

THE DEMISE OF THE AFRICAN GODS: FALLACY OR REALITY

By

Prof. Christopher Okeke Tagbo Ugwu

INTRODUCTION

It is with courage, unquantifiable joy, humility and high sense of responsibility that I stand out here to thank the Almighty God for His benevolence to me and my family all through these years of titanic struggles and challenges of life. I also immensely thank the focused and mission oriented Vice Chancellor of our beloved University and his administration who have graciously granted approval through the University of Nigeria, Senate Ceremonials Committee that I present this inaugural lecture.

The Inaugural lecture is always one of the outstanding occasions for professors of Universities across the globe to present publicly a substantial aspect of their research activities and evidences of their research inputs not only to the University where they are domiciled but to the ever knowledge seeking inquisitive public. This is the task am here today to proffer answers to.

It is in relation to the above, that I also warmly and heartily welcome and profoundly appreciate you all for abandoning all your innumerable programmes and commitments to honour the invitation to this historic and epoch making event. I very formally welcome all of you to the **Den of lions and lionesses** and request for your rapt attention as I embark on this academic voyage.

MY HUMBLE BEGINNINGS IN ACADEMIA

Shortly after my secondary education that saw me through with a good result in the early 80^s, I was exposed to yet another challenge to sit for JAMB in 1981.

In view of the obvious absence of school guidance counselors, I made the choice from the JAMB brochure to enter for Sociology and Anthropology as a course just for the fun of the name and the “ologies” associated with it. Later on when the result was released we frantically sought for the newspapers whose pages were usually filled with names and scores of candidates. To my satisfaction and hope, I scored a total of 276 and prayed I should be admitted into the University of Nigeria. To my chagrin the admission eluded me that year in spite of this my relatively high score. In my strong will and perseverance I stooped and burnt much more of the midnight oil to enable me to conquer. This time I had to enter for Religion and scored 263. In the Departmental list, I was the third person and was eventually admitted. Here then came so many discomfiting scenarios from both my hostel room in B1 201 in Zik’s flats and Hebrew and Greek lectures. From room-mates, the regular questions that woke me up every morning were what I intend to do with the Course on graduation. Have you come here to prepare for ordination or what? In view of the fact that most of my room mates were from Engineering and one other from Psychology, I had very skimpy answers to their innumerable questions. Having lost admission earlier, I took solace in what one of my uncles told me on the day of my matriculation that a graduate of any Nigerian University can fit into so many places in the wider society. The other embarrassments were coming up in our Greek and Hebrew lecture sessions. We were sometimes made to write from right to left in Hebrew and to learn alphabets different from what we were used to in our earlier contact with western education. We also had so many expatriates some of whom we had to strain our tympanic membranes to decipher what they taught. In view of all these frustrating experiences, one was really in between the devil and the deep sea and this trouble and dilemma sometimes brought some of us close to withdrawing from the University. Faith coupled with strong determination to succeed made us forge ahead and after our first year to my surprise, I was the best overall student in the Faculty of the Social Sciences and consequently a beneficiary of the Federal Merit Award (Federal

Government of Nigeria Scholarship). This feat brought me to the fore in not only my class or before the lecturers but to my roommates who now spoke to me with caution and respect. I never knew their own results as they did not want to compare notes.

Given this background I soldiered on till the final year when I then graduated with yet another good result that gave me a lot of laurels ranging from Departmental to Faculty Prizes. I was full of joy as my arrival in my father's compound with my First Class result news was heralded with a gunshot from my elder brother – Late Mr. Michael Ugwu. May his gentle soul rest in peace. I was posted to Lagos State as a Youth corper and thereafter, I secured a job as an Assistant Lecturer in Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu where I spent only six years and transferred to University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1994. Before my relocation to the University, I had obtained my “Masters Degree” under my strict and fatherly Supervisor and mentor; late Rev. Fr. Prof. Emmanuel Ifemegbunam Ifesieh. I also immediately proceeded to register for my Ph.D programme under him but could not conclude it as the cold hands of death snatched him away from this mundane world. I was then assigned to Prof. Ogbu Uke Kalu who carefully mentored and supervised my work and saw me through the programme in 2001. In the course of the mentorship, I started writing and publishing which were the hallmarks of growth in academia and in 2008, I was announced a PROFESSOR of Religion and Cultural Studies of this great citadel of Learning with speciality in African Traditioal Religion and Culture. To God Almighty be the glory.

CLEARING THE TERMINOLOGICAL UNDERBRUSH

Words are like ships that carry along with them so many cargoes and as they arrive each port, they discharge some of them and journey on. Suffice it to say that to define some concepts like religion sometimes turns a herculean task as the field is so universal and usually personalized. The definition can be taken from a lay man or an educated person based on his personal

encounter, hence, we have quite uncountable definitions of religion. For **Ezekwugo**, religion simply defined, means “a way to God.” This God is a being with only positive qualities and glorious intentions. He has no blemishes, no negative intrusions and no deficient intentions. He is wholeness and allness. He is described as an ocean without shores and without bottom (1992:77). **Arinze** explains that religion could be defined both subjectively and objectively thus;

Subjectively, religion is the very consciousness of dependence on a transcendent being and the very propensity or inclination to... worship. Objectively, religion is a complex of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being (1970:8).

Kant simply defined religion as the “recognition of our duties as the divine commands” (**Ajayi: 1981.10**). This points to man’s ability to realize that he is a dependent or contingent being and has some responsibilities to his Creator. This does not capture fully all that religion involves as there are both vertical (man to God) and horizontal relationships (man to fellow men).

