciprocal rather than the complementary…intimacy, so defined, appears to be a constituent factor, or more precisely a constituent gradient, of friendship in all societies.”629 Du Bois is correct, especially if we are mindful of the fact that not everybody in any given society is qualified to be one’s close friend. Some friends are chosen, or we can say we make an alliance with some people for mere

629 Du Bois, ‘The Gratuitous Act, 18
sociability, while a close friend is carefully chosen to share responsibility with. In this instance, one can think of one’s spouse as well. One’s kin or non-kin can as well be one’s close friend. This is a kind of friend that Yorùbá people call, Òré wolé wòde [a friend that one goes in and out with] or Òré kòrí kòsùn [a friend you must see in a day before you go to bed]. This should not be understood merely in the physical sense alone.

Among the Yorùbá as also being practiced by the majority of the Christ Way church members, spouses share their concerns, worries, cares, burdens and financial responsibilities together, as part of either their Christian or social principles. This practice is not too common among many Yorùbá people who do not have formal education in school, so oftentimes the burden of giving rests on men. In Yorùbá society, and maybe some other societies of the world, close friends behave like twins. There is a constant mutual giving and reciprocity and there is spontaneity of actions. Another Yorùbá proverb captures this very well. Ìwájòwà ní jé òré j’òré [Close friends are known by their similar characters]. Yorùbá people emphasize choosing a friend who will be able to stand with one, defend, protect, and assist one, either in private or public and whether one is present or absent in times of needs.

Thus, another proverb says, Eni tí ó se ojú kò se nkan, eni tó sèhin ló se púpò [She/he who helps when one is present does nothing, it is she/he who helps when one is absent that does a lot]. The relevance of this proverb to the discussion at hand can be appreciated if one thinks about how the Yorùbá people appreciate constancy and tenacity of purpose. They show high regard for a person who constantly shows support at all times and not just at a difficult time. This does not mean that they do not appreciate a person who helps once in a while, but a person who

---

630 In Levi-Strauss’s Structural Anthropology, there is resonance of this practice among the Trobriands’ couple in which mutuality and reciprocity between husband and wife constitute two aspects of Levi-Strauss’s fundamental attitudes. The remaining two are rights and obligations just as they are clearly manifested among the elites in the Yorùbá society too. See Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, (USA: Basic Books, 1963), 49.
continues to be a source of support is more valued. Thus closeness presupposes being there when it is good and when it is rough. It is Ìsojú sèhìn (this is having one’s back and front as well). Here we might think of gift-giving that goes beyond mere material objects, for every aspect of life is a gift in the Yorùbá socio-religious experience.

Another important gift-giving motive among the Yorùbá, which incidentally is very common to both traditional worshippers of the Òrisà Olójó and Christ Way church members, and perhaps common to many societies of the world, is the self-evident giving, because it’s only normal. This is the tit-for-tat reflected in the relations model of equality, as rightly observed by Komter. 631 A gift-exchange of this nature goes beyond the confines of intimacy, friendliness, brotherhood, and kinship relations; it is practiced because it is normal. Gift-giving according to the Yorùbá people should be a normal way of life and it must be practiced as every occasion demands. A Yorùbá proverb is apt in this regard: Gbà Fún Rájí n’ílé Òhun ni gbà fún Gbàdà l’óko [Help me give this gift to Rájí at home, is to help me receive this gift in return for Gbàdà in the farm].

This proverb shows the force of inter-subjective relationships, as mediated by gift ‘services’ among the Yoruba. Mauss shows how this practice was also present among the Trobrianders and those of the Agricultural peoples. 632 The proverb, can be interpreted to mean that first, human subjects who are in need are involved in this practice of reciprocity, and second, Gbàdà who stays in the farm settlement has set the pace for exchange of gift from Rájí at home (a different thing is given entirely here and at a delayed time too), by his first gesture of giving.

631 Komter, Social Solidarity and the Gift, 51
632 Mauss, The Gift, 29
Thirdly, the exchange also shows the economic scarcity of things, and how relevant the
dimension of gift is to building social relationships.

Beyond this reciprocal exchange, there is the complementary role these different gifts
serve in different situations. The man in the farm has food, grows vegetables, fruits, and other
farm products, but his case is like a proverbial Robinson Crusoe who was alone in the Island
where all his needs could not be met, at least with all his adventure and enjoyment with company
of nature (animals and plants), he was still in need of human companionship, e.g. a wife.\textsuperscript{633} The
situation is the same with the man in the farm, he will need clothing and implements such as
cutlass, hoes, and “go-to hell” (an agricultural instrument for plucking cocoa), or even it may be
such things as small as salt. The proverb in itself may not particularly refer to this kind of
scenario; it might just refer to the insufficiency of humans to provide for all their entire needs.
This type of gift-giving among the Yorùbá is never to be confused with trade by a barter system
of economy, wherein things are exchanged for money. The practice is also not the same thing as
the Kula system known as \textit{Wasi}, an exchange practice that was common among the New
Zealanders.\textsuperscript{634} In the New Zealand case, return gifts come with interest; in the Yorùbá case, there
is no interest, it is pre-eminently a social and moral practice, “a kind of exchange that is meant to
produce an intersubjective relation between two persons.”\textsuperscript{635}

There is also a sense in thinking that Òwè [asking for Help] as practiced by the ancient
Yorùbá is a form of reciprocity. It is a kind of reciprocal gift-exchange practice. The Òwè had
been in practice for a long time in ancient Yorùbá society till as recently as the late 1980s. Òwè

\textsuperscript{633} We should be aware though, that a need for marriage is not universally applicable, at least there are many people
who are not interested in marriage either because of their religious oath, or as a matter of principle. It is just an
assumption here that Robinson Crusoe might be in need of a human companionship in form of a wife. See Daniel
\textsuperscript{634} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 29
\textsuperscript{635} Levi-Strauss, \textit{Elementary Structure}, 55
is a kind of mutual help association practiced by agricultural people in the ancient Yorùbá society. The purpose of Òwè is to supply the agricultural labor force with no money to be paid (no economic gain). The person who is asking for Òwè needed only to provide enough food and drinks for the people who have come to help him do his farm work. When it is the turn of another person to ask for Òwè, the man who had recently been helped sees it as an opportunity or perhaps moral obligation to reciprocate the help he had previously received. This practice was always on a rotational basis. According to Elias Bongmba, among the Wimbum of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, this is called borfa, which literally means to lend one’s working hand.

A further motive of gift-giving is to curry the favor of the gods according to the religious imagination and experience of the individual Yorùbá people. Using gifts to curry the favor of the gods is not a practice peculiar to the Yorùbá; the practice is prevalent in many religious communities around the world. Indigenous Yorùbá religious worshippers, however, take sacrificial offerings (gifts) to their gods and goddesses as very important, crucial, and necessary to maintain the unbroken relationship that exists between the divine and the humans. Mauss recognizes the all important aspect of this practice in his theory that he even thinks that gods are equally interested in accepting gifts from human beings.

Mauss argues that the exchange of presents between men, the ‘namesakes’ – the homonyms of the spirits, incite the spirits of the dead, the gods, things, animals, and nature to be ‘generous towards them. In his opinion, “the relationship that exists between these contracts and exchanges among humans and those between men and the gods throw light on a whole aspect of

---

636 Fadipe, Sociology of the Yorùbá, 150; Fálolá and Adébáyò, Culture, Politics, and Money, 15 & 133,
637 Personal communication with him in the course of this writing
638 Ìdòwú, Olódùmarè, 108-130; Abimbólá, ‘Ifá: A West Africa,’ 104-112
the theory of sacrifice.” He particularly believes that both the dead and the gods are the true owners of the things and possessions of this world, so with them it is most necessary to exchange and in fact the easiest and safest to exchange. Yorùbá proverbs underscore this fact; “One does not play Warri games with God and hide away one’s fist; whatever is inside the fist is owned by God” Or, the one that says, *Akì́ bá Olórun s’òwò kí ámá jèrè* [You cannot do business with God without profit]. Both proverbs are used as metaphor for gift-giving and reciprocity between gods and humans; they might not literally mean economic transaction between the two. Mauss’s observations corroborate these proverbs, when he says, “Contract sacrifice supposes institutions of the kind we have described and, conversely, contract sacrifice realizes them to the full, because those gods who give and return gifts are there to give a considerable thing in the place of a small one.”

It is not wrong, then, to assume that one of the motives behind Pentecostals practice of giving tithes and offerings is to reap bountiful harvests from their God in return. There is no doubt that, either because of their Yorùbá heritage or identity or their understanding of the bible, Christ Way leaders teach their members about sacrificial giving to the God of Christians, with the hope that the members might be rewarded here on earth and in heaven. At least 60 percent of the responders among the Christ Way church members to the questionnaire I distributed believe that God reciprocates abundantly to generous givers. The worshippers of Ògún and their

---

639 Mauss, *The Gift*, 15-16
640 Mauss, *The Gift*, 16
641 Mauss, *The Gift*, 17
642 More than two hundred questionnaires were distributed to the members in selected Christ way churches in Ilé-Ifè, the site of ethnography (over three-year period 2010-2012). While a majority responded with a strong conviction that God gives bountifully back in return to good givers of gifts either to God or humans, some others spiritualize the notion that gifts should be given without expecting anything in return.
priests confessed that Òrìsàs are not merely worshipped; there are bountiful rewards one gets when one offers sacrifices to them.\textsuperscript{643} Sacrifice is treated extensively below.

Gift-exchange equally serves the purpose of showing hospitality in all Yorùbá society. Yorùbá are said to be very hospitable and hospitality is regarded among them as part of the code of good behavior.\textsuperscript{644} N.A. Fádípè claims that the Yorùbá hospitality is spontaneous and not forced, and it is not motivated by any desire for reciprocity.\textsuperscript{645} This seems to be a recent interpretation that is traced to values of altruism, but we also have evidence from the Ifá Corpus that hospitality can be seen in light of a transaction. According to this Ifá corpus, Èhìn-Ìwà wanted a good afterlife, so he consulted with an Ifá oracle. The Ifá oracle told him to be showing kindness, doing good and giving hospitality to everyone who comes his way. He did and the result was phenomenal. The oracle goes like this:

\begin{verbatim}
Ó d’ìfá fún Èhin-Ìwà
Tí Í se ègbón Òní
Èrò Isinpé, tí ’torí Èhin-Ìwà
L’ase ñ s’Òní L’òore.
\end{verbatim}

Oracle was declared to Èhin-Ìwà (‘After-Being’-personified)
Who is the senior of Oni, (‘Today’, personified)
O ye people of Isinpé, it is on account of Èhin-Ìwà
That we are hospitable, (giving gift) to Òní (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{646}

The concluding phrase of Fádípè’s concept of hospitality ignores this injunction by the Ifá corpus; he seems to believe that hospitality is not motivated by any desire for reciprocity. Yes, in principle, Fádípè’s statement might be correct, but in reality, Yorùbá people believe that what we give is what we get. They have it in their imagination that everyone is a pilgrim in the journey of

\textsuperscript{643} Chief Matthew Akínyemí (the Erédùmí of Ife) confessed to me in November, 2011 that no traditional worshippers of Òrìsà worship Òrìsà for the fun of it; that there are lots of benefits worshippers get when they worship and propitiate those Òrìsà very well. He made a statement in Yorùbá that reinforces what he was trying to explain; Òrìsà wà fún iké ènìyàn [Òrìsà (divinities) are there to benefit humans].

\textsuperscript{644} Fádípè, Sociology of the Yorùbá, 303

\textsuperscript{645} Fádípè, Sociology of, 304

\textsuperscript{646} Ìdòwù, Olódùmarè, 12
life, showing the reality that everybody will be needing hospitality at one time or the other. It is also inconceivable for a person to whom we show hospitality to forget to reciprocate when occasion for doing so arises. Fádípè’s conclusion is not an adequate representation of the Yorùbá thought, I believe. The issue here is one of how people represent their motives versus the objective logic of their practices. Besides this thinking, Idowu observes that “often story is clearly and sufficiently implied in lines as in this one just quoted, or told in a full narrative. After the story has been told and the ‘Odù’ (corpus) has been said, the enquirer was advised to always be hospitable so that he may have a good After-life”.

Another motive for gift-exchange among the Yorùbá is with a view to getting back in the nearest or distant future, and this is common between parents and their children. In the Yorùbá society, there is an underlying motive of reaping the rewards of the cares the parents have given to their children. Many proverbs and sayings underscore this fact. *Oore tí a se fún Adìre kò gbé, tí ó bá yá, á se omitoro ata sí ni l’énu* [A care, (or a gift, or kindness) given to a chicken is not in vain, when time comes it shall give or provide me spicy soup]. This is both real and metaphorical. In real terms, caring for chicken among the Yorùbá people is to get her killed at the time she is old enough to be eaten. Another proverb shows this very clearly, *Ìfè tí a fé adìre kò dé inú, ibi pípa je ló mo* [The love we have for a chicken is only superficial; she is to be killed at the end for our own pleasure].

But in a metaphoric sense, this means that every effort expended in taking care of a chicken is not in vain; all things being equal, there is always a reward at the end. We can then

---

647 While it is true that hospitality is emphasized and encouraged in the Yorùbá society, Yorùbá equally believe that one should be careful enough to know the clear identity of a stranger. An oral story is often told of a stranger who was accommodated by someone, but the stranger turned to be an enemy instead of being a friend. When the person who hosted the stranger went to consult with the community members, they decided that they had to insert broom into a medicinally charmed concoction so that the stranger can be magically sent away. In an ideal situation, Yorùbá people believe that strangers are a blessing.

648 Ìdòwú, Olódùmarè, 8
extend chicken’s metaphor to gain a better understanding of gift-exchange and of reciprocity between children and their parents. Yorùbá people regardless of their religious affiliation believe that when we take good care of our children, we are investing in our future. An investment that is due for reward if the children never die and are kind enough to reciprocate every good deed their parents have done for them. CWCI teaches that parents should take good care of their children so that the parents could reap the rewards from their children. Pastor Odún Oríòkè (the General Overseer), is fond of saying that; “it is only person who takes care of her/his child who will reap the reward of that child.” This explains why childlessness in the Yorùbá society is a great concern and considered a great evil.

There is, however, a rather more relevant proverb than the two proverbs above, which says Tí Òkété bá ti d’ àgbà tán omú Omo Rè lò má n’mu. [When a giant land rat (resembling a squirrel but bigger with a long tail without fur) is grown up (metaphorically referring to parents) it sucks its child’s breast]. Even one of their traditional songs, especially in Ilé-Ifè, shows this motive very clearly. The song goes like this:

\[
\begin{align*}
Omo \text{ mí } A \text{ rá káà fún } mi \text{ ní tèmi } óò/2x \\
Omo \text{ mí } A \text{ rá kaà fún } mi \text{ ní tèmi } /2x \\
Mi \text{ Ò r’ódo Ògbè } \text{l’asikò } \text{ itójúú } \text{ omo} \\
Mi \text{ Ò r’ója } \text{ Ìfè } \text{l’asikò } \text{ itójúú } \text{ omo} \\
Mi \text{ Ò b’òrogún } \text{jà, } \text{ ki nsikà } \text{s’álájogbè} \\
Mi \text{ Ò b’i } \text{mo } \text{mějì } \text{ki } \text{nﬁ } \text{kàn } \text{sé’ só } \text{owó} \\
\text{Òmò } \text{ mí } \text{Á rá káà fún } \text{mi } \text{ní } \text{tèmi.}
\end{align*}
\]

My child will buy a car for me/4x  
I do not go to Ogbe’s river at the time of baby’s care  
I do not go to Ife Market at the time of baby’s care  
I have no time to fight my step wife (in a polygamous setting)  
And I do not act wickedly to my co-residents.  
I do not have two children, and use one (as charm) for money
My child will surely buy a car for me.  

It is my belief that reciprocal gift-exchanges between children and parents are a worldwide phenomenal practice.

Jacques T. Godbout rightly observes that “In other societies, the child begins to give in return quite soon, by producing and procreating.” Komter says: “Between parents and children reciprocity is often experienced in a special way: adult children often feel obliged to give their parents attention by visiting them or inviting them to dinner, because of what their parents have done for them when they were small children.” She further claims that “the primary function of gift-giving – creating social ties – is clearly demonstrated in the interaction between mother and child: the bond is only kept alive and intact if there is some degree of positive reciprocity.” One may conclude, then, that Yorùbá is not the only society involved in this practice, but many other societies, especially other African nations, do so as well. The overall intention of parents’ gifts to their children in every society is rightly captured by the Yorùbá saying: “pouring cold water in the front so as to step on wet ground.” What this saying implies is that whatever good things parents are doing for their children have future rewards.

Another motive for gift-exchange among the Yorùbá is to reinforce the notion of group reciprocity and solidarity. Gift-exchange as such is usually practiced to coincide with either calendrical feasts like New Yam festival, New Year festival, special Òrisà yearly ritual festivals, rites of passage and a host of others. In the past, in many missionary churches in Ilé-Ifè and all Yorùbáland, farmers bring their first fruits to the Church and place them at the altar area at the time of harvest. Apart from serving the purpose of showing gratitude to God for bountiful

---

649 There is no source for this song in any book; I recorded this song in 1984 when I was a student Nurse. The pregnant women who came to the hospital (Teaching Hospital) used to sing the song during their antenatal clinics.
650 Godbout, The World of Gift 41
651 Komter, Social Solidarity, 29
652 Komter, Social Solidarity, 67
harvest, it also provides an opportunity for people to partake in the fruit of one another’s labor.

Berking calls this gift practice, self-reference and self-presentation. Davis interprets the practice as reminding oneself of one’s responsibility to the community. An Ifá corpus shows that Yorùbá are expected to be constantly giving to the larger community in order to have a bountiful harvest.

According to Odù Ifá, Òkànràn méjì, a farmer went to an Ifá priest to ask for help, so that he could have a bountiful harvest. After divination, the Ifá priest prescribed a course of action; he was to offer a sacrifice to his head, the earth, Eégún (ancestor god) and Òrìsà-ílá (creation god) before he could have a bountiful harvest. He offered all the sacrifices but to no avail. He went back to the Ifá priest and asked why his sacrifices had not brought for him the fortunes he was asking for. The Ifá priest then asked him whether or not he made sacrifice to Olúbòbòtiribò, Baba ebo, (Olúbòbòtiribò, the father of sacrifice), he said no. He asked what Olúbòbòtiribò meant. The Ifá priest told him that the mouths of people are so called. Then the Ifá priest started to chant the Odù:

```
Agbóngbón, awo won l’óde Ìlóre;
Àgbáyàngidi, awo ode Ìjèsa;
Okùnrin yàngidi yangidi
Ni wón-ón dì ní àdípa
Adiá fún Olóyíméfun
Yóó bu’lè Olówu s’oko
Won ní ó boógún ilé

Ó boógún ilé
Eboo rè ó fín
Won ní ó b’òòsà ojà
Ó b’òòsà ojà
Eboo rè ó dá
Òòsà ojà ó gbà
```

```
Agbóngbón, their Ifá priest at Ìlóre
Àgbáyàngidi, the Ifá priest of Ìjèsa
The hefty man
Who was always tied hands and feet.
Ifá divination was performed for Olóyíméfun
When he would take the land of Olówu to farm upon
He was asked to make sacrifice to his household’s Egúngún
He made sacrifice to his household’s Egúngún
But his sacrifice was not accepted
He was asked to make sacrifice to the market’s god
He made sacrifice to the market’s god
His sacrifice was futile
The market’s god refused his sacrifice
```

653 Berking, Sociology of Giving, 5
654 Davis, The Gift in the Sixteenth Century, 24
He was asked to make sacrifice to his Orí
He made sacrifice to his head repeatedly, until his head became bald.