Religion is the irresistible urge in man (**homo religiosus**) to relate well with his creator-God and his fellow human beings in order to obtain salvation in the sacred realm (**Ugwu: 1999:7**). From the foregoing, the bottom line is that here is a covenantal kind of relation where man in his helpless situation depends on a higher power other than himself for his salvation. For religious practice to be complete, it must be in recognition of other human beings within the environment.

It is meet and proper here to explain what the word demise in the context of this paper means. This is an intransitive verb that means “to die” or to end”. It has in this context a negative connotation meaning the death or disappearance of a religious form, that which is no more in existence or considered to be fossilized and dumped as an **anachronism**. **Are the African God/gods really dead? Has their indigenous religion really disappeared and is no longer in existence?** This will form a good part of this discourse.

At this point it will be germane to explain what the indigenous religion of Africa which here-in is called African Traditional Religion means. This simply put is the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the people of the African continent which as a legacy is handed down from one generation to another (Ugwu, 2002:115). It was in this regard that Awolalu (1976) elaborately stated that;

... the indigenous religion of the Africans. It is a religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears of the present generation of Africans. It is not a fossil religion (a thing of the past) but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practising it. This is a religion that has no written literature, yet it is “written” everywhere for those who care to see and read. It is largely written in the people’s myths and folklores, in their songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in their proverbs and pith sayings. It is a religion whose historical founder is neither known nor worshipped, it is a religion that has no zeal for membership drive, yet it offers persistent fascination for Africans, young or old, (P. 275)

In a similar vein, Ekwunife (1990) was also expressive and explicit in his **definition of African Traditional Religion when he wrote to say that;**

Those institutionalized beliefs and practices of indigenous Religion of African which are rooted in the past African religious culture, transmitted to the present by successive African forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths and folklores, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals proverbs pithy sayings and names), sacred specialists and persons, sacred space and objects and religious work of art, a religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each generation in the light of new experiences through the

dialectical processes of continuities and discontinuities, (P. 1).

The above detailed definitions by these scholars no doubt speak volumes about the meaning and composition of this religious form. These are emic scholars who are in firm grip of the subject matter and know the knitty-gritty of this field of study. Many other definitions abound but for now we shall halt here to enable us to address other areas in this lecture.

THE AFRICAN AND HIS OBSTINATE ATTACHMENT TO HIS RELIGION-AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

From time immemorial, Africans had demonstrated quite appreciably a firm belief in God and other pantheons of divinities. The attachment they have to their religion is so inseparable and dovetailed that Mbiti had to write in the very first page of his popular work in the following words:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is, therefore, ultimately a study of the peoples themselves in all the complexities of both traditional and modern life **(1969: 1)**.

From what Mbiti had described above as “these religious systems”, it triggers off another polemical argument on whether African Traditional Religion should be described as diverse or unitary religious form. Suffice it to say that one of the issues that border traditional African religious scholarship today is whether the religion of the Africans is to be designated as African Traditional Religion, in the singular, or African Traditional religions in the plural. Simply put; African religion one or many? Is what is seen as multiplicity to be considered realistically and accurately absolute or merely as various tentacles, elements and expressions of one reality?

Researchers in the subject of African Traditional Religion and any other interested reader can observe that the religion is laden with myriads of phenomena which we may call Supreme God, nature spirits, ancestor, rituals, initiation practices, divine kings, secret societies sorcerers etc. This multiplicity of religious beliefs led some to conclude that the appropriate term should be African Traditional Religions.

Among the scholars who support the above view is Ezekwugo (1992:79) who used African Traditional Religions as a chapter title in his book *Philosophical Concepts: Esotericism, Religiosity, Metaphysics, The Stolen Legacy of African Heritage*. He never adduced any reason for the use of the term in plural. For him it is assumed that is the right way to call it. Earlier on, Western anthropologists or ethnologist and missionary scholars almost invariably considered the labels Africans attached to their religious phenomenon as evidence of the non-existence of one basic, universal African Religion (Magesa: 1998:24). If there was such a thing approximating religion at all in Africa, they argued, it was “animism” or “fetishism”, a multiplicity of ritual actions with natural objects as deities.

Trained by western anthropologists and missionaries, African scholars of African Religion in the 1960s and 1970s exhibited a similar mindset. For instance Mbiti (1969:1-2) argues in his book *African Religions and Philosophy*, that the phenomenon of religion in Africa has to be considered multiple. He writes that the fact that there are numerous different peoples in Africa each having a very different religious system of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and its own leaders, one has to speak about Africa Religions in the plural.

Nevertheless, there are others (including myself) who argue and of course more correctly, that the religion should be in the *singular*, having noted the diversities that mark Africa geographically, linguistically and even in the physical appearance

of its various people. The Belgium Conference held in 1920, acknowledged early enough the African people's essential unity. Smith in Magesa (1998) writes to say that:

Underlying all the divergence that marks the pagan (sic) Negro tribes, there is a fundamental unity of belief and outlook upon the world ... Africa is a unity in diversity. Nothing is lost, and much is gained, by trying to look at the New Africa as a whole (P. 25).

Two decades later, the same Smith wrote in the same vein that:

In spite of ... cultural diversities there is, I believe, an underlying identity in religion. I do not deny or minimize the differences you may find between the highly organized Yoruba or Baganda, with their hierarchy of gods, on the one hand, and the more simple peoples, on the other hand. But the difference is one of emphasis and development, not of essence. There is sufficient identity to warrant our speaking of African religion (1950: 62).

The varieties of African Religion cannot be denied but there is a basic world-view, which fundamentally is everywhere, the same.

The varieties are more of those of expression than basic belief. They are much like the varieties of expression we find in any major religion, such as Christianity (in the form of denominations) or Islam, for instance. They may be referred to be different names, such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian or Baptist in Christianity, or Shia, Suni or Sufi in Islam. Nonetheless, they remain Christian or Muslim. To this end, we do not call them Christianities or Islams.

When we study African Religion in a specific place among a specific people, as many scholars have done and still do, it is for

the sake of depth and should not be used to support the argument that African Religion is not a generic whole.

In recent times, most African scholars, including Mbiti studying African Religion from the “inside” or emic point of view agree that African Religion should be used in the singular. They now see African Religion as one in its essence. Ritual manifestations, apparently different, are based on the same religious beliefs and proceed from a common mental structure; the structure of complementarity, symmetry, integration and contiguity. (Ugwu & Ugwueye 2004: 9-12)

Focusing again on the obstinate attachment of Africans to their religion, Leonard (1968:429) wrote to say about the Igbo who belong of course to the West African sub region that

They (Igbo) are a truly religious people of whom it can be said as it has been said about the Hindus that they eat religiously, dress religiously sin religiously ...religion of these natives is their existence and existence is their religion.

The obstinate attachment to religion by the African was also spotted in the writing of Parrinder when he argued that;

One of the greatest forces has ever been the power of religion. This incurable religious people was a phrase often on the lips of many old African administrators. Religion still wields greater power in the modern world, whether it be a Mahdi of the Sudan ... Not only gods but spiritual Forces of many kinds are very potent: witness the lucky charms which most babies and many adults wear, the libations made to the spirits at the crisis of life, the oaths supported by spiritual sanctions ...(1974: 9-10).

In tandem with the above scholarly views Ugwu (2006) had also lent his voice by arguing that Africans are obstinately religious, as he attributes his hitting his right or left leg on an object while

trekking to a particular destination, the irregular palpitation on any part of his body whether hand, eye or leg, the effect of lightning which usually is countered by smacking of the mouth, the hooting of the owl, the shooting of stars, the shape of the new moon, the crowing of cocks, the crackling of fowls, the birth of twins or triplets, the birth of albinos, the change in season or any other mystery to the work of God and the lesser gods (spiritual forces in his ecosystem)

To further accentuate the inextricability and inseparability of the African to his religion Mitchel (1977:81) an American Sociologist who conducted an indepth research on traditional religions of Africa (as they were) prior to contact with Islam or the West wrote to say that;

Since it is “fashionable” in many parts of Africa today to publicly count oneself as a Muslim or Christian there are doubtless many more million’s of Africans who are in reality far more involved in the primal religion than in their professed Muslim or Christian faith. Thus the primal religions are still very much alive, at least for the present.

This is a pointer to the overt but apparently convert existence of syncretism among African peoples with a weightier tilt and slant towards African indigenous religion. The persistence of this belief is quite considerable even among the educated. Some seek the assistance of sacred specialists (medicine men) in times of crisis such as during promotion, in search of a life partner etc.

In all, Africans are seriously attached to their religion and even in the next century will find it extremely difficult to sever relationship with it in almost every circumstance.

BASTARDIZATION AND CONDEMNATION OF AFRICAN RELIGION BY FOREIGN AND INDEGENOUS AFRICAN WRITERS – THE BASIS FOR THE ARGUMENT ON THE DEMISE OF OUR RELIGION – AFRICAN GOD/GODS

Due largely to racial prejudice, discrimination and superiority complex arising from an acclaimed Olympian height of superiority, the early European writers condemned African

Traditional Religion in very abusive, sarcastic, obscene, pejorative and despicable language. They were on most part used to cast aspersions on **African indigenous religion** and not for want of better words. At this juncture, we shall briefly examine some of the etic as well as emic scholars' views indicative of their deep seated and morbid hatred on both the African and his culture. These will be x-rayed in the following discussions.

In the correspondences that exchanged hands between Edwin Smith – a European missionary and Emil Ludwig, – a biographer and armchair writer it was clearly observed as a matter of racial attitude and discrimination when Smith explained that Africans are very religious people and very highly receptive to the Christian missionary preaching about God. Surprisingly in his reply, Ludwig exclaimed thus; “How can the untutored African conceive God, Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing in their minds (Smith 1950:9). This is a manifestation of their superfluity of ignorance and an erroneous conclusion on a matter one had not properly investigated. This was why Blyden (1966:5) wrote that “the downright truth is that the Europeans find it difficult to fathom the native mind. They are generally ignorant of the essential spiritual element which will equip them to unravel the intricacies of the native mind and their ancient law and custom. Similarly Ellis commenting on Africans worship of the Supreme Being wrote out of parochial imagination that:

The native says that he (Olodumare) enjoys a life of complete idleness and repose.....and passes his time dozing and sleeping..... man on his own side does not waste his time in endeavouring to propitiate him but reserves his worship and sacrifices for more active agents (Ajayi, 1981:29)

The above view was supported by Pere Noel Baudin - a Roman Catholic Priest who wrote in 1885 and said that “the blacks idea of God is confused and obscure”. He went on to say that God charged Obatala – the Yoruba divinity with the government of the works while He (God) retired and did not interest Himself with the affairs of this world (Ajayi : 1981 : 29).

For Frobenius, in Idowu (1973:87) Olodumare “leads an entirely platonic mythological existence. In other words, African God (Yoruba - Olodumare) does not exist in reality. He further said that before the introduction of a genuine faith and higher standard of culture by the Arabs, the natives had neither political organizations nor strictly speaking any religion nor any industrial development. According to Awolalu and Dopamu, God among the Africans was also described by the early European writers as “*deus, incertus, deus remotus* (Westermann :1937:15) *deus absconditus, deus otiosus* and *deus comatose* meaning that God for the African is conceptualized in terms of uncertainty, one who has also absconded from his duties and is completely useless and in a state of coma.