He was asked to make sacrifice to Earth until he created a hole in the earth

He was asked to make sacrifice to Olúbòbòtiribò, the father of sacrifices

He said he knew that one’s father is one’s household masquerade

He said he knew that one’s mother is the market’s goddess

And he knew ile to be the earth

The so-called Olúbòbòtiribò, the father of sacrifices

People’s mouths were referred to as Olúbòbòtiribò The father of sacrifices

What is it that we worship in Ifè?

It is their mouths that we worship at Ifè, their mouths

I have given to those over here; I have given to those over there

Their mouths

Their mouths can no longer fight against me; their mouths cannot

I have given to those in my household; I have given to passers-by

Their mouths

Their mouths can no longer fight against me

This Òkànràn méjì could be interpreted to mean that while it is good to give gifts of sacrifice to gods, we should not forget to give gifts, in this case food, to the people with whom we have social interactions. The gift of food serves at least two purposes: psychological and sociological. First, Yorùbá people believe that, all things being equal, it is very difficult for people whom one has cared for or given a gift to turn against one. Their proverb says, O je epòò mi, O je iyò mi; kò leè pamí mó [After eating my palm oil and my salt,
she/he could not think of killing me]. Secondly, they (Yorùbá) believe that when one takes adequate care of people around one, they can be the source of solution to one’s problems. Komter however, warns that, “Things may lead conflicting social lives, in that the meanings people attach to them may not harmonize. Differences between people’s attitudes towards things may be the source of disagreeable misunderstandings and serious disputes.”

One can think about another motive of gift-exchange with the aim of showing off, to corrupt, blackmail or flatter and to show self-interest. In both the ancient and modern Yorùbá society, gifts like this are common. We can think about the Yorùbá traditional chieftaincy titles, which some people use their gifts to buy. In contemporary society people who seek political positions present gifts to buy people over with their gifts. Stories from the Old Òyó City demonstrate this kind of gift giving. Basòrun Gáà, a fearful and wicked High Chief in old Òyó Empire received such gifts. Gáà had created fear in the hearts of everybody in the old Òyó kingdom so much that even the kings he installed were equally afraid of him. Abíódún Adégoólú, the fifth king he installed, usually went early in the morning to pay obeisance to Basòrun, contrary to tradition.

Abíódún Adégoólú even thought of giving his only daughter to Basòrun so that his life could be spared; a daughter who was unfortunately sacrificed by Basòrun Gáà in the hopes that giving such a sacrifice would make her wealthy. This is one example among many of how people used gifts to flatter or blackmail other persons. Komter thinks that “the entire world of sponsoring but also segments of political and professional life feed on the idea. Many gifts in the sphere of public life hardly cover up the self-interest that motivated them…”

---

656 Komter, Social Solidarity, 30-31
658 Komter, Social Solidarity, 48
Yorùbá society, many political elites give gifts or donations to their communities, not necessarily because they actually have the interest of the people at heart, but because they are trying to seek for people’s votes or they are seeking for another term to run for political posts. Personal costs and gains are the main motives behind all the kinds of gifts in this category.

Last but not the least, some gifts are motivated by hostility, hate or contempt in the ancient Yorùbá society. In nearly every part of ancient Yorùbá society, great importance was attached to a bride being a virgin. In this ancient society, if a newly wedded woman was found to be a virgin on the night of her wedding ceremony when the husband had intercourse with her, it called for jubilations for the families of both the groom and the bride. It also enhanced the respect that the newly wedded bride would continue to have among the wives of the groom’s family. As part of the ancient Yorùbá customs, the groom’s family would send special gifts and a full gourd of palm wine as a mark of appreciation to the bride’s parents. On the other way round, if the newly wedded bride was found to have lost her virginity before marriage, the gifts would be sent still, but the gifts to be sent were usually half full palm wine and half box of matches symbolizing that the bride was not a virgin. The gifts signified protest, anger and contempt against both the newly wedded bride and her parents.

It seems the practice of protest through gift is not peculiar to the Yorùbá tradition; it has its resonance in some other societies as well. Komter claims that:

Gift giving as an intentional act of unfriendliness is perhaps a less usual way of looking at the phenomenon but is not uncommon. The extent of the hostility may vary from relatively harmless practical joke gifts, like the exploding cigar or jack-

---

659 See Enoch Olújídé Gbádégésin, “Re-examination of the Traditional Yorùbá Cultural Traditions of Morality and their Implication for Abundant Life” in Lagos Notes Dúró Oni and E.A. Adédún (Eds.) Journal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Vol. 17 (2011). There I gave examples of some Yorùbá politicians who were indicted for stealing Government money.

660 Fadipe, Sociology of the Yorùbá, 83-84
in-the-box, to gifts motivated by really deep-seated feelings of anger, hate, or disdain.661

It is good to point it out however, that this practice has been long stopped partly because of the force of modernity. Many young men and women who are not married have lost their virginity.

For quite a number of youths, it does not make any sense to keep one’s virginity; today they have a lot more freedom and have many other opportunities to experiment with their sexuality. Given these motives behind all kinds of gifts, it should be very clear to us that those gift-exchanges in the Yorùbá society either at the communal or individual level have underlying reasons. As we can see, individual motives are contrasted with that of the communal. Since the practices are very much related, individuals still struggle to align selves, and show concern about reverting to the communal modes of generating social cohesion and harmonious living. While gift-exchange still continues to be practiced in Yorùbá society, modernity, westernization and force of globalization have greatly impacted and affected the motives behind the practice and many people are moving away from some of the traditional practice of gift-exchange as it was done in the past.

*The Norms of Gift-giving*

In this section, the norms or rules and regulations governing gift-giving practice are considered with the aim of comparing and contrasting them in the ancient and modern Yorùbá society, especially with respect to Christ Way Pentecostal Charismatic church and the traditional worshippers of Olójó festival. With various examples already given above, it is clear that gift-giving in the entire Yorùbá society, and especially by individuals, is motivated by reasons which we have discussed and other reasons best known to those individuals in that society. Yet, each

661 Komter, *Social Solidarity*, 49
gift-exchange practice is governed by rules or each society prescribes rules by which gift-practice should be conducted. In the Yorùbá society, there are norms of gift-exchange practice that reflect older traditions even, many things have been modified in the modern Yorùbá society, though, especially with the influence of missionizing and modernizing religions such as Islam and Christianity, especially Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity.

This is where Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of practice can be brought to bear on the norms of gift-exchange practice in the Yorùbá society. Those norms necessarily may not be written down as Bourdieu has forcefully argued. They might just be “a generative principle”, which presupposes “an absence of a genuine law,” yet should not lead us to forget that any socially recognized formulation contains within it an intrinsic power to reinforce dispositions symbolically. These norms are already part of the built-in mechanisms found in the Yorùbá proverbs, adages, mythical sayings, and folktales. Bourdieu is correct in arguing that when we are thinking about practice, the question of the relations between the habitus and the “rule” should be brought to light with the historical emergence of an express and explicit action of inculcation.

Although Bourdieu conducted his ethnographic research in an African society, one still sees some differences in how (exchange) practice in the Yorùbá society is different than the rest of the other African societies. This is where contextualization of practice becomes very imperative too. In Kabyle society of Algeria that Bourdieu’s work refers, there are certain normative exchange practices that are practically absent in the Yorùbá context. This happens, one may argue, due to their different geographical locations and individual cultural appreciations.

662 Bourdieu, *Outline of Theory of Practice*, 21
663 Bourdieu, *Outline of Theory of Practice*, 20
In spite of the various differences that are present in the ways gift-exchange is carried out throughout the world, there are still certain norms that may be common in different parts of the world. In the Yorùbá societies, it was and still is a norm to show gratitude to one’s benefactor. The Yorùbá people have a saying, “when a kindness is shown to one, one must show appreciation (gratitude) by thanking one’s benefactor.” Gratitude plays an important role in how the Yorùbá people deal with one another on a daily basis. In every facet of their life, something as simple as asking ‘how are you?’ and by responding by saying ‘I am fine, thank you’ to a more elaborate invitation thrown to a passer-by for a meal and to every ceremonial occasion where people are usually invited, gratitude is expected. So, when a gift is given to a person, it is expected that the receiver first and foremost show gratitude before she or he might think of reciprocating in future, which is itself a form of gratitude. Even in other societies, especially in America, if people politely reject one’s offer to help, the response is often accompanied by ‘Thank you though.’

There are many proverbs which show how gratitude can contribute to social ties and ingratitude to enmity. One proverb says: “Whoever is shown a kindness (or who is given a gift), but refuses to say thank you, is acting exactly like a thief who meets one and rubs one of one’s properties.” Another one says: “Whoever, is shown a kindness (or given a gift) and refuses to show gratitude, does not appreciate honor.” Komter examines why ingratitude is something to be avoided. According to her:

Gift exchange and the attendant feelings of gratitude serve to confirm and maintain social ties. Gratitude is part of the chain of reciprocity and, as such, it has “survival value”: it is sustaining a cycle of gift and countergift and is thereby essential in creating social cohesion and community.  

664 Komter, Social Solidarity, 57
For her, gratitude is not merely a moral coercion; it is also a moral virtue. Berking thinks that “verbal expressions of thanks are as much part of everyday life as the social situations in which politeness makes it obligatory to express gratitude.”

Berking quotes George Simmel, as stating that “exchange is at once starting point and backdrop for the position of gratitude.” Alvin Gouldner claims that, “gratitude can be likened to debtor’s time, that is, a time within which people are morally compelled to show gratitude towards their benefactors.” The act of gratitude or gratefulness is a moral virtue that is already built into the Yorùbá child upbringing. Children in Yorùbá society are always taught by the Yorùbá parents to show appreciation on every gift the children receive or any good things done for them. Oftentimes parents sharply scold their children who refuse to say thank you to a visitor who had given them special gifts, a peculiar feature of the Yorùbá social life. Some parents even go to the extent of seizing the gifts from their children in order to teach them the moral lesson of a need to always show gratitude.

Another norm of reciprocity is that from the ancient Yorùbá period to a relatively recent time, it is customary for visitor(s) to the houses of her hosts to bring at least a gift either to be presented as soon as she arrives or defers it (them) till when she is finally leaving the house of her host. This practice is a ‘prescriptive act’ rather than a ‘performative act,’ to borrow Sahlins’s societal structural terms. Sahlins clearly distinguishes the two structures to be marked by relationship that exists between “social forms” and “appropriate acts.” In his prescriptive structure, of which African models are a classic example, the social forms generate the

---

665 Berking, Sociology of, 21
666 George Simmel was quoted in Berking, Sociology of Giving, 27
appropriate acts. In performative structures, the situation is reversed; appropriate kinds of actions create social forms. Sahlins argues that in the prescriptive structures, people are always objectifying themselves in mythopoetic representations of the order they have set for themselves. This does not, however, mean that the Yorùbá people totally are lacking in performative acts; at least they expect people to put into practice the generative principle that is already inculcated in the body schema or the *habitus*, in which individual person belongs, to borrow Bourdieu’s term. I believe that the two relational acts are dialectical in the Yorùbá society; both the social forms and appropriate actions are working together for the smooth running of the society.

Another important norm that is common among the Yorùbá, as far as reciprocity or gift-exchange is concerned, is that the persons involved in reciprocal relationships are far more important than the objects of exchange. When Yorùbá people, irrespective of their religions, are celebrating at any particular occasion such as birth of a new child, marriage ceremony or funeral, people that come for the occasion are much more important than the gifts they would present. The ethics of placing more value on human beings rather than the object of exchange also extends to market exchange. In the Yorùbá society, the market system is not considered more valuable than human beings who are engaged in financial transactions.

Market transactions require time, negotiation, consensus, deals, and profits, but those formal relations are set up to serve people, the seller and buyer, and therefore the objects of exchange remain subordinate to a human being. The bargaining itself constitutes a relationship between people, which in some cases continues after the sale of objects. Historically, people value such human relations even in business and it is still the case today in Yorùbá. For example,

---

669 Bourdieu, *Outline of Theory*, 1977
670 The concept of object being personified as gift exchange is concerned does not arise in the Yorùbá society. The exchangers of gifts are the most important frame of reference in gift giving and receiving.
an individual who sold clothes or food materials to another person to use for a special ceremonial function would show up in such a ceremonial function and also present a (monetary) gift. Yorùbá people are fond of saying; “Human beings are my clothes; if I see them I am happy and satisfied, even if I lack anything.”

What this implies is that the Yorùbá people, irrespective of their religious practices, express their goodwill through the act of gift-giving. In case of important celebrations, people are expected to attend and show their support just by being there. That is why some would consider it an insult for a person to send a gift through another person to a friend who is celebrating an occasion, unless there is a genuine reason for doing so. After important celebrations, the celebrant sometimes challenges her or his friends who did not show up at her or his special occasion; even though the person being challenged might have sent a gift to the celebrant. A saying among the Yorùbá shows this very clearly, Aájò ju owó; meaning [Concern (through one’s presence) is more important than monetary gift]. Or, Owó fifún ni kò tó èniyàn; [Money that is given is not as valuable as human being]. It is an evil omen for a person to have a special ceremonial occasion where people, kin, friends, acquaintances and co-workers refuse to show up for such an occasion; it does not matter if those people had sent more than the required gifts to the celebrant.

This is where the concept of debt comes in among the Yorùbá people; it is not about how to reciprocate a gift or what to reciprocate once one has received a gift that becomes a moral burden or debt; it is one’s presence in one’s friend’s, neighbor’s, co-worker’s or even kin’s ceremony that constitutes a more important debt to be paid. The practice of printing and sending out invitations is a modern trend. In the traditional Yorùbá society, a special ceremony was an occasion for everyone in a given community, including guests, would come and celebrate and share the joy of the celebrant.
One important practice of gift-giving in some societies is the habit of reminding a person to whom one has given a gift of how much you have done for her/him. The Yorùbá consider such a behavior shameful; an act that is often discouraged whatever circumstance may have provoked it. Yorùbá people call this behavior, “stooping on one’s kindness after it has been done; an act one should have totally forgotten.” Such actions humiliate the receiver. A Yorùbá phrase that expresses this behavior is: Ìsinni ní èrègún, and means “To show off because of the gift one has given.” The inappropriateness of this behavior may be the explanation why the Yorùbá people believe that it is only God who gives without humiliating one or unduly demeaning one. It must not be forgotten though, that there are certain individuals who often take any good things done for them for granted, to the extent that such people would never bother to appreciate their benefactors. Such people are regarded by the Yorùbá as Ase kí ore sú níí se [The one who makes kindness to be a difficult thing for another person to do].

This section has considered the norms of gift-giving in the Yorùbá ancient and modern society with their implications. The norms governing gift-giving are as varied as there are many social groups in this society. The most underlying norm of gift-giving in the Yorùbá society, however, is the recognition by both the givers and the receivers that they are more important than the objects of exchange. They believe that human beings should be treated as humans, and not mere objects to be exploited and manipulated through one’s gifts. Gift-giving is encouraged but not at the expense of social cohesion and mutual relationship. The Yorùbá people give gifts to one another constantly. In the next section, a brief consideration will be given to occasions gift can be given.
Occasions for Gift-giving among the Yorùbá

If gift-giving is such a huge practice in the Yorùbá society, the question we should address is, what are the occasions when gifts are given? Certain occasions demand more elaborate exchange of gifts in Yorùbá society than others. For example, to give a gift to the poor and the alms beggars in this society is not something that is calculated and has a fixed time when one should do it. If the alms beggars asked for alms yesterday, they are likely to ask for it again today, and tomorrow. One would not say I gave you something yesterday and will not give you anything again. David Graeber agrees with Alain Testart who points out that no reciprocity is expected between unequals: if you make a gift of a dollar to a beggar, he will not give it back the next time you meet. More than likely, he will ask for more, to the detriment of his status. 672

Because of the lack of careful study of alms begging in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society, John Iliffe quoted by Steven Feierman concluded that there were many beggars in the pre-colonial Yorùbá society as if it was a peculiar feature of their tradition. 673 In Iliffe’s words:

Yorùbáland had an indigenous tradition of begging which may have been unique outside Christian and Islamic religions. Begging in Yorùbáland…was an exploitation by the poor of prevailing religious practices. The Yorùbá beggar … was customarily described by missionaries as a “devil-monger.” This was because the beggar normally carried or sat next to a figurine of Èsù, who was the intermediary between men and Olórun (owner of Heavens) but was misinterpreted by missionaries as the devil. 674

---

John Peel and Karin Barber responded to Iliffe respectively. While Peel corrected Iliffe that some of the “beggars” were men of substance, that form and context of “begging” was in actuality a form of mediation with a deity, and that “alms” were a form of sacrifice; Barber argued convincingly that in a world where transfer of money was a symbolic act of recognition, the payment was “a public acknowledgment of the claims of the god, on which the god’s continuing reputation depended.”

Peel and Barber’s positions have helped in reinforcing Mauss’s who argues that “gods and spirits are often happy when the share of happiness and wealth hitherto destroyed in needless sacrifice are given to the poor and the children.” Besides the alms deed that is constantly practiced by the Yorùbá people, there are many occasions when gifts are given and are received. Every life cycle or event that marks what van Gennep described as rites of passage is an occasion for gift-giving and reciprocity in Yorùbá society, but gift giving is not limited to these ceremonial occasions.

Both Fádípè and Bascom devote greater attention to the marriage ceremony than any other occasion, as if it is the only occasion for gift-exchange among the Yorùbá which may be thought through Levi-Strauss’s view of marriage reciprocity conditions their thinking. In *Elementary Structure of Kingship*, Levi-Strauss construes marriage as the most important occasion wh...
when gifts are elaborately given in the Yorùbá society. The birth of a child as well as the installation of a king is always an occasion for gift-giving in Yorùbá society.

In recent times, birthday celebrations, graduations, house warming for newly constructed houses, christening a new car, have become occasions for one’s family and friends not merely to rejoice but also to give gifts to those celebrants. Since the advent of Islam and Christianity into the Yorùbá society, Muslims and Christians often give food items to friends and well-wishers during Eid-il-kabir and Christmas. The card gift culture during Christmas has become not only a common place in contemporary Yorùbá society, but an elaborate ritual practice as well among all Christian denominations and non-Christians too. Berking contends that:

For the Christmas-present economy knows no hiatus between gift and counter-gift: it erases the interval and instates simultaneity of giving and taking and taking and giving; it removes the symbolic framework of complementary creditor and debtor role-structures and approximates to the ideal of reciprocal typing.  

Special periods of sacrificial feast are always a time of elaborate gift-giving in the Yorùbá society. Each Òrisà has her/his time to be celebrated and devotees look forward to such occasions when they consider themselves privileged to give special gifts to their ancestral or community gods and goddesses. Abímbólá claims that, through due consultation with Ifá priests, devotees know the types of gifts and sacrificial materials meant for each Òrisà in the Yorùbá society. For example, during the yearly festival of Òsun Òsogbo, devotees and clients often bring diverse kinds of gifts, such as money, animals, and clothing materials to present to Òsun priests and priestesses who receive the gifts on behalf of Òsun.

---

678 Berking, Sociology of Giving, 13
679 Abímbólá, Ifá, 36-37
Some devotees and clients throw money and other valuable materials into the river Òsun in appreciation of what Òsun has already done or to ask her for future blessings. The gifts that are given at the Olójó festival in Ilé-Ifè symbolize the interdependent relationship between the Òrisà and their devotees and psychologically give assurance to the devotees that their sacrifice will make the Òrisà act on their behalf and fight their life’s battles and give them the goods and things they need in life. Towards the end of Mauss’s book, he points out that even though there were fragile relations between the villages and peoples in Melanesia caused by conflicts and wars, these groups often enacted reconciliation through festivals and exchange of gifts.