According to Ugwu and Ugwueye (2004) the early European writers did not leave any stone unturned in their condemnation of Africa and her religious culture. They used such depreciatory and opprobrious languages such as native, pagan, primitive, savage, heathen, idolatory, tribal, animism, juju, polytheism etc to describe African religion. Most of these words have sociological connotations and of course are misnomers as far as any religion all over the world is concerned. Green also after conducting a research among the Agbaja Udi people erroneously concluded that ... *Chi and Eke* together create an individual but each person is thought of as having his own *chi* and whether over and above it, there is any conception of a universal *Chi* seems doubtful. (1964 : 52)

It is crucial to state here that most of these pejorative comments arose not just out of racial prejudice alone but born out in the main that they did not see any shrines or temples for God in most African communities they visited. The explanation is simply that for the African, God is too majestic and far away removed from them. He cannot be bottled or confined in one place and so they find it more convenient to worship the lesser gods – divinities and pantheons of gods and other spiritual agents/elements who they regard as half way houses, intermediaries between them and God – the Supersensible Reality.

It is also noteworthy here to mention that their main objective of using unprintable, quite unrelated phrases to describe the indigenous African religion falls within the aphorism that you need to call a dog a bad name in order to hang it. Suffice it to say that to supplant African religious beliefs and practices with Christian religion, one simply needs to lampoon, treat with contempt, disdain and levity and reduce it to an abysmally low status.

The question is then whether they have succeeded fully in replacing it. This stubborn religious faith, with very long moral fibre is still alive with innumerable adherents who are ready to die to ensure its continuity.

Exiting from the above European negative assessments of our religion we surprisingly find ourselves in the unfriendly palms of some African scholars who have joined the Western scholars to utterly condemn African belief in God. This was why Mveng was quoted by Ela as saying that Africans have been robbed of their culture and thus even their human identity by a history of colonization and exploitation which is not yet fully over. (1995 : xiii)

He further argued that

the exploitation and denial are not yet over not because foreigners are hell bent on doing so but regrettably because some Africans themselves have chosen to canonize wrong principles implanted in error and out of ignorance.

It is noteworthy here that the reason for the canonization or full adoption of western schemes by African scholars may not have been born out of ignorance alone but by sheer intimidation by their western mentors who had always insisted that their mentees must respect and reflect their own personal opinions in their Masters or Ph.D works or get frustrated out of the registered, time bound programmes. This was probably why African scholars like Nwoga, Nze, Arazu, Achebe, Echeruo and Mba are of the view that the Supreme Being is a stranger in the Igbo religious thought. In fact for them the idea of the Supreme Being came with the advent of Christianity or Islam. (1989 :25-31)

Besides, there are still other factors that tend to point to the European idea of the total absence of God in the imagination and psychology of the African or the demise of the Gods so to say. For instance the 1884 scramble for Africa for settlement led to racial war and this resulted in relocation of the aborigines from their homelands. This event affected adversely the African culture which in the circumstance lost originality. This was probably why the European missionary made all sorts of claims including debunking African knowledge of true God before their advent.

The impact of slavery and inter-tribal wars also did an unspeakable havoc as many communities had their population decimated. This led to the loss of not only African identity but the obliteration of their religious culture. No wonder the blacks have no idea of God.

The problem of no single founder, no scripture and no reformers was yet another challenge. It is the position of historians of religion that other major religions in the world could be identified with founders, creed and reformers while the African indigenous religion has a lacuna here. This implies an inferior status and informed its classification as a fossilized religion of the anachronistic past.

From the foregoing, it becomes palpable that western bias, prejudice, indoctrination, superiority complex, colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism had contributed immensely to the erroneous conclusion that the African Gods are all dead. They simply made fallacious claims.

THE REALITY IN THE EXISTENCE OF AFRICAN GOD/GODS AND THE GODS ARE NOT YET DEAD

The Igbo (Africans) believe in one Supreme Being (Ezekwugo: 1992: 90). First and foremost scholars have argued from the stand point that the incurable religious nature of the Africans stems from the fact that religion qua religion originated from Africa.

This was why Biko (2001: 157) quoting Kwabena an Ashanti wrote to say that “the African religion is the oldest religion on this

planet. Indeed, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Christian scripture borrowed extensively from ancient Egyptian text”.

Tracing our (both Igbo and Africa) belief in God to **1789**, the first Africa slave boy Equiano Olauda captured from Iseke in Ihiala L.G.A wrote on the Igbo belief in God thus “as to religion the Ibo believe that there is God and that his people (the Igbo and Africans) use various mediums to worship him. (Ezekwugo, 1992: 82). It had also been written by Lewis (1957: 404) that the European claim of the first knowledge of God before the Africans had been falsified as the original and primary belief in God originated from Egypt in Africa. This is so because the concept of one God for all mankind has a historical record. Pharaoh Amenhotep or Ikhnaton of Egypt was the first man in history to discover that there is one God for the whole universe and all mankind. For this singular reason Ikhnaton was known the world over as the first great citizen (Lewis; 1957 : 93). Ezekwugo also further added that “before this great Pharaoh of Egypt, nations of the world had been adoring multiplicity of gods as their Supreme Beings relatively conceived (1992:86).

When we say that Africans are notoriously incurably and obstinately religious, we mean to say that through all the stages of rites of initiation, through all their daily, weekly and annual activities including rites of breaking early morning kola-nut to invoke and worship God and the gods – earth goddess, sun god, moon god etc., the rites and rituals involved in festivals, divination to mention but these, the African demonstrates a high spiritual and undiluted spiritual inclination.