Mauss’s position reinforces the point that sacrificial feasts or festivals are always special occasions to give gifts to the Òrisàs in Yorùbáland and provide an opportunity for individuals to lay aside their differences in the name of peace and harmony. Pentecostal Charismatic Christians also use their annual conventions and congresses to give special monetary gifts to appreciate and rejoice together as one family for what God has done to them. Christ Way Church in Ilé-Ifè has her convention during Easter and the leadership often uses the occasion to tell the congregation of the uniqueness of the invaluable gift of the only begotten son of God to humanity through his vicarious death on the cross. Members are usually enjoined to respond by giving generously and sacrificially to the advancement of the reign of Christ on earth. They also use the occasion to teach members how to be generous to people with whom they interact on a daily basis. More will be said on the aspect of sacrifice as gift in the latter part of this chapter.

---

680 I carried out research on Òsun Òsogbo from 2003 till 2006 before I left Nigeria for the USA to further my academic program. In 2004, a lot of people brought chicken, cockerels, rams to be presented to Òsun and quite a number of well-dressed elites from different large cities such as Lagos, Abuja, Republic of Benin, Dahomey, North and South America, Caribbean and Ghana were throwing money into the Òsun river as Christians would throw money into the offertory in the church.

681 Mauss, The Gift, 82
**Practice of gift-giving**

In Fádípè and Peel we see that the Yorùbá world is first, a world of gifts that promote social cohesion, communal living and harmonious relationship between an individual and the collectivity and individual and nature, before it is of economic relationship.\(^{682}\) In the ancient Yorùbá society, care for the welfare of the people that made up the society was more paramount than what is being witnessed today and some attribute that to the effects of modernity and its economic arrangements. Economic interpretation of exchange is one of the ways individuals in Yorùbá society today look at social exchange. While we have noted that there is a high appreciation of the human, rather than the material, we can also affirm that economic calculation was involved in the practice of exchange in Yorùbá society. Within such an exchange however, the social relations and interrelatedness remained important and for that reason, gift-exchange was not completely dominated by values dictated by monetary or the materials used in exchange.

In some Yorùbá communities, when one had bargained and purchased things, they were also pleasantly surprised that the seller often gave them an extra gift of either of the same stuff bought or a different kind of gift entirely. So, the implication of this is that gift-exchange has always been a way by which interdependent relationships were coordinated in the Yorùbá society before the present state of affairs. This practice has been described by Akínsolá Akiwowo as the principle of *sociation*, which he claims existed in the ancient Yorùbá society. The principle of sociation also informs his Àjobí (consanguinity) and àjogbé (co residence) concepts.

He suggests that the task of the African sociologists and other professionals is to employ what he calls *Ìfogbóntáyése* (the use of wisdom to restore the world) to correct the ills that afflict

---

\(^{682}\) Fadipe, *Sociology of the Yorùbá;* 301-314 Peel, *Religious Encounter, *85-87,
African society today. According to Akìwowo, his inspiration comes from Ifá oratory, and a particular verse called Àyájó Asùwàdà actually informs his perspective on the society. According to the principle of Àyájó Asùwàdà, the basic form of human sociation is Asùwàdà ènìyàn (human society, or more literally, “human beings who come together for a common purpose”).” Akìwowo claims there is: “[a] . . . primordial purposeful union of human beings physically articulated within Asùwàdà ènìyàn is Àjobí, which he translates to mean “consanguinal relationships.”

A derivative of Àjobí is Alájobí, which he defined as “that which sustains all kinds of lineal and collateral relationships.” He believes that, even though stressed under the tremendous weight of Western influence, the Alájobí, which includes those individuals who have died, still stands as the focal point of the most significant relationships within Yorùbá society. He asserts that when the people did not establish and maintain Àjobí, that spirit of neglect took its toll on society. According to him, this toll was exacted due to many factors; inclusive is the impact of Western culture, which encourages dissociation through envy, competition, and conflict over the means to success.

For him, it is through this conflict that communal bonding was weakened and this eventually led to the birth of another form of sociation—àjogbé (co-residency). When family bonding has become weakened, the Yorùbá people say: Kò sí Alájobí mó, alájogbé nìkan l’ókù. [There no longer exists the bonds that sustain consanguinity; only the bonds, which sustain co-residence, remain. Yet, in spite of this claim, he says both Àjobí and Àjogbé informs the daily life in Yorùbá society and one could make the case that similar principles work on other parts of

683 Akínsolá Akiwowo, Àjobí and Àjogbé: Variations on the Theme of Sociation, (Ife: University of Ifè Press, 1983)
684 Akiwowo, Àjobí and Àjogbé, 18
685 Akiwowo, Àjobí and e, 10
Africa. His position has been criticized by Túndé Láwuyí and Olúfemi Táiwò, and some non-African scholars and he has responded to these criticisms in his 1999 article titled: “Indigenous Sociologies: Extending the Scope of the Argument.”

While Akíwowo’s principle and the criticisms raised against it are quite informative, I am more interested in how the principle could be meaningfully applied to the gift-exchange practice in the Yorùbá society, especially in contemporary society. Without necessarily taking the argument at every stage, or analyzing it from Àjobí to àjogbé to idágbé (being alone) sociational principle, these models could be made relevant to this discussion. I have already indicated that separating a kin from a close friend seems to be a difficult proposition in the Yorùbá society. As a matter of fact, Yorùbá people believe that “one’s slave can swear in the name of Alájobí, especially if she or he had stayed long enough to be incorporated into the family. Bí erú bá pé n’ílé, èpè Alájobí ni ó má ñsé. Yet, no matter how close they are, friends and one’s slaves can only be co-residents and not one’s co-sanguine.

But if we are thinking of a broad network of social alliance through gift-exchange, one cannot be thinking of an immediate co-sanguinal relationship, but a community of diverse individuals’ writ large. One would even need to enlarge such a social alliance to other categories of beings living and dead. Phenomenal existence among the Yorùbá is regenerative and cyclical. Thus, death is not seen as an absolute and final state of oblivion, but rather it is merely a point of transition whereby the individual crosses the threshold from one plane of existence to another. The individual who has died takes up another existence back in the phenomenal world. What this

686 Akíwowo, Àjobí and Ájogbé 13-14
implies is that a person who dies physically becomes a living-dead; she or he is neither alive physically nor completely dead, she or he is part of the corporate group among the living. The traditional Yorùbá people bury their dead inside or outside the house instead of taking the corpses to the cemetery as the Christians do. This understanding explains why it is acknowledged among the Yorùbá that those people whose physical existence in this world has been terminated through death, have conscious, active spiritual essences which persistently endure.689

Because of the harmonious relationships that exist, not only among humans, but also between humans and other inorganic elements, with which the Yorùbá people are endowed, gift-giving practice touches on every area of their natural and spiritual life. They see life itself as the process of giving and taking on a constant basis. A Western visitor into the midst of the Yorùbá people might be struck by their practice of pouring their drinks in form of palm wine, brewed guinea corn liquor, and water on the ground, claiming that they are giving the ground its own share. In an extreme case, some even think of urinating on the ground as a form of giving gift to the ground to nourish it. Seen in this way, one can safely make a claim that the Yorùbá world is a world of gifts. Within this societal structure, gifts are usually not confined within one’s immediate family but the norm is that gifts should be extended to the strangers and people with whom we interact on daily basis.

In this sense, a hunter who went to kill a game especially to be eaten and not for commercial purpose, saw it a necessary and perhaps an honorable thing to give portions of the meat from his game to the people other than his own immediate family. This is equally true of

farmers who lived in villages and small towns; they often distributed pieces of yams and corn to the people in their immediate environment. Kolanut is a very common fruit the Yorùbá people share with one another. But during elaborate occasions such as a naming ceremony, engagement ceremony that normally precedes marriage ceremonies, and especially during the worship of their Òrìsàs, kolanut is one of the gift items that are presented to the people. Joel Robbins has observed a similar behavior among the Urapmin; “an ideal model of how they were made to accommodate each other in the life of each person.”

In comparing their dialectic of lawfulness and willfulness as they impact on morality, he states that (I will quote him at length):

> Within this dialectic, the law’s basic demand is that all realized relationships, those of coresidence, affinity, or active kinship set up expectations of “lawful” behavior that ideally constrain or shape the will. In such established relationships, the general lawful expectation of good behavior—generosity, reciprocity, helpfulness—is always understood to apply. Those with whom one has established relationships can, for example, expect one to think of them when sharing food, to answer their calls to work together, to honor the state of give-and-take in these relationships. Having chosen to live in a particular village, it would be immorally willful of me to disregard attempts to coordinate action among village members….It is similarly an act of willfulness for me secretly to kill a pig and not share its meat with those with whom I usually share.

This gift-giving practice as seen both in Yorùbá and Urapmin societies can also be likened to what David Graeber calls “timeless relations of open-ended, communistic reciprocity, whether they apply to groups like moieties or clans, or members of a family, or network of individuals.”

Gift-exchange in Yorùbá society oftentimes is spontaneous and at other times motivated or provoked by special ceremonial functions. Peel documents the regular practice of gift-

---

690 Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, 195
691 Robbins, *Becoming Sinners*, 195
692 Graeber, *Towards an Anthropological Theory of value*, 225
exchange within the Yorùbá family and community.\textsuperscript{693} he says that when he looked through the CMS Archives, he noted that presents exchanged between mission agents and chiefs were carefully documented. Fadipe also shows how the Lagos State Governor, Sir Gilbert Carter, was given as presents a horse, sixteen sheep and thirty bags of cowries (equivalent to Seven pounds and ten shillings), and how Revd. David Hinderer was generously presented with a hog and 20,000 cowries (equivalent to one pound) in 1853 when he went on a visit to Ìbàdàn.\textsuperscript{694}

Friends exchange gifts among themselves spontaneously, whereas gifts within kinship relations might be unilateral for a very long time, as in an older or well-to-do person to constantly give gifts to the children and the less privileged ones in the family. It is unilateral in the sense that those children only begin to reciprocate when they start to earn money. A child who is hard-working is rewarded by an outsider with a gift as an incentive to continue in that manner. Beautiful wives are very well appreciated through gifts from their husbands.

In certain towns, especially in Ilé-Ifé, some women receive special gifts from their husbands because of their conjugal relations. Thus, one of the traditional women’s songs in Ifé, which reveal sexual innuendo, says: “You have already purchased Olórógbó (a very expensive cloth), you would easily get Súnsún (another expensive cloth), when the husband is calling you for sex but you are turning your neck to show refusal, easily you would buy those expensive clothes.”\textsuperscript{695} The implication of this song is that men in Ilé-Ifé were expected to be responsible for their wives’ clothing and food. As also part of the ritual activities, during another Yorùbá special festival called Orò, in another community, the reverse is usually the case; men from the Orò

\textsuperscript{693} Peel, Religious Encounter, 85-87
\textsuperscript{694} Fadipe, Sociology of the Yorùbá, 305
\textsuperscript{695} This is one of various songs sung by compound wives (Obinrin Ilé) at any communal ceremonial function in Ilé-Ifé.
family, are fond of singing, “women with vaginas come and show hospitality to the men with penises; thinking about sex as if it is a material object.” The last song can hermeneutically be said to have something in common with Jacques Godbout’s idea that women are the only people who give all, to the extent that “A woman (but not a man) is often said to “give herself” when she makes love.”

Rene Girard argues that almost every society has festivals that have retained a ritualistic character over centuries. Of particular interest to the modern inquirer are observances involving “the deliberate violation of established laws; for example, celebrations on which sexual promiscuity (called ritual license) is not only tolerated but prescribed or in which incest becomes required practice.” Girard’s remarks are apropos because in nearly all the traditional Yorùbá religious festivals honoring of Òrisàs, ritual license allows participants to hurl insults at their superiors, what Max Gluckman called ritual of rebellion.

In his research work among the Ndembu, Victor Turner explains the ritual of rebellion as a liminal phase in which a structured society experiences a temporary anti-structure; a time characterized by certain attributes in which egalitarianism is the most striking feature. The individual to be installed during the ceremonial installation of a king must be dressed in a ragged cloth and paraded in the front of his future subjects, and he must endure affronts, humiliation and insults as his head is bowed to absorb them. What researchers describe as rituals of rebellion highlight the view that order and contradiction have always been ways some societies managed.

---

696 This song is one of the ritual songs during annual Òrò festival in Òkèhò in Òyó North, Òyó State in Nigeria. I was born in Òkèhò and I have witnessed this festival on many occasions.
697 Godbout, The World of Gift, 35
change and transition. Ritual action also provides activities that could be described as the climax when society searches and takes steps to establish harmony through an exchange either of material or immaterial objects.

Yorùbá people have used gifts as messages (metaphor) either to buy peace or incite war in the past. When a war was to be initiated by a sub-ethnic Yorùbá community against another community in ancient Yorùbáland, certain objects often were usually sent especially to the community chief or king to be challenged for war. When the King of an opposing community received the objects he and his community were obliged to respond by either sending gifts to appease the community initiating war or it could respond by getting prepared for war by sending equivalent gift signifying readiness to fight. The latter option became necessary, especially if the responding community was capable of fighting the first community initiating war. At the individual level, a person who wants to put another person into trouble might offer a forbidden gift on the shrine of Èsù, in order to afflict her/his intended enemy. There are instances in the Yorùbá society, when interpersonal conflict between two people are often settled by well-meaning mediators, who after settling the conflict, encourage the partners who have agreed to settle the conflict to consummate it with either eating kolanut or drinking palm wine together.¹⁰¹

In the Yorùbá society, givers of gifts are often treated with respect and deference. Younger people, who do not have the means to reciprocate the generosity they have received from their benefactors, often offer some services in return such as running errands or rendering help when it is needed. Various kinds of gifts serve as motivation for people in order to render help that could otherwise be denied. For example, one Yorùbá proverb says; Òle tì torí àmàlà bá won gbé òkù lo sí Òyó; Ó ti torí iyán bá won gb'òdó r’oko. [A lazy man helps to carry the dead

¹⁰¹ Fadipe, Sociology of the Yorùbá, 310
to Òyó because of yam flour paste; he helps carry a mortar to the farm because of pounded yam].

Quite a number of people have served as body guards and protectors for some important or wealthy people because of gifts they have received from those wealthy people. Traditional chiefs in Yorùbá society are expected to be generous and people in political power are also expected to give gifts to their various wards, yet some of them often manipulate the less-privileged to serve as their guards.

One could argue that the kinds of gifts I have been discussing could also be seen as a form of bribery and the receivers, more often than not, are corrupted in the process. The exchange of gifts in the socio-economic arena in Nigeria is complicated. The exchange of gifts sometimes has made some leaders choose unqualified people into positions. It may be reasonable to argue that in many Pentecostal Charismatic churches in Yorùbá society today, gifts to Pastors for various kinds of blessings are very common. Paradoxically, while many members within this group are very poor, they still give because they have been told that if they give generously, they will be blessed and prosperous. I will devote attention to this important point in the general conclusion of this dissertation. In the next section, the concept of sacrifice and how it is conceived as gift-giving shall be the focus of discussion.

*Sacrifice: A brief Theoretical Understanding*

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “sacrifice is an act of offering to a deity something precious, especially: the killing of a victim on an altar.” Concise Dictionary defines it as “an act of offering objects to a divinity, thereby making them holy.” Sacrifice is considered “an offering of a gift to the holy in thanks for what has been received. Reciprocity is even regarded as the formula of sacrifice.”

702 E.B. Tylor argues that sacrifice serves as a means of

---

702 Roger Schmidt, *Exploring Religion*, 166
‘bribing’ the gods or paying homage to them in the same way as men pay homage to their overlords.\textsuperscript{703} Van der Leeuw sees it as a gift to enable the receiver (the god) to give something in return or as a means of teasing the gods to act as favorably as possible to those who give them gifts.\textsuperscript{704}

Robertson Smith sees it as means of cementing a communion between man and supernatural being or beings.\textsuperscript{705} F.B. Jevons just like Robertson Smith emphasizes the communal aspect of sacrifice as this is noticeable in totemism.\textsuperscript{706} E.A. Westermarch sees sacrifice as a means of providing food for the gods to encourage them to be kind to men, to bestow blessings upon men, to avert dangers or prevent epidemics, and he sees human sacrifice as a method of ‘life insurance.’\textsuperscript{707} E.O. James regards sacrifice as a means of giving life to have life.\textsuperscript{708} Catherine Bell points our attention to the religiously-motivated gift, by showing that the best known examples of religious rituals are those in which people make offerings to a god or gods with the practical and straightforward expectation of receiving something which may be concrete or abstract in return.\textsuperscript{709} This is a straightforward free gift, a gift without any conscious expectation of material return but which very often accrues “cosmic points”. A giver says, “I have done a good deed in giving a gift and I am going to be divinely or cosmically rewarded as a consequence.”

These definitions offer insights into an understanding of the Yorùbá concept and notion of offering sacrifice. There is no single purpose or thing that motivates people to offer sacrifice.

\textsuperscript{705} Robertson-Smith Williams, \textit{Religion of the Semites}, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1889), 226-231
\textsuperscript{706} F.B. Jevons, \textit{Introduction to the History of Religion}, (London: Harper and Row, 1921), 154
\textsuperscript{708} E. O. James, \textit{Origins of Sacrifice} (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 256
\textsuperscript{709} Catherine Bell, \textit{Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions} (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78-79
The reasons are as diverse as the problems encountered by them and the outcome of the divination. Maurice Godelier reinforced the idea of obligation that Mauss recognized but did not develop. This, according to him, is one that has since been neglected, to the detriment of anthropology: the obligation to make gifts to gods. Godelier argues that, “by excluding sacred objects from his field of analysis, Mauss may have unintentionally created the illusion that exchange was the be-all and end-all of social life, thereby preparing for Levi-Strauss, who further simplified matters in his well-known formula which reduces society to the threefold exchange of women, wealth, and words. Godelier recognizes the importance of the fourth obligation of gift-giving to be very crucial to the creation and maintenance of hierarchy: since according to him, “the gods can never be fully repaid, those humans who give the most are elevated to quasi-godlike status”. For him, therefore, the core principle behind gift exchanges lies in the double nature of gift objects, which are simultaneously “substitutes for sacred objects and substitutes for human beings”.

Girard, in his thought provoking book, Violence and the Sacred, argues that “in many rituals the sacrificial act assumes two opposing aspects; appearing at times as a sacred obligation to be neglected at grave peril, at other times as a sort of criminal activity entailing perils of equal activity.” Girard thinks that any form of violence should be described in terms of sacrifice. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss already had foregrounded the second aspect of Girard’s opposing nature of sacrifice by saying that what makes a sacrifice illegitimate is because the victim is a sacred subject therefore, it is a criminal act to kill him, but the victim is sacred so as

710 Maurice Godelier, Enigma of the Gift, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 13
711 Godelier, Enigma of the Gift, 69
712 Godelier, Enigma of, 30
713 Godelier, Enigma of, 72
714 Girard, Violence and the Sacred, 1
to be killed.\textsuperscript{715} Admittedly, Hubert’s and Mauss’s general theory of sacrifice does not construe sacrifice as gift exchange.\textsuperscript{716}

Georges Bataille, in his \textit{Accursed Share} Volume 1, especially with respect to his notion of gift, claims that, “sacrifice restores to the sacred world that which servile use has degraded, rendered profane. Servile use has made \textit{a thing} (an \textit{object}) of that which, in a deep sense, is of the same nature as the \textit{subject}, is in relation of intimate participation with the subject.”\textsuperscript{717} All these arguments will give us a sense of the traditional Yorübá religious practitioners; they hold the view that without the divinities to empower them, humans will die on the one hand, and on the other hand, if the divinities are also neglected in the offering of sacrifice, they will also die.

It is not out of point to think that this was what was going on in the minds of the Aztecs of ancient Mexico, who thought that sacrificing victims of war to the Sun god would make the Sun continue to produce for them light.\textsuperscript{718} There is always a reciprocal giving and taking between the divinities and humans, as seen in virtually all societies of the world. Perhaps it is because of this relationship, which makes Mauss develop a theory of the ‘contract sacrifice,’ according to which it is necessary to buy from ancestors and gods, for they are there essentially to give something big for something small.\textsuperscript{719} Mauss uses the peculiar practice of potlatch to show how the principle of giving and the principle of sacrifice can co-exist. Potlatch for him ‘produces an effect not only upon men, who vie with one another in generosity, not only upon the things they

---

\textsuperscript{716} Hubert and Mauss, \textit{Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions}, 1
\textsuperscript{718} Bataille, \textit{The Accursed Share}, 56
\textsuperscript{719} Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 17
pass on to one another or consume at it, not only upon the souls of the dead who are present and take part in it, and whose names have been assumed by men, but even upon nature.”

Mauss thinks that “the purpose of destruction by sacrifice is precisely that it is an act of giving that is necessarily reciprocated.” Berking claims that gift and sacrifice belong together. Berking is of the opinion that:

It is not only that, in most varied cultures, gifts are again and again understood as sacrifices and vice versa. It is also that gift and sacrifice denote two, admittedly distinguishable, intensities in the continuum of an anthropology of giving from which the moral vocabulary of archaic societies developed.

Returning to Girard, the concept of sacrifice for him contains an element of mystery. The mystery is the relationship that exists between sacrifice and violence. Substitution for him is the basis for the practice of sacrifice. He goes to a great length in showing different biblical examples to defend this theory; examples such as Cain and Abel and Esau and Jacob.

His conclusion is based on the fact that “a frequent motif in the Old Testament, as well as in Greek myth is that of brothers at odds with one another. Their fatal penchant for violence can only be diverted by the intervention of a third party, the sacrificial victim or victims.” Godfrey Lienhardt agrees with Girard and Victor Turner, who “portray sacrifice as a deliberate act of collective substitution performed at the expense of the victim and absorbing all the internal tensions, feuds, and rivalries pent up within the community.” For Girard, therefore, sacrifice is

---

References:

720 Mauss, *The Gift*, 14
721 Mauss, *The Gift*, 16
722 Berking, *Sociology of Giving*, 51
723 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 2
724 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 3
725 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 4
essentially a communal institution. Yet, the sacrificial victim not only must be completely separated from those beings for which the victim is a substitute but also a similarity must exist between both parties.

A good example from Ilé-Ifé, the site of this ethnographic work, will suffice. The Edì festival has been studied critically, by scholars in very detailed using indigenous hermeneutical interpretations. Edì festival is important to understand daily life in Ilé-Ifé and it also shows how gender roles are played out in the founding of this ancient Yorùbá city. Mythico-historically speaking, women have contributed immensely to the founding, growth and expansion of Ilé-Ifé and other Yorùbá cities from the beginning of time to the modern period, contrary to the scholarly arguments that Yorùbá society is highly patriarchal, as carefully argued by Oyèrónké Olájugbù. Mythically speaking, women are fully recognized; the mythical valorization or deification of women should not be confused with any proof of their actual secular power though.

*Sacrifice as Gift*

Traditional Yorùbá religious practitioners share the view that human life is never lived in isolation; it is constantly in mutual interaction and interdependence with other living and nonliving organisms, through which it is being blessed. There seems to be in the religious imagination of the Yorùbá traditional religious practitioners, a dialectic relationship between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the physical, body and soul, divine and human, good and evil, and any disconnection between these organizing principles can lead to serious anomie.

---

727 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 101
728 Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 39
730 Olájugbù, *Women in the Yorùbá Religious Sphere*, 21-42
When this disconnection happens, people look for a solution to reconnect oneself individually and collectively to those organizing principles and to sacred power. This can be accomplished through the techniques of divination and sacrifice.

In Yoruba religion as elsewhere, sacrifice in particular plays a very crucial role in reorganizing the society that is either disturbed by anomic forces, through transgression of moral and spiritual boundaries or the maintenance of the ongoing peaceful social order. Sacrifice serves the purpose of mediating the supernatural and human world, and humans have to see two divides: when humans placate or memorialize the divinities through sacrifice, the divinities are also expected to overlook errors or transgressions on the part of humans and then deliver goods, especially if humans have offered correct sacrifice(s).

For the Yorùbá traditional religious worshippers, no major achievement in the life of an individual, a group, or a community is considered possible without the active support of the supernatural (God through the Òrìsàs). Sacrifice seems to serve as the major means through which traditional Yorùbá worshipers curry the favor of the Òrìsàs. It is even claimed that, “it is potentially tragic, for the gods, in nervous control of the universe, demand from man a steady, periodic sacrifice as a demonstration of his continued loyalty and submission.” The spatial and temporal repetitious practice of sacrifice in the Yorùbá society shows its importance to the continued existence of the people and the harmonization of the society at large. Each Òrìsà in the Yorùbá society has its sacred day when the individual worshipper brings special offering either to thank or placate her/his Òrìsà, apart from the elaborate annual festival dedicated to each of them. In either case, it is through sacrifice that the worshippers approach these Òrìsàs. The

---

annual celebration of each Òrisà is an occasion for rejoicing and thanksgiving; worshippers come out to give their best gifts to the Òrisàs.

The gift-offerings are mostly thank offerings, and the meals provide the opportunity of communion between the Òrisà and her/his children on the one hand and then among the children themselves on the other. It is a time of cyclical renewal of covenants. The renewal of covenant is performed in the presence of the priest or priestess connected with a particular Òrisà. Olúpònlà asserts that “the gods are at the service of humans, and in return, humans adore, propitiate, and feed the gods.” Still echoing the concept of gift, Olúpònlà sees this exchange gesture as reciprocal relationship that exists between the gods and the humans. This is the reason why “the Yorùbá are encouraged to bestow gifts and honor on their deity in return for the ample benefits they received.”

_A brief comment on Women as active Givers_

The importance of women in the socio-religious, economic and political life of the Yorùbá society only underscores Weiner’s forceful argument that women are never behind in the mythico-historical arrangement of any given society. They also have productive and reproductive capacity. She even believes that apart from the fact that the “Western notion where women’s participation in biological reproduction and nurturance are fetishized with negative value,… women’s control over political and cosmological situations and actions can be beneficent or malevolent, matching the ambiguous potential of men’s control and power.” Whereas Bronislaw Malinowski recognizes that women play a prominent role in certain ceremonial

---

732 Ìdòwù, Olódùmarè; Awólálá, Religious Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites, 1979
733 Olúpònlà, City of 201 Gods, 102
734 Olúpònlà, City of 201 Gods, 102
735 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions, 3
actions, he seems to overlook the active role women play in gift-exchange in Melanesia. Accordingly, Levi-Strauss’s notion is that women in many non-Western societies were only good as exchange gifts among men.

According to this notion, women are at the base of systems of kinship relations. Men, in his account, primarily see women as objects of gift exchange but not as subjects who can act in their own capacities to contribute to the societal growth. Given this view, Western anthropologists usually interpret the apparent absence of women as autonomous actors in gift exchange as a sign of the hierarchical dominance of men over women in Melanesia. Marilyn Strathern argues in *The Gender of the Gift* (1988), however, that this interpretation is biased by Western preconceptions. Strathern claims that in Melanesia, no permanent relations of dominance exist between men and women; the same position maintained by Olájugbù (2003).

If there is any festival that Ìfè indigenes would continue to memorialize in many years to come, it would be Edì festival. According to the Ìfè myth, Edì festival is a commemoration of the heroic activity of Mòremí, an ancestress and heroine of Ìfè turned a goddess. Mòremí long ago saved Ìfè people from the warring Ìgbò marauders/invaders who were bent on destroying Ilé-Ìfè ancient city. She refused to become helpless just like any other person; she decided to take concrete action against an insult and defeat of Ìfè by the invaders. She consulted with the oba (the king) and the chiefs that she had made up her mind to go into the enemy’s territory all by herself.

---

The people feared for her life after telling them her plans, because she was not a warrior. The only feature that distinguished Móremí from other women was her impeccable and incomparable beauty; the only weapon she had to do the unimaginable. After much persuasion, the people allowed her to go ahead with her plan. But before she embarked upon her mission, she first went to Èsìnminrin River, where she made a vow that if she could come back alive and was able to accomplish her mission, whatever the river demanded as sacrifice, she was prepared to offer it.740

Móremí went to the Ègbò territory and allowed herself to be captured by the Ègbò marauders. When the king of Ègbò saw her, he was immediately attracted to her because of her comely and beautiful appearance. This is reminiscent of Sarah, who was also seized by Pharaoh in Egypt because of her beauty (Genesis 12:10-20). The myth has it that Móremí’s beauty surpassed any other women in Ilé-Ifè at that time, to the extent that every well-to-do man wanted to marry her. The king asked what brought her to his territory. She told the Ègbò king that she was a suffering woman who needed help. The king decided to marry her; before long she had become the most favorite of the king’s wives. One day while the king was playing with Móremí, having been intoxicated by her beauty, completely oblivious of the identity of the stranger he was romancing with, he revealed the secret of how the Ègbò people have been successfully capturing and killing Ifè people, when Móremí asked him. This information became a very useful weapon in her hand, who after some time in Ègbò king’s palace escaped back to the ancient city of Ilé-Ifè, where she was able to reveal the secret of the Ègbò people to the king and Ifè people.

740 Smith, Yorùbá 18-19; Awólàlú, Yorùbá Beliefs, 150-151; Olájugbù, Women in the Yorùbá, 28-29; Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 203-233.
She told her people and the king that the enemies that have been attacking Ifè were the Ìgbò and not spirits, as wrongly assumed by the Ifè warriors. Those Ìgbò warriors were usually dressed in Raffia palm to disguise their real identities. She told them that the next time they come, Ifè warriors should get torches with fire ready to set the enemies ablaze; this the Ifè warrior did. Ifè people were able to defeat Ìgbò and eventually took them captive, thus putting an end to the incessant defeat they have suffered from the hands of the Ìgbò. Meanwhile, when Móremí went back to Èsinminrin River to offer her gifts, to her terrible dismay all was rejected; the only gift the river demanded was Olúorogbo, the only son that she had. In her terrible distress and sorrow, she bowed to the demand of the Èsinminrin River by throwing Olúorogbo her only son into it. This vicarious act made Ifè people to reciprocate by re-enacting the annual festival of Edì in commemoration of Móremí and Olúorogbo. Why do we need to have a lengthy story of Móremí and how important is this story to the discussion on sacrifice?

Even though Moremi’s mythico-historical account can be read within a cultural context, its style reflect accounts of sacrifice in other cultures. Ifè people interpret the sacrificial offering (gift) of Olúorogbo by Móremí as not only vicarious, but also that the action of Móremí in itself was to them a selfless sacrificial gift (of her vagina or her body) to the redeeming and cathartically absorbing all the internal tensions, feuds, and rivalries pent up within the community, as already argued by Girard. Moremi is often praised as “A f’òbò s’ètè [Using vagina to put war to an end or to conquer war].

The re-enactment of that mythico-historical moment is symbolized (since that period till modern time) in Tele, who is usually a stranger (victim and scapegoat comparable to Aztec’s war

741 Another Yorùbá folklore account shows how Olúrómbí also pledged her only son to Ìrókò tree in an attempt to redeem her community just like Móremí (see Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 206). What is not too clear though is whether the same story of Móremí is being told in another form. The reason is that Olúrómbí’s story does not connect to space and time like that of Móremí. This is open to argument though.
captive), charged with carrying the evil away from the community, thereby sanctifying and cleansing it. For Girard, there are several conditions for the choosing of the scapegoat. First, the scapegoat is, by definition, an arbitrary victim, at least to the degree that the victim has, in reality, no direct bearing on the problems that are causing the community disturbance. However, the victim is not arbitrary to the extent that most scapegoats tend to have similar cultural traits that allow Girard to classify them as a group. Normally they are an outsider, but on the border of the community, not fully alien to the community. This victim belongs to the community, but has traits that separate him/her from the community.

On the General Notion of Sacrifice in the Yorùbá Society

The traditional Yorùbá religious people hold the notion that sacrifice also involves substitution, such that one person’s life is substituted for another or for the whole community, or of property such as a domestic animal for a human life. Ifè people claim that all sacrificial gifts (items) that Móremí gave to the Èsinminrin River were not sufficient to compensate for the redemption of the Ifè people; it must be her only begotten son. This shows the incontestable comparative practice of the gift-giving as sacrifice cross-culturally. We can also see that when Jesus was to be sacrificed, it was outside the city, and in this case too, Èsinminrin River where Oluorogbo was sacrificed was also outside the Ifè city at the time.

In the Yorùbá society, just like the Aztec of Mexico, the Jews in Israel and a host of other countries, sacrificial offerings are of different types; gift-sacrifice, the food-sacrifice, and the contract-sacrifice. These different types of sacrifices have the motivation to perpetuate, intensify, or reestablish a connection between the human and the divine. They are often intended

---

742 Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, 45-61
743 Girard, *Violence and Religion*, 8
744 Idòwú, *Olódùmarè*, 126; Awólàlú, *Yorùbá Beliefs*, 158-159; Olúpònà, *City of 201 Gods*, 219
745 Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Natures and Functions*, 1
to gain the favour of the god or to placate divine wrath. More importantly, the gift-sacrifice often coexisted with food-sacrifice in the Yorùbá traditional religious practice. During the annual Òrìsà worship, devotees and priests are constantly reminded through gift-sacrifice and food-sacrifice of their duties and obligations towards their Òrìsàs. Each Òrìsà has her/his sacrificial gift preferences. Materials for sacrifice vary from one circumstance to another and from one Òrìsà to another.746

All these sacrificial materials are known through due consultation with babaláwo, who uses Ifá oracle to know the correct sacrificial materials due a particular Òrìsà.747 Here, we see how women are actively involved in the preparation of the food-gifts for the Òrìsàs and the participants. For example, the following materials are given as sacrificial gifts to Ògún, the god that this dissertation is concerned about: dog, palm-wine, roasted yams, palm oil, snails, tortoise, kolanuts, chicken and ram.748 Paradoxically, those animals are sacrificed to the gods, but the congregation keeps the best for itself.749 When we turn to the Christian practice of sacrifice, as exemplified by Christ Way Pentecostal Charismatic Church in Ilé-Ifè, one sees a similar pattern in the way the notion of sacrifice is conceived by the traditional Yorùbá religious worshippers. The only difference is that, while traditional Yorùbá religious worshippers would emphasize the shedding of animal’s blood and other materials in placating and worshipping their gods, Christ Way Church members would see no sense in shedding any animal blood. They claim that Jesus Christ has paid the ultimate price once and for all for them through shedding of his own blood on the Cross of Calvary.

---

746 Abímbólá, Ifá, 1976; Awólálú, Yorùbá Beliefs, 162-182
747 Abímbólá, 'Ifá: A West African Cosmological System', 101-116; Awólálú, Yorùbá Beliefs, 162
748 Òdòwú, Olódùmarè, 111; Awólálú, Yorùbá Beliefs, 163; Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 119-121.
749 Berking, Sociology, of Giving, 53.
Yet, this church believes that every Christian who has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ should be able to live a sacrificial life of giving and service. The four cardinal principles of the church are Salvation, Sanctification, Service, and Success. For example, the church’s teachings emphasize the giving (surrendering) of one’s life first, before one’s material gifts can become meaningful and acceptable to God. This giving of one’s life is what is called in the Pentecostal Charismatic theological parlance, “Being Born Again,” as already mentioned in chapter two. To be born again is to have a radical change of heart from committing sins (doing evils) into doing righteousness (good works). Then sanctification is a process whereby the heart and entire life of a born again Christian is continuously being worked upon by the Holy Spirit for cleansing and purity.

According to the Christ Way Church’s belief, the first two of the Church’s cardinal principles prepare a Christian for active service towards God and humanity. The church holds that a person who is yet to be ‘born again’ cannot receive the mercy and favor of God. On the flipside though, according to this church’s teaching, the duty of a born again is to be ready to devote her/his life sacrificially both to God’s and humanity’s service. The biblical account of Abraham and Isaac is often used by the Christ Way church leaders to inculcate the spirit of this sacrificial giving of self and one’s property in the congregation. Berking argues that “Not only does the talk of ‘Lamb of God’ (John 1:29) emphasize the archaic image of animal sacrifice; the definition of the Mass as bloodless representation of the sacrifice on the cross imported the central concepts of Roman sacrificial language – *immolation, hostia, victim, sacerdos, sacrificium* – into the dogmas of the Catholic Church.” While animal sacrifice is no longer

---

751 Berking, *Sociology of Gift Giving*, 53
needed, Christ Way Church emphatically teaches that the gift of Tithes and Offerings are means through which God is appreciated for giving His only begotten son.

Just like the traditional Yorùbá religious worshippers have their special annual ceremonial occasions to celebrate their Òrìsàs; Christ Way Church also sets apart Easter Season as its Annual Church Convention where doctrines about Jesus Christ’s gift to and his vicarious suffering for humans are being taught to the members by the invited guest speakers. The convention period is both the time of jubilations as well as the time of deep reflections on the Christian principles of self-denial and sacrificial giving. At the annual convention, Christ Way Church members are expected to give bountifully their offerings and their thanksgiving offerings to God. A pastor who is gifted in motivating people is often chosen to preach on giving before people are asked to give their monies with singing and dancing.

It is also a time when members give special gifts to their pastors and the senior pastor. Christmas season is also a period of elaborate rituals of gift-giving and reciprocity among Christ Way members. There is a tendency to believe that Western idea of gifts and gifts wrapping have influenced all the Yorùbá Christians’ practice of gift-exchange during Christmas time.\(^752\) In Christ Way Church, some pastors who are well disposed financially also give the senior pastor special gifts. Pastors also give to some members who are very poor and especially widows. There were different occasions in the past, when two people gave their expensive wristwatches as special offerings to the church because they did not have money on them to give.

Another family, Evangelists Ségun and Kémi Òkéowó gave their ceiling fan to the church as a gift sacrifice. The gift, according to them, was motivated by the testimonies of two pastors within Christ Way Church group, who claimed they got bountiful rewards in return having given

---

special offerings in the previous annual convention. Another person, pastor Solá Ajibádé, disclosed to me that there was a time his local church was in need of money to complete the church building, so he had to go and take a loan of N400000 ($2700) in order that the church building might be completed.

According to him, some months after, a door was opened to him to travel to Germany, and it was in Germany that God gave him back more than N2000000 ($16,000) as a reward of his previous gift to his local church. Women are definitely not left out in sacrificial giving; one of the women leaders, Pastor Bósèdé Beulah, shared with me how her first salary every year “goes to God.” Instead of interpreting the money as a gift to the church, she instead sees it as a gift to God. What she means by this is that her first salary is usually paid as offering in January of every year. She claims she has been doing this for more than a decade and a half and that God has been faithful in blessing her in return. Testimonies of bountiful return gifts from God only support Mauss’s argument that humans always give something small for something large in return from the gods.

The church’s senior pastor (the General Overseer), in person of Pastor Odún Oriökè, disclosed to me that members and pastors of the church always give sacrificially. He shared a testimony of how he sold his very first car (Peugeot 504) in 1993 so that God’s work could progress. He believes that that is why God is constantly blessing his family. He is fond of saying, often in Yorùbá dialect, Àsírí náwónáwó kíí tú [A giver of money does not go into penury]. The word náwónáwó, if taken literally, means ‘the spender’ of money, whereas in this context, it is better interpreted to mean a ‘giver’. Devoid of its religious meaning, when reduced to its social context, a person who is in constant habit of giving gifts (money, material objects, etc.) is not likely to lack people who will rise up to help her/him in her/his time of need. He is equally fond
of saying Òkè l’òkè ni owó a fún ni má ìnwà [the hand of a giver is always at the top]. People used to think that one of the very successful businessmen and a philanthropist in Nigeria, late Chief Moshood K. Abiola, could never be poor because, according to one Yorùbá saying, “Devourer could not enter the money of a giver and therefore could not go into bankruptcy.”