RATIONALIZING THE EXISTENCE AND BELIEF IN GOD IN AFRICAN RELIGION

It will be exigent to examine the reasons for the existence of God in African religions thought through some theories on the origin of religion and some very common, overt and convincing reasons. To these we turn:

The rationalistic theory on the origin of religion can be traced back to the Greek Euhemerus who wrote to say that religion started from the deification of heroes, ancestors and those who one way or the other had distinguished themselves by their achievements. In this vein it will be commonsensical to say that if Africans believe that God created man and controls his being here on earth it simply means that if some men were deified because of their distinctiveness, then God is bound to receive high sacrifices. If this age long theory is anything to rely on, then the existence of God among Africans is a veracity.

Secondly, we also need to examine briefly Freud's psychological theory on the origin of religion. He thus said that – the belief in God came as a result of guilt done to the illusory heavenly father and the consequent fears surrounding the guilty person. In this blameworthy state of man, he seeks the face of his father God to propitiate him. In this sense Africans also came in contact with religion – belief in God based their fear or trepidation of the unknown. To this end, Africans are said like other races in the world to have had a notion of God long before the advent of the European missionaries.

Next is the sociological theory in which Durkheim (1915 : 55) proposed that religion is a social phenomenon. Men he said are acted upon but because they know the source of such action, they invent for themselves the idea of the powers with which they felt themselves in connection. For him there is nothing like the Divine Imperative as that which speaks in man to man is only but the collective voice of the society – “Vox Populi vox dei” (Ajayi 1981:5) African communitarian spirit supports this theory hence an evidence that Africans believe in the existence of God whose voice speaks through the ingenious inventions of men in the society.

The theory on **revelation** is also rife as a proof of the existence of God among Africans. African Traditional Religion is a revealed religion and believes that much of what they know, believe and

practice is revealed to them through dreams and trances. This was a view highly supported by Rudolf Otto, H.H Farmer and others. In this circumstance, God's existence in African Man's religion is simply a revealed one.

The mythological argument is yet another point to proof the existence of God through myths, folklores and other modes of expression. Myths refer to all those stories that belong to folklores and tell us of how certain phenomena came into existence (Douglas: 1986). To this end, it can be argued that in virtually every creation myth among African tribes, there are names indicating the reality of the existence of God who performed the act of creation. He was at the epicentre of the creative activity and never at the periphery. This was why in Igbo creation myth, the name *Chineke* or *Chukwu* was repeatedly used, among the Yoruba, *Olodumare* was the key player, among the Ashanti – *Nyame* was constantly mentioned. For the purpose of clarity, four West-African creation myths (Awolalu and Dopamu) will be explained here in which the names of God in their countries were repeatedly mentioned in the creation exercise – an indication however of his existence and acknowledgement among the people. To these we turn:

Igbo Creation Myth

It is a general belief among the Igbo of Nigeria that they had their primordial origin from *Nri*, their spiritual and ideological headquarters. According to *Nri* mythology, their founding father was *Eri*. This man was sent down from heaven with his wife *Namaku* by *Chukwu*, the Igbo supreme God and they landed at *Aguleri*. Here, it has been adduced and certified authentic that all-important features of Igbo culture evolved and were received as gift from *Chukwu*.

When *Eri* came down from the sky, he sat on an anthill as the land was morass or was waterlogged to use the Igbo phrase, *ala di deke deke*. When *Eri* complained to *Chukwu* the Supreme God, He sent down an Awka blacksmith with his bellows, fire and charcoal to

dry up the land. This is a direct reference to the expertise of the Awka people in blacksmithing profession. When the Awka blacksmith rounded off his assignment, *Eri* rewarded him with an *Ofo* which conferred on him special claims to the smithing profession (Afigbo, 1981:37).

While *Eri* lived, God fed him and his people on a substance from the back of the sky (*Azu Igwe*) and throughout this period when men lived on the substance they did not sleep. This special food ceased after the death of *Eri*. *Nri* his first son complained to *Chukwu* about this monotonous supply of the same food daily, and in consequence God ordered him to kill and bury in separate graves, his first son and first daughter. *Nri* complied and in consequence after three Igbo native weeks (*Izu ato* or twelve days), yam grew from the grave of the son and cocoyam from the grave of the daughter. When *Nri* and his people ate these, they slept for the first time. Later, *Nri* on further directive by God (*Chukwu*) also killed male and female slaves burying them separately and after three Igbo weeks (*Izu ato*) an oil palm tree grew from the grave of the male slave while bread fruit tree grew from that of the female slave.

With all these new food supplies, *Nri* and his people prospered, but here came the rob. *Chukwu* the God told him to distribute the new food items to all people but *Nri* refused because he had bought them so dearly with the blood of his own children and slaves. Eventually, however, *Nri* and *Chukwu* made a bargain. For agreeing to distribute the food, *Nri* got a number of rights over the surrounding people.

This is the Igbo creation myth with *Chukwu* as the Supreme God ordering and creating and men, *Eri*, *Nri*, and the Awka blacksmith as his subordinates who carry out his instructions.

Yoruba Myths of Creation

Like the Igbo, the Yoruba also have a very rich cultural heritage especially in mythological systems. In their myth of creation, they had it that in their primordial times or times of pre-history, the Supreme Being, *Olodumare* with His numerous divinities lived in the far removed heaven. These divinities included *Orisa-nla* (also called *Obatala*) the arch-divinity and deputy of *Olodumare* in the ordering of things. *Orunmila* (also called *Ifa*) the deputy of *Olodumare* in matters of knowledge, and *Esu*, the inspector of rituals.