In the real world, a giver might go into serious crisis that might make her/him to suffer setbacks, but within a community of sharing and caring that she/he belongs and has been contributing to through her/his gifts, everybody who had been previously helped would be willing to render help in return. But what is the relevance of this proverb to the gift exchange between God and humans? One can interpret it to mean that, when a constant giver of money (gift) to God and God’s servants (priests and pastors) runs into financial crisis, God will induce the hearts of other givers to remember her/him. At least the pastors or priests who had benefitted from the generous donation of a member of her/his church to the church and to her/himself will constantly pray and network for such giver at the time of need. A very clear observation shows that giving sacrificially has always been a fundamental religious ceremony. According to Berking, “people offer their god a sacrifice, which usually means that something is destroyed or slaughtered.”

In Pentecostal Charismatic Christian circles, the words ‘seed’, ‘sowing’ and ‘reaping’ are constantly mentioned with regards to giving either of Tithes, or general offerings, or special offerings such as Thanksgiving offerings, showing their Agricultural metaphor. Pentecostal Charismatic Christians are fond of saying they are sowing seeds when they are giving their

754 Komter, Social Solidarity, 96;
755 Berking, Sociology of the Gift, 52
offerings, and believe that their seeds are bound to germinate and produce fruits, provided the seeds sown were good, incorruptible seeds and provided they were sown in a right soil. The right soil here means giving one’s offerings and tithes to a genuine or godly church and or godly pastors. In their mindsets, there are some pastors and some churches that are not right soils to plant one’s seeds. In this sense, the sowing of seed already presupposes a killing or destruction or decay, yet it has a potentiality of resurrecting (sprouting) or growing into not one seed but multiple seeds, all things being equal. The outcome is a bountiful harvest for the sower. Whether or not emphasis is placed on right seed is a very interesting line of inquiry to look at. In many Pentecostal Charismatic churches in Nigeria, terrible monetary scandals have been reported.\footnote{Olúfúnké Adébóyè, “Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America: A Comparative Focus on Nigeria and Brazil”, \textit{in Afrika Zamani}, Nos. 11\&12, 2003-2004, 136-159 see especially 147.}

This shows the negative side of excessive teachings of the prosperity gospel.

As a matter of fact, Bataille sees giving sacrificially especially with regards to potlatch in terms of acquisition of power. According to him:

\begin{quote}
We need to give away, lose or destroy; but the gift would be senseless (and so we would never decide to give) if it did not take on the meaning of an acquisition. Hence, \textit{giving} must become \textit{acquiring} a power. Gift-giving has the virtue of a surpassing of the subject who gives, but in exchange for the object given, the subject appropriates the surpassing: He regards his virtue, that which he had the capacity for, as an asset, as a \textit{power} that he now possesses (emphasis in the original).\footnote{Bataille, \textit{The Accursed Share, 69}.}
\end{quote}

We might argue that Bataille says this with respect to potlatch and in purely economic terms, whereby a giver proves his superiority over the recipient until the recipient is able to pay back higher and with interest, if he wants to be free from humiliation he has to suffer in the hands of the giver.
Can we say then, that what the Pentecostal Charismatic Christians are doing when they are paying offerings and tithes is to acquire power? If the answer is yes, what kind of power are they acquiring? We will be able to get the clear picture of this if we pay attention to Malachi 3:8-10, often quoted when Pentecostal Charismatic pastors are about to take offerings and Tithes. The emphasis on reward is placed on verse 10; “the commitment God is making to open floodgates of heaven to the givers.” When one pastor was asked to take offerings and tithes in Christ Way Church Annual the last Sunday of November anniversary in 2011, he told the congregation that any Christians who do not pay tithe, things would become tight for her or him. Such Christians’ pockets would constantly be leaking because there is already a curse of God on such a defaulter of tithe payment. In many Pentecostal Charismatic notion of favor (grace), riches and wealth are usually interpreted as good indication; they often claim that it is as a result of sacrificial giving by those faithful who have been blessed. One pastor says if as a Christian, you have done everything possible to catch the attention of God and nothing happens, try and give sacrificial offering. Then God shall be moved.

We are faced with a paradox in the Pentecostal Charismatic Christian theology of “grace” and the concept of gift-exchange. It is paradoxical because it is as interesting as it is complex; complex in the sense that it has been a source of controversy in Christian history. While Christ Way Church teaches that Grace is something that cannot be bought; it is a free gift from God and that “to father, to master, to God all powerful, no one can return the equivalent.”

---

758 I attended the 2011 Christ Way Church’s annual November festival commemorating when Christ Way became a church.
759 This statement is often being made by Prophet Samson Ajoyindé. He repeated the same when he came to a local RCCG that I am attending in May, 2013. Pastor E.A. Adébóyé, has also many times referred to sacrificial giving as means to unlock God’s blessings in his yearly publication of Open Heaven.
761 Davis, *The Gift in Sixteen Century France*, 68
nevertheless, think that Grace is not complete when Christian good-works are lacking. Ephesians 2:8-10 are usually the most important relevant text used to explain this interesting and yet complex phenomenon. While salvation is expected to come to an individual by God’s gift of grace (unearned favor that comes as a response to the person’s godly faith); yet, as God’s workmanship, the saved have been created (anew, added emphasis) in Jesus unto good works.

Pentecostal Charismatic Christians (Christ Way Church members inclusive) perhaps would think like Peter Groves, who uses the story of the conversion of Zacchaeus to explain how a person who is saved by grace should respond to God. According to Groves, when Zacchaeus was spotted by Jesus on the Sycamore tree, Jesus invited him to come down because the salvation that the former was seeking has been made available.\(^762\) Jesus indeed told Zacchaeus that he was willing to follow him to his house to eat. Here Jesus turned the practice of hospitality on its head; instead of the host inviting him to his house, it was the guest who initiated the move here.

Groves also shows how Zacchaeus was willing not only to return what he had unlawfully collected from people four folds over, he was also willing to give everything he had to the poor. Groves claims that Zacchaeus’ “new behavior—overwhelmingly generous giving to those in need, and superabundant restitution to all whom he has wronged—illustrates that he is a new person.”\(^763\) If this interpretation is correct, Christ Way Church would need to emphasize more on this aspect of giving to the poor; while it is good to give to the church and to the priests in order to make them comfortable, the surplus should be directed to taking care of the poor and needy within and without the church premises.


\(^{763}\) Groves, *Grace: The Cruciform*, 8
Dangerous Gifts

Before closing this chapter, there is need to show how Christ Way Church crafts its separate identity from the rest of the society, thereby forcing us to have a rethink of interpretation of gifts in the modern Ilé-Ilé city. Modernity, with its link with missionization, colonization and postcolonial state-formation in the third world and especially in many African countries, has always presented itself as a rupture with perceived evil past.764 Victor Mudimbe makes this observation rather clearer; “The missionary conforms the meaning of his or her action and generosity to both the theological implications of the extension of the Heilsgeschichte (the salvation history) to non-Western peoples and the procedures of missionising.”765 The missionizing purpose was very clear and still is; the stamping out of paganism. If the colonial missionaries have learned their lessons as a result of their encounter with the natives or the primitives, by softening their attempt at radical weaning of the ‘non-believers’ from their past, a few fundamental Pentecostal Charismatic Christians in Nigeria seem to continue in perpetuating the initial missionising agenda.766 While vacillating between the traditions within which it grew and the Western oriented Christianity, Christ Way Church yet thinks that traditional Yorùbá religiosity is an evil that should be stamped out.767

---

766 The Christian Student’s Social Movement of Nigeria (CSSM) was determined to root out traditional belief systems when it was founded in the 1960s and 1970s see Matthews Ojo, The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria, (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press, Inc. 2006),110. The practice continues till today, especially in cities where Orisâ worship is present.
767 Christ Way Church’s leaders encourage the members to use Yorùbá language to communicate their gospel message within and without the Church’s setting, and also approves of wearing Yorùbá dresses (so long is not too flamboyant to preach and conduct services) and traditional drumming, yet, do not condone any traditional ways of naming, wedding, burial, especially that combine using those material elements.
Before becoming a denomination, it was only a bible study fellowship group that brought people from different cadres of life and of different church denominations together with the primary aim of re-evangelization of those older missionary church denominations and the evangelization of the whole Ilé-Ifé city. As already hinted in chapter three, it has other aims, one of which is to completely destroy the shrines of Orisas in Ilé-Ifé, not by brute force but by praying and fasting and the Open-Air Crusades. The first unsuccessful target of attack by this determined group of initial professional Hospital Christian workers (Doctors, Nurses and Technicians), which were later joined by other born-again professionals in the city, was the traditional rites of passage, which are to be by-passed and rejected as devilish.

A few of such rites of passage are traditional systems of ancestor veneration, marriage ceremony, naming ceremony, installation ceremony and funeral ceremony. To this group of young but aggressive Christians, not only the conduct of the ceremonies was uncivilized but all the symbolic material elements being used for prayers in those traditional rites of passage such as kolanuts, alligator pepper, bitter kola, animal sacrifice, Schnapps, palm oil, and so on, are demonic. These items are all believed to be gateways by which one can be infested by demons. They described polygamous marriage a great obstacle for many converted. Nearly all Pentecostal Charismatic denominations still hold the notion that polygamous partners cannot inherit the kingdom of God. 768

The Yorùbá traditional concept of abundant life, which sees continuity with the ancestors already gone through animating their names, has received a different interpretation,

---

768 Christ Way Church’s doctrine tempers judgment on the issue of polygamous marriage, based on the understanding of the bible according to the leaders of this church. While leadership of Christ Way Church believe that a polygamist that is genuinely saved can still make it to heaven; he or she cannot be ordained into any ministerial positions in the church. In other Pentecostal Charismatic denominations such as Deeper Life, Redeemed Christian Church of God and a host of others, a polygamist must divorce all other wives except the first wife before he could enter into heaven. All these teachings are contained in these churches’ constitutions and workers’ manuals.
indeed among Christ Way Church’s members. Such names like Ògúndòkùn (Ògùn has turned into Ocean), Eégúnjobí (Masker gave birth to both of us), Awódèyí (Cult has turned into this) and so on, which are meant to connect people back to Òrìsà among the traditionalists in the Yorùbá society with the aim of reciprocating what the Òrìsàs had done for the people, are rejected. They are now changed to Bible (not Christian names as wrongly supposed in Pentecostal circles) names such as Faith, Hope, Victory, Precious, Love and so on.\(^{769}\) Even, before those so-called names are given, newborn babies into Christ Way Church’s members’ families, are normally subjected to a special night of dedication and consecration to the Christian God. What follows is the renunciation and revocation of the inherited Yorùbá traditional religious gods and ancestral deities that are perceived to constitute a great impediment to Christian growth and success in life.\(^{770}\) Coupled with this, are the vigilant watchful eyes of the “praying squad members,” which are to monitor gifts given to the parents of the newly born babies to ascertain that those gifts are free from demonic infestations. This practice is extended to the gifts received by the groom and bride on their wedding day. Any gifts suspected to be “demonic” are separated, prayed over and then cast away, buried or burnt. Those are the dangerous gifts perceived to have been given by people who have malicious intentions.

Ironically, too, while Christ Way Church members are encouraged to invite “unbelievers” to their church programs, they sternly warn the same members that they should “[be] not yoked together with unbelievers…. (2 Corinthians 6:14).” And while members are being encouraged to

---


\(^{770}\) A similar experience was witnessed among the Sumbanese converted Christians; ceremonial exchange between these Christians and their past ancestral heritage raised difficulties for them. Few are even willing to reject exchange out of hand. See more details in Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. (Berkeley, London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 203-208.
invite “unbelievers” to their personal social functions, they are also encouraged to be selective about the kinds of ceremonies they attend. For example, only a few Christ Way Church members would dare to attend any ceremonial or religious functions taking place in the mosques, to talk less of attending any social or religious ceremonies by Olórisà (worshippers of Òrìsà) at all. They are all considered “unbelievers.” Leaders warn that, if Christ Way Church’s members must go to the ceremonial (social) functions organized by those “unbelievers”, they should be mindful of their conduct either in drinking or eating. The intention of the leaders of Christ Way Church is to protect their members from either reverting to the idolatrous past or contaminating themselves with the unbelievers’ ways of lives.

Christ Way Church’s leadership believes that all the warning and precautions they give to the members of their flock have their bases in the Bible. All these manifest behaviors by Christ Way Church find resonance even in European society. According to Komter, “in many fairy tales malevolent gifts play a prominent role, for instance, Snow White’s poisoned apple.” She points her readers’ attention to the fact that the German and Dutch word Gift, meaning poison, has its etymological roots in the word “gift.” She then goes further to say that “some gifts are literally given with the intention to sacrifice somebody’s life; think of the legendary poisoned cup.” Despite the warnings, in my last interview with the senior pastor and General Overseer, Pastor Odún Orôkè, in his house in October, 20, 2012, the issue of interrelationship between Òrìsà worshippers and Christ Way Church members came up again and was extensively discussed.

Pastor Orôkè confessed to me that the last wedding ceremony he had for his son was well-attended by many chiefs in Ìlí-Ifé, who are co-incidentally regarded by Christ Way Church

771 Komter, *Social Solidarity*, 51-52
members as Olórísàs (Ọrísà Worshippers). He said that all these chiefs gave him gifts of money. He even said that the king of Ifé (Oba Okùnadé Sijùwadé Olúbùse II) gave him a live cow for the wedding occasion. He reminded me of the similar gesture by the king (Ọnì Olúbùse) in 2004 of the gift of a big cow for Christmas, which was killed and the meat shared among all pastors (both within and outside Christ Way Church) praying for the revival of godliness and Christ kingdom in Ilé-Ifé at the time. This is understandable because, as an important religious figure, gifts are likely to be given to him by people in the society regardless of their religious beliefs and practices, and rejecting such gifts would be regarded as very impolite.

Inter-marriage between Christ Way Church members and other religious denominations generally, and not merely the Olójó or all Ọrísà worshippers alone, remain problematic. Christ Way Church’s doctrine has zero-tolerance for inter-marriage between their members and those outside the group. By those outside the group, it means even Muslims and worshippers of other religions contrary to Christianity. And interestingly too, members are also warned sternly against marrying from other Christian denominations, who are tagged “unbelieving believers.” That means that Christ Way Church’s members are not encouraged to marry from churches such as Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim, Brotherhoods of Cross and Stars and so on. If members are to marry from the Mission Oriented Churches, they must be very sure that the would-be spouse is a born-again Christian. If marriage were the basic form of gift that promotes alliance within a given community, as agreed on by many anthropologists and sociologists, the crafting of separate identity by individual religious group as clearly manifested through Christ Way Church’s ideology will continue to impact and affect the modern society. This will necessitate re-examination and re-interpretation of Yorùbá gift-giving, receiving and reciprocating practice by scholars.
In this chapter, I have examined the various dimensions of gift-giving and reciprocity in the larger Yorùbá society, and then compared them with how the gift-exchange is being practiced in Ilé-Ifé—the source of the Yorùbá people—home and in Diasporas. The importance or motives, occasions, and norms governing gift-giving and reciprocity were carefully enumerated and analyzed with a view to gaining better understanding of the practice of the gift in this society. The question of identity already discussed in chapter three comes up again in this chapter, as I examined and analyzed the ways gifts are conceived, interpreted and given among the traditional Yorùbá worshippers of Òrisàs and Christ Way Church members, especially with respect to sacrifice.

It is good to be reminded about how a set of religious symbols and signs can be means by which religious associations distinguish “in-groups” from “out-groups.” When religious symbols are grounded in group associations, respect for and devotion to them is likely to be a primary value. The differences in belief systems of the two religious denominations examined in this chapter obviously manifest and impact the ways each denomination thinks about the what and how of the gift. But are Pentecostal Christians in general and Christ Way Church members in particular justified in rejecting or throwing away the gifts received from the so-called “unbelievers”? Addressing this question will be one of the concerns in the next chapter, which is the concluding part of this dissertation.
Chapter 5

Conceptual Dimension of the Gift

This chapter is a return to the conceptual dimension by shifting from the practice of gift exchange among these the two religious groups: Olójó (Ógún) worshippers and CWCI, to the question of suspicion or a consideration of belief or disbelief in the acceptance of or privileging one particular gift to God over the other. This question of suspicion is addressed by examining different senses and contexts in which humans might maintain social solidarity by re-introducing Hobbesian and Maussian idea of privileging common humanity over religious differences through the mutual reciprocal gift exchange. In essence, this chapter argues that moral imperatives and ethical reflections are crucial to the recognition that all religious belief systems provide ultimate meaning and values as guide for the conduct of life. The methods employed here are both analytical and normative ethical considerations.

In the preceding chapters three and four, I have argued that the CWCI has not shown enough understanding, tolerance, and patience to the religious “others,” especially the Òrísà worshippers in Ilé-Ife. In those chapters, I have demonstrated that CWCI does not want to have anything to do with the Òrísà worshippers either in religious or gift exchange matters, due to its Christian convictions. The societal gift exchange practice, such as intermarriages between one family or community and other gift exchange that was once in vogue has continued to experience changes as new forms of religious identity and solidarity continue to increase. The Pentecostal Charismatics’ reading and understanding of the scripture has further negative implication for the way gift exchange is conceived among the Yorùbá in the new millennium, as

772 Jacob K. Olúpònà earlier has observed that “Christian Evangelicalism is spreading through indigenous Yorùbá states with a message couched in images, imagined or real, of religious battle against what evangelists perceive as the vestiges of “pagan” traditions. See Olúpònà, City of 201 Gods, 290.
we saw in those two chapters. In this chapter I will argue that a correct understanding of religion can serve as a means for solidarity and social ties and also lead to significant social transformations in the Yorùbá society.

Religion as a social phenomenon is a way we understand reality and express our relationship to it. All religions provide a total perspective on reality, but none can hope to have fully grasped what that total perspective is. The majority of people in every society, whether primitive or modern, have some conception of a superempirical or nonordinary reality, such as gods, spirits, or impersonal forces, that they believe influence or govern their existence. Given this reality, there is need for religious communities, especially CWCI and the traditional Òrìsà worshippers in the Yorùbá society in Nigeria, to be willing not only to understand one another but also to be ready to embrace one another through the prospective practice of the gift and reciprocity. The big problem that has faced Nigerian religiosity is impatience and lack of willingness on the part of the Pentecostal Charismatics and Islamic fundamentalists to understand the viewpoint of African Traditional Religious (ATR). This lack of tolerance has unfortunately extended to other areas of life as well, such as ceremonial functions, naming, marriages, kingship installation, funerals and ancestors worship.

Historically, the Yorùbá society seemed to embrace religious and cultural plurality more readily than today. The society has experienced a radical change in recent years, due to the infiltration of the “born again” culture ushered in by the Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity. Forgetting that each of us stands in our uniqueness and in our separateness, and, according to Jewish theologian Martin Buber each person “is a new thing in the world called upon to fulfill

---

773 To be more practical, mission churches had already begun to use Christian religion as a divisive means wherever they turned. What Pentecostal Charismatics do is to perpetuate the ideas and ideal of Christianity as means of excluding others who do not belong to their group. Even though, the religious violence being experienced in the Northern parts of Nigeria is infrequent in the Yorùbá society, it nevertheless exists to a certain extent.
his particularity in this world”.\textsuperscript{774} Still, our aloneness, our uniqueness is tempered by an experience of a common humanity. No matter how unique our experience may look, there is a broader view of human experience that leads to a fraternity with our fellow human beings.\textsuperscript{775} Acceptance of others comes when each of us is sincere enough to agree that, “There is no religion in which the nonordinary, nonrational quality of the holy does not live as the real innermost core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the name.”\textsuperscript{776} This is how different religious groups that make up the Yorùbá society should view one another’s religious beliefs and practices. It is beginning from this level that the interrelationship, cooperative understanding and friendliness that the gift exchange is hoped to bring will be appreciated.

\textit{Relevance of the Gift to the Modern Yorùbá Society}

Anthropologists and all who have shown one interest or another in the gift theory have demonstrated to us that a gift has the capacity to bring about mutual alliance and solidarity, irrespective of our political, social and religious orientations.\textsuperscript{777} Marcel Mauss’s essay \textit{Sur le don} in particular tells of war and peace, the ending of original violence through the exchange of gifts. For him, the gift is an alliance, it establishes symmetry. Gift exchange is one of the cores of religious beliefs across cultures. As one sociologist rightly puts it:

\begin{quote}
Without prejudging what the traditional or the so-called primitive religions do and tell, about the gift and about their fluids, and without projecting possible truths in Christianism on other monotheisms, limiting oneself to the Christian system only, it seems necessary to insist on the importance of the gift in the religious.\textsuperscript{778}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{775} Roger Schmidt, \textit{Exploring Religion} (Belmont California: Wadsworth Inc, 1980), 32
Looking closely at the above quote, we notice at least two important facts. First, all religious traditions teach that gift giving is inherent to their belief systems and second, the gift is a fact of social life that is not restricted to one particular religious way of seeing, acting and doing. As one of the common humanity’s traits that all share, the gift exchange should be the starting point of all religions instead of looking at the differences that separate one religious person from the other. One would hope that different religious traditions (groups) would be willing to come to terms with the plural nature of the new millennium, whereby imposition of one’s religious ideology on another is no longer a norm.

There should be willingness to demonstrate human indebtedness to one another no matter what creed or faith individuals may hold. CWCI should begin its theology of the gift from Jesus’s model. Up till the present time, the tendency has been to cling to its religious doctrine and culture and to guard it from becoming tainted. There is nothing bad in this. Everybody has a way of doing her own thing, yet there should be space for mutual dependency between one religious belief and the other. In this case, I am thinking of the possibility of CWCI reaching out in love to the Òrisà people without denigrating them and the Òrisà worshippers doing the same things for members of CWCI.

*Community of Sharing and Giving*

All religious communities in Ilé-Ifè and Yorùbá society in general should learn not only to embrace each other in the attitude of love and fellow-feeling but also to embrace religious diversity based on the social virtues of giving and sharing. In doing this, it will help transform the society into a peaceful and harmonious place. When someone asks, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. Here compassion, not blood or religion makes one a brother or sister. Jesus remarks on the concept of the gift as a way society can be socially
organized in Luke 6:37-38. This passage is in keeping with the principle of love for others; we must give to those who are in need. Religious adherents and groups also need to make conscious attempts to cultivate a tolerant attitude towards each other. The ethical religion of Jesus is that of tolerance. Simeon Ilésanmí argues that “only when people are willing to tolerate each other’s existence, the existence of their houses of worship, and the rights of religious group to proselytize can they experience social peace and, perhaps, material progress as well.”

A careful look at the teachings of Jesus gives no basis for the sharp distinctions we tend to make about any culture or any religious orientation. What this implies is that there is a need for people of faith traditions to be careful not to draw unjust conclusions about people or emphasize the faults of others while overlooking our own faults. Instead of judging and condemning people around us about their religious inclinations, Jesus prescribes a mode of relating to one another by instructing his followers that when people offend, there should be forgiveness. Then, he presses for the most important thing that can help maintain peace and harmony in any given society: The Gift. The concept of the gift as Jesus admonishes, is in keeping with the principle of love for others, regardless of their religious beliefs, race, and gender orientations. It seems to me that that Jesus highlights a divine wish for human relationships that is grounded on sharing, or giving and receiving from each other.

In clear demonstration of this, when he was alive, Jesus often reached out to people that did not belong to his immediate circle of influence. He was able to condescend enough to understand people’s diverging opinions before he provided his own better alternative (John 4:1-

---

779 Simeon O. Ilésanmí, Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State, (Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997), 256
780 I am aware that this statement was made against a cultural background, and context, but I am looking at Jesus’ concern, even for the society in every generation. The statement need not be restricted to the immediate followers of Jesus in Palestine.
The major difficulty in maintaining one’s point of view especially for those who presume to take some active role in the lives of others, is that “in casting oneself as “right,” “better,” and “rational,” there will, almost inevitably, be times when one judges others as “wrong,” “worse,” and “irrational.” This is exactly what CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatics are doing. The response to this kind of attitude from the Yorùbá traditional religious practitioners has been that of violent response too. Olúpònà shows the responses of the Ìfè traditional priests to the intense campaign against Òrìsàs by Islam and Christianity to range from the condemnation of these foreign religions to pleas for compromise. Olupona even records a situation where, “the current chief priest of Odùduwà, the Òbàdìmó, prayed to the irùnìmolè (401 gods) to save his people from these “infidels” (aláìgbàgbó), enemies of Òrìsà living in the land of Odùduwà.”

The enemies of Òrìsà are not only the “strangers” (Pentecostal Charismatics) who are foreign to the Yorùbá religious and cultural practices dwelling in Ilé-Ìfè, but may also include enemies within the Òrìsà lineages themselves. Many of these enemies within, though they were born into Òrìsà lineages, have already been indoctrinated into the Pentecostal Charismatics’ traditions, and have continued to fight against the Òrìsà religion of their parents in Ilé-Ìfè.

Olúpònà again observes:

Amidst hundreds of Christian evangelical programs in the city—revival meetings, open-air services, and nightly vigils—a new form of discourse is emerging that pushes evangelical Christian activities beyond the domain of the individual or the church and into the public spaces, directly challenging the Òrìsà traditions.

As already mentioned in chapter three, during its existence as Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF), before changing its name to Christ Way Fellowship (CWF) leading to the founding of CWCI (in collaboration with other Pentecostal Charismatics), the determination has always been

---

781 Anthony J. Gittins, Gifts and Strangers: Meeting the Challenge of Inculturation, 2.
782 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 291
783 Olupona, City of 201 Gods, 286
to put an end to Òrisà worship in Ìlè-Ìfè and other Yorùbá communities. This battle against Òrisà worship was fierce and was never intended to be a passive one but an active engagement through which Christians would take the battle to the gates of all the Òrisàs. The idea that the “Kingdom of God suffers violence and the violent takes it by force” (Matthew 11:11-12) continues to condition the minds of CWCI and all Pentecostal Charismatics in Ìlè-Ìfè and in all Yorùbá society at large.

Ìlè-Ìfè’s experience has paralleled Sumbanese society in Indonesia. Sumbanese who were unconverted ancestral ritualists were regarded as those who worship stones and pieces of gold and thus surrender their agency to that of demons, imagined or real. Those people were the target of the Calvinists who thought that they (unconverted ritualists) needed help because they have been excluded from modern citizenship by the Indonesian state, which requires its people to belong to a monotheistic religion. According to Web Keane:

One of the chief aims of the work of purification, as undertaken by Protestant missionaries, is to establish the proper locus of agency in the world by sorting out correct from mistaken imputations of agency. God, Christ, and humans, for instance, have agency in their respective ways—priestly words, pagan sacrifices, and ancestral spirits do not.

The religious landscape in the Yorùbá society is rather worse than this situation in Sumbanese. What the Yorùbá Christians, especially the Pentecostal Charismatic denominations, have not been able to deny though, is the inherent crisis looming large within them. One member of a Pentecostal denomination often deals with the other person from another Pentecostal denomination with suspicion, fear and many times with disdain. For example, a Deeper Life

---

784 Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 2
785 As earlier hinted, purification according to Bruno Latour entails “the overarching project of making separations—of humans from nonhumans, nature from society, objects as sources of determination from objects that we can make use of, and the Kantian things-in-themselves from the transcendental subject (1993:10-11, 33-56, as quoted in Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 23.
786 Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 54
Bible Church member always finds it difficult to relate well with a member from CWCI; Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) members always think that they possess the absolute truth that one needs to know about God and the Scripture better than any other Pentecostal Charismatic denomination in the world. They always think they have the absolute truth. 

What the Pentecostal Charismatic Christians lack is the ability to conscientize themselves to the reality of religious pluralism that characterizes the new millennium and a globalized world. It can be argued that lack of tolerance for the religious “other” has provoked a renewed violence of the Muslim fundamentalists known as Boko Haram in Nigeria. As we enter twenty-first century in Nigeria, the question to address is: how can religious violence be eradicated or minimized? Many scholars have suggested some solutions ranging from embracing one another in the spirit of fraternity to finding ways and situations in which one could embrace peace at all cost. But I think it is possible to explore principles of social relations in the gift exchange practice that could be prospectively used to reduce religious or social violence as eminently argued by Marcel Mauss and Thomas Hobbes.

———

787 Till date, Deeper Life Bible Church members are warned against intermarriage with not only “unbelievers” but also with other Pentecostal Charismatic denominational members. The RCCG members pride themselves in the fact that their church is the fastest growing in the world today not only because of the special place the church occupies in God’s heart but also because of the truth the church holds and teaches. On page 11 of the Prayer Bulletin published by CWCI, there is a prayer point that reads, “Let opposition from other churches be subdued in Jesus’s name.” Before that prayer point, there is one that says: Let all the enemies of the Gospel, every manifestation of the gates of hell in our church perish in Jesus name. Here CWCI does not only see enemies from the Òrisà, it also sees enemies manifesting from within Christianity too. This is the present situation of all Christian churches in Nigeria. One needs not be deceived by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) that were formed with the aim of fostering unity among all Christians in Nigeria. See Olufunke Adébóyè, ‘Pentecostal Challenges in Africa and Latin America: A Comparative Focus on Nigeria and Brazil, in African Zamani, Nos. 11&12, (2003—2004), 2006, 136-159, see page 152 in particular.

788 I do not doubt the fact that Boko Haram sect is reacting to Western Education; yet, there is a truth in arguing that its reaction is also against the excessive behavior and aggression of the Pentecostal Charismatics demonizing other religious denominations different than their own.

Marcel Mauss’s and Thomas Hobbes’s Concept of the Gift

To begin with, comparing Mauss and Hobbes is a difficult exercise. The questions that may come to mind are: what do they share in common? Do both have the notion and conception of the gift the same way? Are both arguing from the same premises? All these questions must be adequately addressed if one will have any meaningful conversation between these two. As already mentioned in the general introduction, there is nothing like a Maussian and Hobbesian theory of sociality. Hobbes thinks that in abstract terms, the rational motivation why people want to maintain peace is the fear of violence; for Mauss, it is the choice of economic over military competition, a choice that also opts for a mode of opposition other than violence. In spite of the apparent differences, however, there are some valuable lessons we could still learn from these two theorists.

Hobbes and the Voluntary Gift

Through a careful study of Hobbes, despite his abstract social political leanings, one still discovers that he shows a little interest in how the gift that is given voluntarily can be a means by which destructive logic of “the war of all against all” may be averted. In his *Leviathan* (1651), we can see the outlines of a modern society organized around conflict between independent agents struggling for survival. According to Harry Liebersohn, “Despite its reputation for narrowly grounding human society in personal selfishness, *Leviathan* from time to time took up

---

790 It must be pointed out that Hobbes had little sympathy for religion and politics, his interest lies in how a sensible person can sue for peace and security. Civil war, the worst calamity that can befall a society, through which people slaughter one another, leading to solitude and the want of all things, was a disastrous drift that needed to be halted. This was Hobbes’ concern and worry. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (New York, London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1651), 8.
the definition and function of the gift." There is clear contrast between gift and contract in *Leviathan*.

For Hobbes, there is a fundamental distinction for a society organized around both gift networks and the verbally articulated, legally binding, finite agreements called contracts. Hobbes’s conception of the gift is:

> When the transferring of Right is not mutual; but one of the Parties transferreth, in the hope to gain friends; or in hope to gain reputation of Charity, or Magnanimity; or to deliver his mind from the pain of compassion; or hope of reward in heaven; This is not Contract, but GIFT, FREE GIFT, GRACE; which words signified one and the same thing (emphasis in the original).

Looking at this quotation, one can see that Hobbes is thinking about Asymmetrical gift. The gift is expected only to be initiated by a person who just felt like giving something out without any hope of getting anything in return. For Hobbes, contract is binding whereas gift is not. Contract is mutual, gift is not, and the general distinction leaves no room for a reciprocity of gifts.

There is another interesting thing that catches one’s attention in Hobbes’s idea of the gift. Even though the giver of the gift does not expect a return gift from her beneficiary, she still has a hope of being rewarded by a higher power-God. The mere mention of reward in heaven and grace presupposes a mutual relationship between human and the divine. While in this world, the only expectation the giver needs from the receiver is gratitude, since the gift is only a consequence of the giver’s goodwill and free will. Yet, divine grace is already part of the deal. This kind of the gift is non-contractual; there is nothing binding the other party to return a gift received.

---

Hobbes even thinks a gift of this nature becomes real gift if it is not delayed till another day. According to this logic:

Words alone, if they be of the time to come and contain a bare promise, are an insufficient sign of a free-gift, and therefore not obligatory. For if they be of the time to come, as tomorrow I will give, they are a sign I have not given yet, and consequently that my right is not transferred, but remaineth till I transfer it by some act.  

Hobbes also considers the impact of gift giving within civil society, apart from its relation to higher authority. He believes ingratitude results and this is a disturber of peace, creating resentment by frustrating the original design of the giver as a seeker of social peace. Natalie Davis explains this logic, with respect to fifteenth and sixteenth century France, to be that “limiting gifts from subject to monarch was a way of strengthening the principle of royal sovereignty.” In return, the king or queen will thank the people and use the occasion of the gifts received from his/her subjects to pardon and release offenders.

A big concern one can show with respect to this kind of the gift that Hobbes discusses is how it might create social harmony and peace and how it might not lead to enhancement of power and status by those who alone give and not receive. I guess Hobbes thought that the acknowledgement of the gift by being grateful is enough and it is one of those acts of intersubjective recognition that worked beyond the arena of self-interest to bind individuals into a peaceful community. There are at least three problems that one may face if this kind of the gift logic is applied to the Yorùbá society.

---

794 What this implies is that, while it is good to give gifts to higher authority such as the Monarch during his or her advent to the throne, it is not expected that the people should exchange gift among themselves. What a giver of gift should expect is only gratitude, as far as it concerns civil society.
First, no matter how we might think about the concern of Hobbes, his asymmetrical gift practice will actually continue to generate crisis and disharmony. In the Yorùbá society, the logic of give me and I give you is what they are likely to hope will help bring about peace and societal harmony. In Mauss’ major interest in the asymmetrical gift, one can see how a particular chief in one Polynesian society puts another chief in another society in debt, (until fully paid and with interest) with the aim of humiliating him. This is exactly what happens when there is no mutual give and take. As a matter of fact, what this dissertation is aiming at is how CWCI would be able to reach out and enter into meaningful gift-exchange practices with the worshippers of Òrìsàs in Ilé-Ifè without both losing and compromising their religious identity.

Second, the conception of the gift from the lower (the subjects) to the higher office seems to be a feature of the ancient Yorùbá society just as it was being practiced in the ancient European society. Liebersohn interprets this to mean that, “Hobbes’ strictures on gift giving between ruler and the ruled can be a way of recalling that every reciprocal gift is another name for an obligation incurred.” I also hinted on this in chapter four that in the past, Yorùbá obas could receive gifts but were not obligated to reciprocate. It is just like thinking of the gods receiving gifts from humans without being under any obligation to return. That practice no longer exists. In the contemporary Yorùbá society, a person who aspires to the throne must be very generous and be willing to part with his substance at all times. All Yorùbá obas today can be said to be the givers of the gifts to both strangers and the households.

---

797 Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift*, 31
798 All the Yorùbá obas are regarded as those that have power like that of the gods. It is as a result of this mindset that the subjects often treated obas like gods and often venerate them.
tún se fún Onílé]. The Yoruba Obas’ palaces are not merely where loads (gifts and goods) are deposited; they are indeed where the subjects also take away goods too. 799

Thirdly, and this is very crucial to the argument here. If gifts are not encouraged to be exchanged between one person and another or one group and another, the intersubjective relationship is no longer in force. Hobbesian gift practice is highly individualistic. It is very important to know that the desire to exchange something for another thing is inherent in human beings, even in the most abject poor. The instinct in every human being is to be obligated to another person as far as the gift-giving behavior is concerned. 800 Mauss is very clear about his concern about gift giving; it is to be seen as a patterned behavior embodying clear moral values; it creates and maintains personal relationships, not simply between private individuals, but between groups and between ‘moral persons.’ 801 It is only characteristic of a proud person to think that she/he is sufficient enough as to not receive any gift. Aristotle stresses the asymmetry in the kind of giving practiced by the proud thusly:

He is the sort of man to confer benefits, but he is ashamed of receiving them; for the one is the mark of a superior, the other of an inferior. And he is apt to confer greater benefits in return; for thus the original benefactor besides being paid will incur a debt to him, and will be the gainer by the transaction. 802

---

799 Before embarking on this project, I was a member of the team assigned to give invitation letters to all the Yoruba obas located at South East of the Yoruba society to come for the Oba Ókunadé Sijúwadé Olúbùse annual lecture at Obáfemi Awólówò University. I remember vividly that in many of these obas’ palaces we got to, we were specially treated and were given gifts as a team. One oba sarcastically said, things are changing, there is no longer help me bring my load down in the palace but help me lift my load up.

800 Recently I gave a homeless man just a dollar that I had on me that day, after thanking me, he added a familiar statement in the United States of America: “I owe you one.”


Marcel Mauss and the Community of the Gift

Mary Douglas in her foreword essay to the Marcel Mauss’ *The gift*, has reminded us that Mauss’ conception of the gift does not come out of a vacuum, apart from the political milieu in which he lived that influenced his thinking. His uncle, Emile Durkheim, was a big inspiration to his consideration about the topic. Durkheim seems to be the initiator of the gift network, to which Mauss later turns his academic lens. The purpose why Mauss embarked on the gift was to revive the damaged enterprise of the prewar collective. Focusing his writings on three cultures located on the same geographical axis: Polynesia, Melanesia, and the Pacific Northwest. These are the places where the obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate is at play.  

Mauss emphasizes that the gift exchange in cultures he studied is both interested and disinterested. He rejects the idea that “the primitive gift exchange” is an archaic economic system which forces people to circulate necessary goods, so that ultimately everyone gets what is needed. He argues that the gift exchange is patterned into expected forms of behavior that persist over time and involve people in relationships. It is not simply private, even though private individuals can embark on the gift exchange, but it is the community on behalf of its citizens that enters into exchange of the gift. He thinks that this kind of relationship may endure throughout the life of the parties. Conceived in functional terms, he believes that the mutual gift-giving serves to bring about social relationships, which in their turn, are the cement of a common culture.

In this type of reciprocity, “The giver does not merely give an object but also part of himself, for the object is indissolubly tied to the giver: the objects are never completely separated

803 Mauss, *The Gift*, 4
from the men who exchange them." Because of this bond between givers and the gift, the act of giving creates a social bond with an obligation to reciprocate on the part of the recipient. He even assumes that whatsoever is given as the gift has its spiritual dimension. According to him, “In any case all these things are always, and in every tribe, spiritual in origin and of a spiritual nature…. Each of these precious things, these signs of wealth possesses—as in the Trobriand Islands—its individuality, its name, its qualities, its power.”