According to this myth, the world this time was null and void and of course a very watery, marshy waste – an endless stretch of water and wild marshes. During this period, the divinities on delegation by God usually came down from heaven on the wild marshes to perform their hunting activities. They descended on it with the aid of spider's web.

On a more serious note on how to treat this situation, *Olodumare* considered it necessary to turn this watery, marshy waste into a habitable place for the divinities and other living entities. Based on this consideration, *Olodumare* summoned *Orisa-nla* and commissioned him. He provided *Orisa-nla* with the materials of a leaf packet of loose earth (sand) and a hen and a pigeon to spread the sand (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979: 55)

In obedience to the instruction of *Olodumare*, *Orisa-nla* descended from the sky through a ladder and on getting to a particular spot, he poured the sand and dropped the birds where he had thrown the sand. The birds began immediately to scratch at the sand and scattered it on the waste. And wherever the earth was scattered became land. It is to be observed that the sand was unevenly scattered hence there emerged hills, valleys, mountains and oceans and rivers.

On completion of this part of creation, *Olodumare* sent His Inspector of works — the Chameleon — to go and inspect the work ‘which the arch-divinity had earlier reported to have completed. After two visits to the spot, the Chameleon reported to *Olodumare* that the work was perfectly done.

Orisa-nia was again ordered to furnish the earth with living things. The birds were to multiply and serve as food for mankind. Some trees were planted to supply drinks. Most importantly, a man called Oreluere was created to head the beings who should inhabit the earth. This was of course the genesis of human habitation of the earth. As life progressed, one problem arose and this was that of water scarcity. *Orisa-nia* then appealed for more water and *Olodumare* sent rain. Later, on the instruction of God *Orisa-nia* moulded man on physical shape with dust of the earth. By implication, this arch-divinity had the powers to make human beings of perfect or deformed nature. In any case, it was a duty incumbent on *Olodumare* to put the essence of life - the soul — in these human figures.

From the beginning of creation, the created man enjoyed what was good and there was peace and harmony. In fact, according to tradition, heaven was very near to man and he could touch it and make his requests known easily to God. Sooner or later, this period of enjoyment was interrupted by man’s sins and the sky (heavens) retreated into the far-away heavens.

It should be pointed out that in some Yoruba myths, the power of creation was attributed to *Oduduwa* the father/founder of Yoruba land but this may not be very appropriate since *Orisa-nia* was the arch-divinity whose sole responsibility it was to bring forms into existence from the supernaturalworld .

Creation Myths Among The Akans of Ghana

Among the Akans of Ghana, the creation myth is such that is full of anachronisms and contradictions because there is no proper and systematic account of the creation of things. In any case, a version of their myth of creation has it that in the beginning God (*Nyame*) made the sky and proceeded to make the earth, rivers, water and trees. This was followed by the creation of the first parents of the Akan people. God at this point made animals for man's consumption. They were to feed on plants but man has the total control over all created things by God. According to tradition, the man was called *Okawe* while the wife was called *Kyeiwaa*. They lived in a cave and were taught by Nyame the names of all things he had created.

Another version of Akan myth of creation is that there were sacred pots in different parts of Akan land from where the first couple were said to have been created (Ray, 1976: 4). The above is an abundant testimony to the fact that God is the creator, excavator, carver, originator and inventor or architect in West African cosmogony. The divinities are called the children of *Nyame* signifying that they have their sacred origin from the Supreme Being.

Myths of Creation Among the Mende of Sierra Leone

According to the Mende, in the beginning of beginnings, *Ngewo*, the Supreme Being created earth and all the things in it and later crowned this work with the creation of man and woman. *Ngewo*, whom the couple did not know, told them that they should ask for anything they wanted from him. As dependent being, they were constantly making demands or requests from *Ngewo* who always met them. As time went on, these requests became incessant and as

a result, one night when they were asleep, *Ngewo* moved far away from them. *Ngewo*'s retreat was a surprise to them when they woke up the following morning. In any case, in order to satisfy their curiosity, *Ngewo* gave each of them a fowl and instructed that they should call on him anytime one of them has offended the other (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979: 63). He further told them that each time he came, they should return His fowl to Him. When he came down to them one day, he warned them not to bear grudges against each other to enhance peaceful coexistence. He later went away. From that day, the people called him *Leve* meaning "high" Smith, 1950: 278ff).

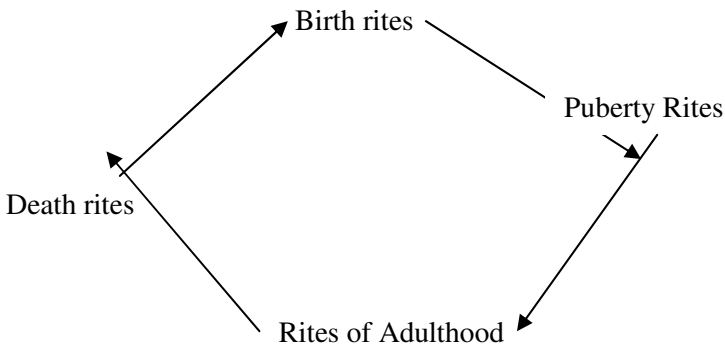
If there was any missing link in relation to the existence of God among these African tribes how come it that the different names of God in their communities were profusely mentioned in all the stories/myths of creation. God really exists from these mythological discourse.

Going further, Madu cited Thomas Aquinas Quinequivie five proofs of the existence of God which were based on the principle's causality and impossibility under certain condition of an infinite series. The five of them suit our purpose here as each one can fit in comfortably into the African explanation of the existence of God. In this section, it is also germane that mention be made that the nature and existence of the Supreme Being in African Traditional Religion can be gathered from both the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities attributed to him. He is known to be a Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Judge, Immortal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Transcendent, Immanent and Self – Existent. To support this viewpoint, many scholars, Ifesieh (1989), Metuh (1987) had argued that these attributes were not just manufactured to key into western schemes but were the products of their life experiences which they can testify to.

From the foregoing, it is understandable that the idea of God, his existence and worship are alive and very vivacious in African religious culture.

ESTABLISHING THE VIVACITY OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION THROUGH INVOLVEMENTS IN RITUAL ACTIVITIES

It was earlier stated that Africans are their religion and their religion is their life. Right from the cradle (conception) to the grave Africans participate fully in their religious/ritual activities (Mbiti : 1975). It was probably informed by this, that Gennep quipped that life passes through four transitional ritual stages namely; birth rites, puberty, adulthood, and death rites as shown below in this cyclical diagram.

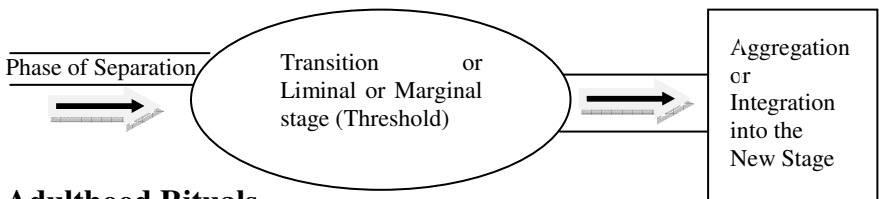


It should be noted that participation through any of these ritual activities is a sure way of paying homage and allegiance to the numerous gods of the African universe indicating largely that the religion is still alive.

Birth Rituals – These involve ceremonies of different forms and shapes during conception and pregnancy. Thereafter other such rituals that fall under this category such as birth, infancy – exorcising the spirit of born – to die, Ogbanje among the Igbo and abiku among the Yoruba, naming ceremony, teething, dedication, circumcision or clitoridectomy rituals (Ugwu 2001:84-

106). These are done to legitimize the formal reception rituals of a child into the community.

The second stage is puberty during which time we consider to be pre-adolescent. This in most communities involve the initiation ceremonies into masquerade societies or different cult (age group). These according to Genep's threefold structure of initiation will include rites of separation, ritual of transition or liminal or marginal stage and finally the aggregation or integration into the new state. See the diagram below



Adulthood Rituals

Next is the adulthood stage in which so many rituals are also widely performed such as marriage rites, rites of initiation into title taking or advancement to a higher social class (Metuh: 1987: 197) and other such like adulthood rites. One of the outstanding rituals which an adult Igbo man or woman must undergo is marriage ceremony (Onwubiko : 2002:). These have lots of religious undertone and are still in vogue as am delivering this lecture. *Ozo* title taking, Chieftaincy titles are till today highly recognized ceremonies among African tribes. Inclusive in the initiation rites into adulthood are those Mbiti (1969: 166-194) addressed as Sacred specialist and who Ugwu (2006:1) called the religious leaders. These include the medicine men, rain makers, kings, priests, seers, mediums etc. It was also in this vein that Metuh wrote to say that initiation rites could accompany admission into age groups, secret societies, the ordination of a priest or medicine man or even the enthronement of a King (1987: 205) It is worthy to remark here that even though some of these ceremonies have socio-political attachments, they also have religio-cultural colourations in them.

There are also death rituals that persist till date. Death is celebrated with funeral rites and ceremonies (Goody:1992:283). Such complicated ceremonies include burials, funerals, inheritance, the living dead, the world of the departed, visit of the living dead to their human families-reincarnation. They vary from one country to the other and from tribe to tribe (Onwumere :2007:90).

There are first and second burial rites which are religiously followed to avoid incurring the wrath of the dead. The issue of second burial no doubt had remained a very controversial area between the traditional practitioners and Christians and has so remained a very stubborn area which has become irresolvable till date. Some highly placed Christians also observe the second burial ceremonies in Africa. To this end the worship of the African God/gods is not yet over.

Festivals and Its Continued Ritual Observances

Ejizu (1990:134) defined festival as any special occasion, observance or celebration which may be religious or secular in nature and which is generally marked by merry making, performance of music and the like. Most African festivals are meant for recreation as they are agrarian people who work tirelessly in the farms and use the avenues of these seasonal festivals to relax and rest. Festivals are usually accompanied by masquerading activities most of whom entertain the members of their community.

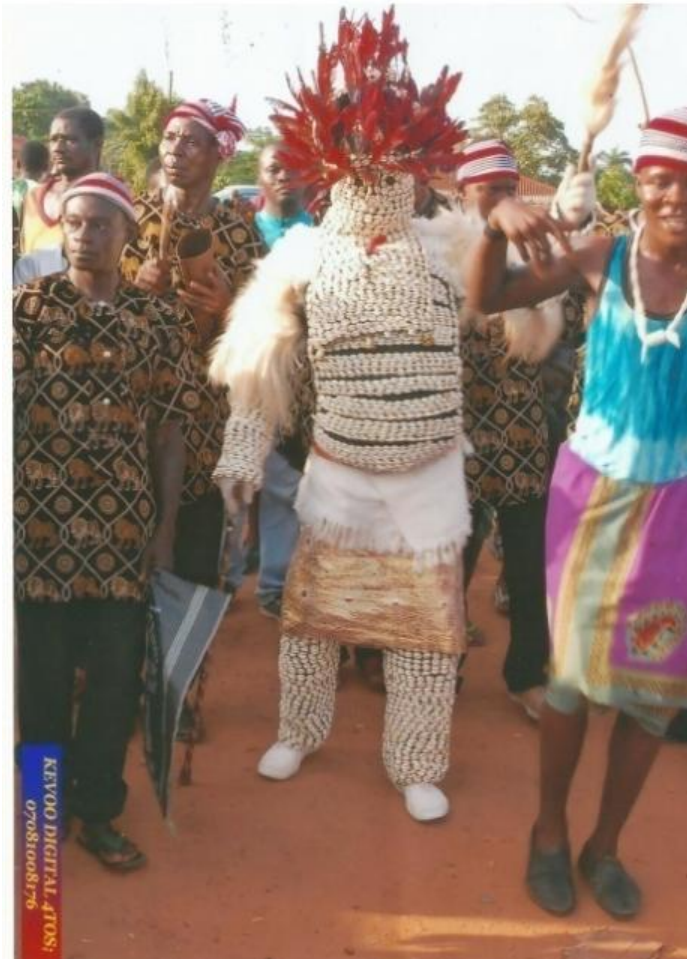
In the view of syncretic nature of the practice of Christian religion, among African Christians there are noticeable involvements in African religious practices especially during festivals. Most young maskers are baptized Christians who as a matter of protection wear scapula, rosary and other Christian emblems and of course traditional charms and amulets all in one.