In Mauss’s conception of social relationships, which he calls “total social fact,” he believes that the gift will work to build not just wealth and alliances but social solidarity. Since in his imagination, “the gift” pervades all aspects of the society: politics, economics, religion, law, morality, and aesthetics, it is his considered opinion that “nothing is more urgent or more fruitful than the study of total social fact. The total social fact for him will make individuals within particular groups, even those with strong characteristics, to be less sad, less serious, less miserly, and less personal ….. But beyond this, friendship and contracts will be enhanced. Not only among humans but also with gods; this will ensure ‘peace’ within ‘markets’ and towns.

Mauss also believes that peace is guaranteed “when groups paid visits to one another at tribal festivals and at ceremonies where clans confronted one another and families allied themselves or began ‘initiations’ with one another.” Marshall Sahlins reiterates Mauss’s thought when he writes that Mauss, at the end of his essay, recapitulated his thesis by two Melanesian examples of tenuous relationship between villages and peoples: “of how, menaced always by deterioration into war, primitive groups are nevertheless reconciled by festival and

---

805 Interestingly, many Pentecostal Charismatics also believe that whatever a person gives to God does not leave the person; it is still part of the giver. They talk about sowing a seed that often will germinate and multiply. See Mauss, *The Gift*, 31
806 Mauss, *The Gift*, 44
807 Mauss, *The Gift*, 80
808 Mauss, *The Gift*, 81
809 Mauss, *The Gift*, 81
In addition to Sahlins’ good observation is the claim made by Mauss himself in his “The gift” that, “It is by opposing reason to feeling, by pitting the will to peace against sudden outbursts of insanity of this kind that peoples succeed in substituting alliance, gifts, and trade for war, isolation and stagnation.”

We are able to isolate at least three important lessons from Mauss’s argument, which presupposes that when people within a given society want to enjoy peace among themselves, they need to: first, know that societies can progress in so far as they themselves, their subgroups, and lastly, the individuals in them, have succeeded in stabilizing relationships, through giving, receiving, and finally, giving in return. Second, all members of a given society must learn to live harmoniously and cooperatively with one another by making conscious efforts to play down those ideas and ideologies that can undermine societal peace and development. The fortunate thing on the one hand is that all religions seem to preach peace. On the other hand, however, the unfortunate situation is that attempts by Christians and Muslims to proselytize will continue to engender hatred, intrigue, division and disharmony, as carefully observed by Gbádégesin.

The religious crisis in Nigeria is traced to the Christian and Islamic fundamentalists’ efforts in trying to force their gospels down the throat of their targeted “unbelievers” (African Traditional Religious believers) at all cost. In spite of this, the fact that Nigerians still are embroiled in corruption, greed, and selfishness have not fully shown the positive impact of the so-called “evangelical” religions. Mauss’s antidote to religious and societal violence in the current dispensation will look something like this: Lay aside spear in its real and metaphoric sense, and then trade will flourish. From this onwards, society can succeed in exchanging goods

---

811 Mauss, *The Gift*, 82
813 The way I am using the word evangelical connotes both Islam and Christianity and their proselytizing methods.
and persons, no longer only between clans, but between tribes and nations, and above all, between individuals.

According to this logic, “only then, would people learn how to create mutual interests, giving mutual interest, giving mutual satisfaction, and in the end, to defend them without having to resort to arms.”\footnote{Mauss, \textit{The Gift}, 82} One can imagine how many scholars today see Mauss’s work as a guide to how giving can promote a better way of living. For instance, Claude Levi-Strauss writes, “there is a link, a continuity, between hostile relations and the provision of reciprocal prestations. Exchanges are peacefully resolved wars and wars are the result of unsuccessful transactions.”\footnote{Levi-Strauss, \textit{The Elementary Structures of Kinship}, 67.}

The third important lesson that we can learn from Mauss’s argument is what Sahlins has already spelled out in his book; “The \textit{Gift} transposes the classic alternatives of war and trade from periphery to the very center of social life, and from the occasional episode to the continuous presence.”\footnote{Sahlins, \textit{Stone Age}, 182.}

Sahlins thinks that this is the supreme importance of Mauss’s return to nature, from which it follows that primitive society is at war with Warre,\footnote{This is a corruption of the word “war” or archaic word for “war” used by Hobbes in his book. Marshall Sahlins interprets this word “Warre” to mean a determinate political form. That is, the critical characteristic of Warre is free recourse to force: everyone reserves that option in pursuit of his greater gain or glory, and in defense of his person and possessions. See Sahlins, \textit{Stone Age Economics}, 172.} and that all their dealings are treaties of peace. All the exchanges must bear in their material design some political burden of reconciliation.\footnote{Sahlins, \textit{Stone Age}, 182.} At the end of this analysis, I am able to see a connection between Hobbesian and Maussian conception of the gift, in spite of their apparent differences. Both believe that peace could reign when the gift is being encouraged in a given society that has potential for war.
We can even borrow a leaf from the Christian Bible about the necessity of and the importance of the gift in bringing about peace. Scattered throughout the Bible one can see that giving of gifts is not only enjoined, it is also meant to create social harmony and mutual interrelationships.

“If anyone should press you into service for a mile, go with that person two miles. Give to whoever begs from you. Do not turn your back on the borrower” (Matthew 5:41-42)

“The gift you received, give as gift” (Mt. 10:8)

“A gift opens every door for you and wins you access to the great” (Prov. 18:16)

The generous person has many to court his favor; to the one who gives, everyone is friend” (Prov. 19:6)

“Each one of you has received a special gift; so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others” (I Peter 4:20)

“The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given” (Mk. 4:24)

“Give and there will be gifts for you... good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (Luke 6:38)

In all the above quotations, one does not see where the practice of the gift is meant to be just for any specific category of people. Jesus Christ, who taught this precept, meant it and acted it out in concrete terms. When he sent his disciples out on mission campaign, he enjoined them not to take anything with them, but to accept whatever our so-called “unbelievers” must offer (Matthew 10; Mk. 6:7-12; Luke 10:1-24).

There is mutuality of gift giving in Jesus’s concept of the gospel. He did not only admonish his disciples to eat anything set before them while they go about preaching the gospel, but Jesus ate with sinners and showed compassion on them. This shows that Jesus did not just talk. He acted and lived an extraordinary life, yet in thoroughly mundane circumstances. As he
ventured from place to place teaching, he touched the untouchables, fed the hungry, prayed, and served. Perhaps, CWCI may never understand him until it does the same. Where does the present exclusivist gospel of Pentecostal Charismatics' idea of demonizing traditional religious gifts come from? In this sense, I am thinking of the gifts given by the traditionalists during the various rites of passages that are being treated with suspicion and demonized. For all religious denominations in Ilé-Iò and all Yorùbá society to cooperate, it is necessary for them to have the understanding that they could learn one moral virtue or the other from one another.

*Christianity and Yorùbá Traditional Religion in Conversation*

The major problem with Pentecostal Charismatics and perhaps all Christians all over the world is that they have not learned to listen, to talk less of understanding the religious others. While a few in the world today cling to the notion that Christianity is the only way, many others feel that all faiths are manifestations of a deeper spirituality, that of the one true God above, beyond all mere human religious expressions. There is no doubt that in reality, not all religious faiths are the same. Some concepts are not conceived the same way. James C. Howell, writing from Christian theological perspective, has well captured those differences:

Nirvana does not equal heaven; Brahman, Shiva, and Vishnu are the not the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Eastern guise; Buddhist loss of self is not quite the same as Christian self-denial. Apparent agreements are encompassed in a web of disagreement. Islam itself claims to supersede Christianity, which in turn claims to be the way. [819]

He does not stop at that, but balances his good observation by saying that, “One thing we have learned: we Christians don’t have a corner on truth.” [820] This is correct, careful observation has

---


shown that teachers and practitioners of other faiths have spoken truths and have lived true lives, often with more validity and persuasiveness than Christians. \(^8\) H

Humility, then, demands that other faiths can also provide other aspects of the Christian faith that get watered down. \(^8\) Howell agrees with Thomas Merton who writes that:

The existence of many religions is not an evil, but a sign of God’s mercy, God’s pursuit of all people, or at least of their need for God. With respect to other religions, our first task is not to “win” adherents away from other religions. Our first calling is to be Christian, to embody the faith. \(^8\) In a similar fashion, Howell believes that there is a role Christianity can play with other religions. He quotes at length George Lindbeck who suggests that:

> Christians may have a responsibility to help other movements and other religions make their own particular contributions, which may be quite distinct from the Christian one, to the preparation for the Consummation. The missionary task of Christians may at times be to encourage Marxists to become better Marxists, Jews and Muslims to become better Jews and Muslims, and Buddhists to become better Buddhists (although admittedly their notion of what a “better Marxist,” etc., is will be influenced by Christian norms). Obviously, this cannot be done without the most intensive and arduous conversation and cooperation. \(^8\)

There are at least two important comments on this quote; first, there is already a religious violence in thinking that it is only Christianity that has a responsibility to help other movements make sense of their religious or nonreligious beliefs and ideologies; second, if other religions or

\(^8\) Good examples that readily come to mind are: 1. Buddha who not only lived the life of peace but in fact, taught his followers that the only way to peace is to closely pay attention to other faiths; 2. Mohandas Gandhi who worked tirelessly to see an end of violence either civil or religious in India leading to his being awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. See Roger Schmidt, Exploring Religion, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc. 1980), 16; See also Thich Nhat Hanh, Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism, (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press 3rd edition, 1999).

\(^8\) In this sense, I am thinking about the lack of integrity in life and doctrine of many Christians. Many Pentecostal Charismatics are even involved in a lot of scandalous acts in the pretext that grace and mercy will cover it.

\(^8\) Howell, Exploring Christianity, 190

nonreligious are being influenced by Christian norms alone how unique are those religions any longer? Is there nothing for Christianity to learn from other religions? Apart from the fact that Lindbeck’s suggestion contradicts Merton’s insightful comment, his attitude to other religions seem rather biased. In his considered opinion, all religions should take Christian religious beliefs and attitudes to life to be the norm. Howell however, corrects this notion by claiming that “dialogue and shared labor are needed among religions, not aimed at conversion, but at benefits for all religions and people.”  

Howell is also quick to show that all religions have their beauty by giving a good example of Mother Teresa who once said, “I love all religions, but I am in love with my own.” There is nothing bad in being in love with one’s own religion, but there should be mutual respect for other peoples’ religious beliefs and practices. It is still to be maintained that when there is constant give and take between one religion and another there is bound to be peace, harmony and friendliness. It is also possible that crossing of one religious boundary to another (we might call it conversion) may be possible in an atmosphere of genuine love provoked by reaching out to understand and accommodate others. Who will want to embrace a religion, for example Christianity, which many Christians have often presented in an awful, unfaithful and abysmal manner? The unfortunate thing still, is that many people distrust and disbelieve the mercy of God that Christians preach because majority of these Christians themselves are not merciful.

The Christian protagonists might raise objections to all the points just made above. Questions might be asked: What about the schools and hospitals Christians have built for the

---

825 Howell, Exploring Christianity, 190
826 Howell, Exploring Christianity, 190
827 Quite a number of my friends in the United States of America, who used to be active in Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, told me that they stopped being Christians because of the hypocrisy inherent in those churches. They claim they are no longer religious in the Christian sense but now spiritual in the Universalistic sense.
Yorùbá people in promoting their lots in life in spite of their traditional religious belief? And what about the Enlightenment cultures that Christianity has ushered into the Yorùbá society, which put an end to the horrendous human sacrifice? I think nobody would deny that Christianity has done much to improve the lots of the Yorùbá in terms of making education and health care services available for the people. One should consider these as gifts that have been given to the Yorùbá people by the missionaries *par excellence* and this is a welcome idea.

As a matter of fact, many private schools and hospitals are built today by Pentecostal Charismatics; the only problem is some of these schools and hospitals are rather too expensive. Notwithstanding, at least people who can afford to pay the exhorbitant fees can attend those schools and seek medical attention in those hospitals. The concern here under a broad consideration of the economy of the gift and principles of peace which one can draw from it, is the disdain with which Pentecostal churches treat the Yorùbá Traditional Religious worshippers because such derision constantly fans the ember of religious crisis. The point is that no matter how relevant Christianity may be to social life, Yorùbá traditional religion has important things to contribute to the social, economic and political situations of the Nation of Nigeria too.

Many Yorùbá scholars such as Wándé Abímbólá, Jacob Olúpònà, Ségun Gbádégesin, and Wolé Sójínká have shown the same concern about how Pentecostal Charismatics have continued to create disaffection among the Yorùbá people and Nigeria at large. The followers and

---

828 CW CI has Nursery, Elementary and High Schools, which at the present moment are still one of the cheapest in terms of tuitions and fees students pay. Scholarships are also being offered to children from poor families. Whether or not this idea will continue is another thing, especially when the church begins to expand beyond what it is now.  
829 The Reinhard Bonnke’s Crusade in Ilé-Ifẹ ended on a bad note. The land that belonged to the Obàtálá family was hijacked by the Oòni Síjúwadé for the purpose of the Bonnke’s crusade. Not minding the insult to their land territorial integrity, they asked the Oòni to return their land after the crusade that lasted a whole week, but Oòni refused and claimed that the land had been set apart for the Christian crusades (revivals). This became a big problem. Because, the Obàtálá people see the land to be their inalienable right, they fought for it and were able to claim it back.  
830 It will not be fair to think that Pentecostals are the only religious denomination causing division among the Yorùbá people in particular and Nigeria at large, the Muslim fundamentalists are also contributing in no small measure to the disintegration of the nation of Nigeria.
worshippers of traditional religions are often excluded from the debates that affect the generality of the Yorùbá at the national level. According to Olúpònà whom I will quote at length:

This new sense of exclusivity is counter to Nigeria's religious heritage. Although Islam and Christianity have tended to play more significant roles in contemporary Nigeria, indigenous African religious values and worldviews are nevertheless still key to the soul of the people, defining their ontology and organizing their epistemology. For many, including residents in rural areas, but also members of the elite, Nigerian political life has always involved gods, ancestors, festivals, rituals, and the whole gamut of African spirituality. In a way, both Islam and Christianity are forever responding to issues defined by the indigenous moral system. 

It has become necessary that the Yorùbá triple religious heritage, African Traditional Religion, Islam, and Christianity need to learn from some developed countries of the world, which attach a more important place to their commonwealth and the welfare of their people than religion when it comes to things that affect their society. For example, I do not think it really matters too much in the United States of America whether one is a Christian or a Muslim or a pagan when it comes to the matter of donating organ or blood to the people who need them. It is my assumption that all people of different faiths in American society are always ready and willing to help one another in need.

Embracing Religious Plurality through the Gift-Exchange Practice

In returning to Maussian and Hobbesian conceptions of the gift, one notices that in spite of the different approaches the two of them take, there is an important thought running through both, as I already mentioned. This is that the gift-exchange helps to maintain social alliance and

---

831 Jacob K. Olúpònà, ‘Bonds, Boundaries, and Bondage of Faith: Religion at the Crossroads in Nigeria ’in Harvard Divinity Bulletin, Summer/Autumn 2013 (Vol. 41, Nos. 2 & 3) accessed 10/10/2013. Olupona has always been at the vanguard of the campaign for religious tolerance and especially the idea that African Traditional Religions also hold good promises for the development of Africa conditions his academic thought.
thereby reduce selfish competition and undue rivalry of “war of all against all”. How can this be achieved in practical terms in the current situation of the Yorùbá religious landscape? I think that a lot can be learned from scholars who have agitated for the genuine understanding of the plural nature of any given society. A Yorùbá proverb even shows how true understanding of our diversity can bring about harmony. The proverb says: “All of us cannot sleep in the same place and yet face the same direction.” This proverb presupposes that even within a family, to talk less of a larger community or society, everybody cannot reason the same way, share the same political ideology and may not share the same religious view. Yet, “every member is expected to consider her/himself as an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards the goodwill of all.”

First and foremost, the gift-exchange practice should be able to break the barrier of religious affiliations or ideological beliefs. One can imagine a situation whereby a CWCI member attends a ceremonial function such as naming or marriage or chieftaincy ordination organized by an Òrisà worshipper, and also presents a gift. The gesture will not only attract gratitude from the receiver, it will also enhance an act of friendliness and provoke a return gift. Gittins recognizes this fact to be an important weapon in missionizing by claiming that:

Reciprocity must mean more than turning people into images of ourselves by giving them our language and expecting them to adopt our ways of thinking and acting. Reciprocity must mean that we will receive from others, just as they will receive from us. Reciprocity will result only if we respect the values of others and the presence of God in their lives.

---

832 My extended family is spread across all religious traditions of African Traditional Religions, Islam and Christianity. Up till the present moment, we continue to exchange gifts among ourselves. I do not necessarily need to attend Òrisà worship but when an Òrisà worshipper is celebrating his or her birthday, I am obligated to not only attend but also to give gift to him or her. This has been the pattern in my own extended family.

833 Ségun Gbádégesin writes this with respect to community and the moral order, in which an individual foregoes her or his own interest when the interest of the community is at stake. He gives example of Mòrémi whose story has also been given due attention in this dissertation. See Gbádégesin, *African Philosophy*, 63-65.

This suggestion is highly insightful, taking into consideration how Jesus Christ crossed the racial boundary by reaching out to a Samaritan woman at the well in Sycar (John 4:1-24). Despite the fact that the story ended up by showing that Jesus was the only giver on this occasion, one could imagine that Jesus would have accepted water from the woman if indeed he (Jesus) really needed it. At least another sinful woman was able to give precious gift to Jesus, which he did not reject (Luke 7:36-48).

Second, CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatics in Ilé-Iṣẹ and the Yorùbá society in general must be able to come to terms with the reality of the religious and cultural plurality which will continue to be part of human society in the present millennium. Christian churches have lived in situations of religious and cultural plurality since the first century. The process of globalization and the growing permeability of territorial boundaries have brought religious and cultural plurality closer home in many parts of the world. A kind of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s conception of the “universalistic” culture is here at play, in which “a cultivated person sees mankind as a whole, knows the art and literature of other peoples, and sympathizes with human life in all its higher forms and aspirations.”

CWCI should cultivate the attitude of inclusivism, which affirms both the saving presence and activity of God in all religious traditions and the full, definitive revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The pluralist position affirms the viability of various paths. For example, a Baptist minister and a Professor at Harvard, Harvey Cox, in his book *Many Mansions*, urges a

---

835 Cultural globalization involves the formation of shared norms and knowledge with which people associate their individual and collective cultural identities, and increasing interconnectedness among different populations and cultures. See Roland Robertson “Cultural Globalization” in Robertson, Roland and Jan Aart Scholte (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Globalization* 1. (Routledge, 2007), 258-259.

836 Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), 3

discussion of religious pluralism among local clergy and people in the pews.\textsuperscript{838} John Hick goes as far as developing a theocentric position in his book \textit{God Has Many Names}. He argues in the book that the world’s religious traditions are best understood as “different response to the one divine Reality.”\textsuperscript{839}

Third, given this concern for religious and cultural plurality, there is need to have a kind of positive feeling for one another irrespective of the faith or creed one may belong. The gift exchange practice can enhance how one group communicates positive feelings to other group. According to Komter “some of the motives (of gift giving) are strongly other-directed and altruistic: one wants to contribute to other’s wellbeing…”\textsuperscript{840} In essence, the implication of this kind of gesture can be interpreted like this: I am a human being, so I have to help a fellow human who is reading and understanding of the Christian scripture has often contributed to the idea that when one is born again, one should cut off from friends, family and neighbors because they are dangerous enemies. This will not help to appreciate the concept of plurality. In the words of Marshall-Fratani:

True conversion means cutting the links with one’s past; not simply the ungodly habits and sinful pastimes, but also friends and family members who are not born-again. Such individuals provide the greatest threats to a ‘new life in Christ’, precisely because of the power in ties of blood and amity, and if they cannot be brought to give their lives to Christ, they must be cut surgically from the lives of the new convert.\textsuperscript{841}

This is rather very unfortunate. The Christian gospel that does not have any concern for fellow human beings regardless of how it is preached is not, in my considered opinion, Jesus’s gospel. Jesus did not cut off his relationship with his family and neighbors; he continued to associate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{838} Harvey Cox, \textit{Many Mansions: A Christian Encounter with Other Faiths}. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 53-57.
\item \textsuperscript{840} Komter, \textit{Social Solidarity}, 46
\item \textsuperscript{841} Marshall-Fratani, ‘Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism’, 80-111.
\end{itemize}
with them. For example, the presumed first miracle recorded by John the evangelist (John 2:1-11), shows that Jesus gave a special kind of gift to the bridegroom and his bride and the people who attended the wedding by providing them new wine. Although John interprets it to be Jesus’ first miracle, it is nevertheless a gift of a kind.

I interpret this miracle to be a gift in the sense that, whatever one person can contribute to the lives of others to better their lives and remove shame is a gift in its guise. The CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatics in Ilé-Ifè should cultivate this good character of Jesus Christ who was able to cope and deal with the plural nature of his time. As a matter of fact, Pastor Odún Oríòkè, the general overseer of the CWCI’s disclosure to me that the Oòni and some chiefs of Ilé-Ifè gave gifts to his family during the marriage ceremonies of all his children should show how better the worshippers of Òrìsà embraced religious pluralism and the faiths of others than the Pentecostal Charismatics. Luke’s account of the voyage that led to shipwreck in Malta in Acts of Apostles 28:1-10 shows that the Islanders (the so-called barbarians) first showed Paul and all the people who came out of the wrecked ship unusual kindness before Paul returned the kindness by praying for the sick. The gesture demonstrated on both sides here shows that reaching out to others with compassion is more important than the concern for one’s faith being contaminated or tainted.

Fifth, CWCI and Òrìsà worshippers in Ilé-Ifè should learn a lesson from the Caribbean region, where plurality highlights the need to be inclusive. It is a region where there is cooperation and sharing—giving and receiving from one another according to Mulrain. He even thinks that, “honest religion is duty bound to articulate a theology that emphasizes inclusivity. If it purports to bring persons into contact with the Supreme Being, then it has to be

---

842 Mulrain, ‘Religion and Plurality’, 189
true to its teaching, namely that all of life emanates from that Being” (ibid, 190). While I do not think that CWCI will have any problem accepting the fact that all of life emanates from Supreme Being (God), whether it will accept that “one must posit a plurality of deities, each one to be credited with creating different races, tribes, cultures, etc, is a different thing.”

My concern, though, is to let them accept this fact of human nature and the new dispensation we are in. Mulrain argues that “if ecumenism is not embraced by all religious faiths what one will be experiencing is a boring monotonous God. He thinks that the unifying feature is our common humanity and our common ancestry in God.” One needs to agree with Mulrain’s position, there is need to acknowledge that all religions, and not just Christianity, ought to be working towards oneness of purpose for the good of humanity. This adequately captures the import of this dissertation; all religious belief systems provide ultimate meaning and values as guide for the conduct of life.

Six, the fact that CWCI and other Pentecostal Charismatics are responding to the call to obedience to the radical message of Jesus should lead them to acknowledge that there is need for the formation of communities that interface and intermingle with the broader community. I strongly believe that the twenty first century church should be more concerned about social engagement, in recognition that the gospel relates to the whole person and to the formation of the faith communities that will have a transformative influence on society at large. By faith communities, I am not thinking in terms of Christianity only, I am also thinking in terms of all religious communities such as Islam, African Traditional Religions, Baha’i Faith, and Hare Krishna and so on to cooperate together in building the Nigerian society that is almost at the

---

843 From the point of view of this theologian (George Mulrain), whether one worships Òrìsà or Jesus, it does not matter, what matters, is the (willingness and concern of) reaching out of one religious faith in embrace of another’s point of view.

844 Mulrain, ‘Religion and Plurality, 195
brink of collapse. I completely agree on the fact that “the orientating concept of human social existence in Nigeria in general and in Yorùbá society in particular is highly communitarian.”

Given this concern for religious and cultural plurality, I will highlight five points in my final observation and analysis of the gift as it ought to be conceived and practiced in the Yorùbá society.

One, all the major triple religious heritages among the Yorùbá should be able to understand that the gift-exchange need not employ religious language or introduce religious bias (sentiment) before it is practiced; the gift is first and foremost a social phenomenon. Seen in this fashion, it becomes necessary to appreciate the fact of the norm of reciprocity (gift) as a mechanism to start social relationships. Alvin Gouldner believes that ‘this norm helps to create social interaction “for it can reduce an actor’s hesitancy to be the first to part with his valuables and thus enable exchange to get underway.”’

The implication of this is that the Pentecostal Charismatics including CWCI should not be hesitant in reaching out through gift-exchange to the Òrìsà worshippers instead of seeing them as estranged people to be brought back to the God of Christianity at all cost. Eddie Gibbs observes that, “In our fragmented urban societies people seek a safe third-space where they can make friends, exchange ideas and concerns, and relax in a congenial atmosphere. Many churches fail to provide such a context in which friendships can develop.”

---

845 Ilésanmí, Religious Plurality, 211; Gbádégesin, African Philosophy, 159
847 It is sheer arrogance to think that one person can take another person to heaven, as both CWCI’s and RCCG’s evangelistic slogan reads: “Our goal is to make Heaven and take as many people with us as possible.” Apart from the fact that this slogan already contradicts the individual salvation both Pentecostal denominations preach, it is also supererogation of one’s belief on other people’s private and individual belief.
848 Eddie Gibbs, Church Morph: How Megatrends are reshaping Christian Communities, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), 191. Gibbs begins by showing how Sociologists speak first of “first-
Charismatics sheer attitude of superiority in terms of the experience of God, which makes them either to bracket or completely exclude other modes or possibilities of experiencing the same God.

Two, giving is first and foremost the priority of Jesus’s ministry while on earth. Apart from the fact that Jesus’s death is interpreted by all Christians as sacrificial gift for the whole world, according to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus admonishes his disciples to sacrifice, specifically to give alms, pray, and fast. With respect to giving gift of alms, Jesus says:”But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matt. 6:3, NRSV). Though the giving does not presuppose an earthly (terrestrial) reward, it still has a celestial dimension, just like the Hobbesian conception of the gift. But also beyond this, is a call to responsibility to others as exemplified through Jesus’ death for the world. What this implies is, in spite of his death for the whole world, Jesus never discriminated against people who did not accept his message. While he was on earth, he cared for people’s welfare by feeding them (Matthew 14:13-21). Coincidentally, as I have already hinted in chapter three, the sacrifice of the only son that Móremí had, is continuously interpreted by Ifè traditionalists as substitutionary sacrifice for the whole of Ifè people.

Three, assuming that Òrìsà worshippers are regarded as God’s enemies by the CWCI because they have not given their lives to Jesus Christ, there is still a provision in the bible in both the Old and New Testaments to have an expansive benevolence towards one’s enemy.\(^{849}\) For example, Moses commands that “If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering space,” meaning family or inner circle of friends, and “second-space,” where we work and then moves to the third-space, which he thinks to be very crucial to creating friendly atmosphere.\(^{849}\) There has been statement often made by some people in CWCI that “God’s enemies are our enemies” by simplistically citing the bible verse in Psalm 68:1, “Let God arise and His enemies be scattered.”
off, be sure to take it back to him.” (Leviticus 23:4). I see this verse to be challenging directives even for Christians today. It seems very clear here that God expects everyone to show concern with the lives of others, including those who are a source of pain and irritation.

CWCI and indeed all Pentecostal Charismatics often disparagingly treated sacrifices that the Yorùbá traditional religious worshippers offer to their Gods and Goddesses as false also belies their preaching of love to every mankind. There is no cause for this attitude. Here is a lesson every religious person can learn. As soon as the priests/priestesses and devotees have finished offering their sacrifices, they also address their gods in prayer. During this past Olójó festival of 2012, I personally witnessed the ways chief priests of Olójó festival continued to pray for the peace and welfare of the entire Yorùbá race, Nigeria and the world. The question I continued to ask myself when observing those rituals was how the prayers that are being offered here different from how Christians pray to their God, assuming that the God of Christian is different than the God of Òrìṣà worshippers, which seems to me to be inconceivable.

The address to the gods invariably includes a prayer for health, prosperity and a long life. The truth is that those worshippers also believe that Olódùmarè (God) through the gods and goddesses is also near to them just like the Christian God. In the last 2012 Olójó festival that I witnessed, chiefs Erédùmí and Osògún at different times they offered sacrificial offerings, did so with the purpose to pray for the peace of Nigeria, Yorùbá at home and in diaspora and the world at large. What interests me most was the knowledge of the accuracy of the account of what was going on in the world news possessed by especially Chief Erédùmí. Chief Erédùmí’s prayers also

850 Chief Matthew Akínnyemí the Erédùmí (now late) of Iförè, told me that prayer must always accompany sacrifice because that is the psychological aspect of the sacrifice. He pointed it out to me that even Christian also pray after giving their offering and their tithes. He went as far as telling me that the “Amen Hallelujah” churches (apparently referring to the Pentecostal Charismatics) are far more notorious than all other Christian denominations as a result of their attaching every giving to the notion of prosperity. This is indeed true. The idea of sacrificial giving among many Pentecostals is directly linked to the wellbeing, wealth and prosperity of the givers.
addressed world current issues. The question then is why a particular religious group would condemn another’s religious belief and obligation as demonic, if the purpose of the sacrificial offering is to pray for the society in which they live. How can one be so sure that their sacrifices and prayers are indeed not really answered?

Four, as far as the Òrìsà priests are concerned there is no need to ask for personal prosperity, a practice that characterizes Pentecostal Charismatics’ notion of the gift and sacrifice. The reason why the Òrìsà worshippers would not do this according to Gbádégesin is because, “Devotees of traditional religions do not, generally, attach great importance to the accumulation of (personal) material wealth, either because they lack the kind of the drives it takes, or because there is something in their religious tenets which prohibit such outlook.”

I see another reason, the fact that Òrìsà worshippers and importantly chief priests esteem the virtue of communalism far more important than individualism is a good factor that aids them to think less of themselves. One of the Yorùbá proverbs even make this very clear: One rich man in the midst of six poor, all of them have become poor.” The Pentecostal Charismatics idea of prosperity is different. It is often taught by the prosperity gospelers that wealth and prosperity are an indication of a special favor from God for individuals and not collective “we.” Few of them even think it is because of their “passionate and dangerous” giving that wealth is coming to them and hence they are prospering. While one should have no problem with this kind of idea of giving by the prosperity gospelers, there is a problem in losing the import of Paul’s injunction to the Corinthians in terms of giving to a body of the Christian community that were lacking at the time. I am thinking

---

851 Gbádégesin, African Philosophy, 159.
852 The way the word “dangerous” is used here does not connote a bad thing according to the prosperity gospelers’ sensibility. It is their belief that when a gift is given leaving some pains on one’s finances and emotions, God is bound to show up and reciprocate bountifully. The prosperity gospelers usually, often lifted out of its immediate context, make reference to 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 which reads, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
beyond immediate particular religious denominations. CWCI should embrace this idea of thinking about larger community rather than its immediate religious constituency.

Five and the last point, the concept of neighbor as eminently taught by Jesus, beyond the confines of one’s religious belief and tradition should continue to condition the minds of all religious groups represented in Ilé-Ifé. It is very appalling that “the traditional solidarity in which the individual says ‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am’ is constantly being smashed, undermined and in some respects destroyed.”853 This individualistic salvation orientation, especially within Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity, seems to continue to contribute to the myriads problems such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, joblessness, corruption, drug addictions that characterize our modern Yorùbá society. The reason why I say this is because instead for the Pentecostal Charismatics to cooperate with other religious groups to fight those social ills, they often simplistically think that as long as the people within their immediate groups are shielded from the social ills, everything is fine. That thinking is completely false. The truth is that many youths within CWCI and other Pentecostal Charismatics will continue to be influenced directly or indirectly by the so-called children of the “unbelievers” that they have not been cooperating with in a meaningful and prospective communal exchange. This attitude needs to change if the Yorùbá society must progress in all areas of social, economic and political life.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have examined and analyzed the concept, norm, and the social and ritual practices of the gift among the Yorùbá people. The research primarily is focused on the two opposing religious denominations—the Ògún (Olójó) worshippers and the Christ Way Church International (CWCI) in Ilé-Ifé. I have argued that, during the ancient times, a communal

ideal of coming together to promote common goods devoid of religious biases was espoused by every member of the Yorùbá community. At this period, humane and communitarian ideals were greatly encouraged among the Yorùbá people. In such an atmosphere there was a kind of solidarity not merely based on mutual dependency and the capacity to trust other people but on the capacity of putting oneself in the imaginary position of other. There is no doubt that there were certain practices that were in vogue such as human sacrifices, slavery, and ethnic rivalry. Those problems are vastly eroding away in the era of modernity and with time, the remaining practices such as female circumcision, patriarchy, and polygamy would completely disappear with the passage of time.

What one is not particularly sure will disappear in the Yorùbá society in many years to come is the traditional worship of Òrìsàs. The reasons why this is so are many: One, Olúpònà aptly observes that, “as a response to the increasing marginalization of Òrìsà tradition in Ìlè-Ìfè and the Yorùbá society at large, the involvement of the global Òrìsà community has increased and may ultimately become a formidable strategy for guaranteeing the tradition’s survival.”

Two, the fact that sizeable numbers of people from America and the Caribbean showing interest in Òrìsàs’ worship and indeed get initiated into them will continue to reinforce the belief in Òrìsà tradition in many years to come.

Three, the Òrìsà worshippers are now re-inserting themselves into the political discourse of the Nigerian nation. For example, Wándé Abímbólá, who is the head of all Ifá priests (Àwíse) worldwide, was elected majority Leader of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria between 1992 and 1993 and served in 2003–2005 as an adviser to the Nigerian President on Traditional Matters and Cultural Affairs, Office of the Presidency. Four, the modern era we are

---

854 Olupona, *City of 201 Gods*, 292
in is enabling people to make their own choices and realize their autonomy, and it is viewed as a promising strategy to enhance mutual trust and foster community feelings. ⁸⁵⁵ Five, because many scandalous acts are now rife among Pentecostal Charismatics in Nigeria would continue to make Yorùbá traditional religious worshippers to stick to their traditional worship. Six, the fact that many Christians are now showing understanding towards religious plurality (ecumenism) will continue to encourage and enhance the Yorùbá traditional religious worshippers’ participation in National discourse and to continue to show interest in their religions. ⁸⁵⁶

Given this concern, the CWCI and Òrìsà worshippers and indeed all religious groups in Ilé-Ifè in particular and the Yorùbá society in general will need to return to the Durkheimian view of the interdependency of citizens for the provision of their needs, which informed the foundation of organic solidarity. At the time Durkheim wrote his book, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* ⁸⁵⁷, the relationship in the nineteenth century between citizens were characterized by mutual dependency, and forms of social organization were interconnected. If society is seen from Durkheimian functionalist perspective, solidarity has an apparent survival value: the continuity of the community is dependent on it. What fragments people in the Western society is increasing individualism due to processes of differentiation and increasing scale ⁸⁵⁸, whereas what fragments people in the Yorùbá society and Nigeria at large is different religious orientations. Pentecostal Charismatics can be said to share a bulk of the blame for this.

---

Perhaps the reason why few people are no longer either interested in Christian religion in particular or religion in general is because people who claim to be religious are no longer inculcating the communal values which emphasize fellow-feeling, love, compassion and hospitality one for another irrespective of religious, political and personal belief. Despite this assumption, I do not share in claims by some Yorùbá scholars’ that Western influence has not been altogether beneficial or that Christianity makes its own contribution to the decay of moral values in the Yorùbá society. 859 What this dissertation upholds is the belief that all religions have many things to contribute to the development of the Yorùbá society and Nigeria, but there is a thinking also that peace could be enhanced if CWCI and Olójó festival worshippers could embrace each other’s gift-exchange gesture.

859 Ìdòwú, Olódùmarè: God in Yorùbá Belief, 227
Bibliography


Ajibade, Bólájí “Christ Way Church and Politics of Cultural Identity”, in Ife Journal of Religions vol. 6 (1 & 2), 2010


Arinze, Francis (Cardinal) in an address to the April 4-7 consistory at the Vatican at the Cardinals Meeting, April 5, 1991


Asiyanbóla, Abídémí R. Urban-ethno communal conflict in Africa: Nigeria, 


Beier, Ulli, “Before Odùduwà”, in Odù No 3, 1956, pp.25-32
Beier, Ulli, ‘The Yorùbá Attitude to Dogs’ (1959), in wolé Ògùndélé Ed., The Hunter Thinks the Monkey is not Wise, But He has His own Logic: A Selection of Essays of Ulli Beier, Bayreuth African Studies, 2001

Bell, Catherine, Ritual Perspectives and Dimensions, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997


Boas, F., Anthropology and Modern Life, New York: W. W. Norton, 1928


Camenisch, Paul F. “Gift and Gratitude in Ethics, in *Journal of Religion and Ethics* Volume 1, Issue 1, Fall 1981, accessed 01/14/2013


Crumbley, Deidre Helen, “From Holy Ground to Virtual Reality: Aladura Gender Practices in


Erivwo, Samuel U. History of Christianity in Nigeria: The Urhobo, the Isoko and the Itsekiri Daystar Press, 1979


Geertz, Clifford Interpretation of Culture NY: Basic Books, 1973

Gibbs, Eddie Church Morph: How Megatrends are reshaping Christian Communities, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009


Godelier, Maurice, ‘Some Things You Give, Some Things you Sell, but Some Things you must Keep for Yourself: What Mauss Did not Say about Sacred Objects’ in Wyschogrod Edith,


Hanson F. Allan and Louise Hanson, *Counterpoint in Maori Culture*, Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983


Jevons, F.B. Introduction to the History of Religion, London, 1921


Laitin, David D. Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yorùbá,


Lloyd P.C., “Yorùbá Myths—a Sociologist’s Interpretation” in *Odù No 3*


Olájugbù, Oyèrónké Women in the Yorùbá Religious Sphere, NY; State University of New York Press, 2003


---------------------, City of 201 gods: Ilé-Ifè in time, space, and the imagination, California: University of California Press, 2011


Omígbulé, Morufu B., ”Ritual as Codification of Collective Socio-Historical Sensibility in Annual Òlójó Festival in Ilé-Ifè”, a paper presented at the Annual Faculty Conference held at Obáfémi Awólówò University, Ilé-Ifè, Nigeria, between 8 and 10 of October, 2012


Peel J.D.Y. *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, Bloomington &
Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000


Ryder, A. F. C. “Missionary Activity in the Kingdom of Warri to the Early Nineteenth Century” *J.H.S. No. 2 No 1* (1960), 1-26


Robertson-Smith, Williams, *Religion of the Semites*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1889


The Daily Trust of Nigeria, October, 4, 2013


*The News* (Lagos), June 30, 2003
The Vanguard Newspaper, Nigeria, December 28, 2011.

The Vanguard Newspaper, Nigeria, April 20, 2013
www.vanguardngr.com/2013/04/only-sango-ogun-deities-can-downloaded-on-April-20, 2013 at 5.45pm


Vandevelde, Antoon, Gifts and Interests: Morality and Meaning of Life, Peeters Publishers, 2000


Webster, Merriam http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gift


Williams, Robertson-Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1889