It is a truism that what has made festivals with masquerade performances an enduring legacy in Africa is that one grows with it from the onset of his life participating in all the activities

especially in its function of acceptance and rejection aesthetics. This involves masquerades or masks as recreational facility in which the spectators are chased (especially girls going home from benediction or Sunday school) away into corners and when they regain their freedom they will go back to the operating square for the masquerade calling it names and they are chased again and again (Ugwu : 2004 :114). During these festivals also, children or adults who are being prepared for Christian baptism are usually warned not to eat meat sacrificed to idols but because they are usually flayed on fire and properly spiced, most Christian adherents had always failed to strictly keep to these warnings. The place of festivals/masquerades among Africans is such that it has created an irresistible urge to both Christians and the practitioners. It has really come to stay. The educated elite are not left out either.



Okikpe Masquerade from Okpaligbo Obollo Eke (23/7/2014)

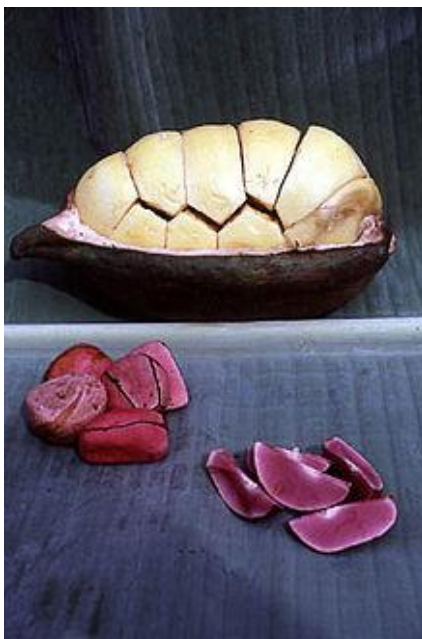


Akatakpa – Obollo Masquerade on the stage of performance sided both ways by traditional practitioners and baptised Christians.

Kola -nut Rituals :-Kola-nut ordinarily Oji Igbo is one of the several species of nuts found in the West African Sub-region (Opata : 1998: 98). Kola-nut has so many different species but the Oji Igbo we are referring to here belongs to the *Cola acuminata* specie. This is well celebrated among some tribes in Africa.

The Igbo are known to be religiously conscious about the value and essence of kola-nut. Even though it observes what Opata

(1998:105) called a democratic tradition, women and children do not qualify in all circumstances to participate in all the rituals. In every ritual ceremony be it during traditional sacrifice or offering, festivals of local or national importance, Christian ceremonies like wedding, bazaar or launching of any kind, kola-nut takes pre-eminence over any other programme other than prayers. The Igbo word *OJI* has already been taken as an acronym for *Omenala jikoro Igbo onu*. – The tradition or custom that binds Igbo people together. The lobes of kola-nut are of male or female types and usually when prayers are offered with kola-nut, the male cotyledon is preferred as we live in an Igbo patriarchal world where the males dominate their female counterparts. Usually the head of the cotyledon (*anyaoji*) is removed and offered to God or the lesser gods at the end of the invocation prayers. This tradition of breaking the kola-nut and the observance of all the ceremonies associated with it is a pointer to the fact that kola-nut rituals has come to stay. I have also observed with keen interest even among the educated class within the university's old newspaper stand colleagues, academic and administrative staff meet to chuckle over the "modus operandi" whenever kola-nut was presented. It had always remained controversial as to whether the man from Obukpa or Nsukka should be the first to be invited to break the kola-nut within the University. This arising from the claims that part of the entire land owned by the University belongs to Obukpa and the other part to Nsukka Asadu Ideke people. Kola-nut which is also a symbol of hospitality among Africans does not hear any language (dialect) other than that of a people on whose soil the function of breaking is performed. Kola-nut is used during prayers to God and the divinities and has come to stay. This points to the fact that the African God and gods are neither comatose nor dead.



Colaacuminata (Kola-nut) used in worship to God and gods.

Traditional Medicine and Medical Practices

Over and against the hygiene, dosage, availability of orthodox medicine to our ever teeming population, traditional African medicine and medical practices have been considered very efficacious. Medicine according to Awolalu and Dopamu is the art of using the available forces of nature to prevent diseases and to restore and preserve health. It is prophylactic and therapeutic (preventive and curative).

Ubrurhe also opined that traditional or indigenous medicine includes all mystical preparations that prevent and cure diseases, enhances life and provides means of achieving one's aspirations (1994).

Medicine in African religion is dependent on spiritual belief. It is inevitably connected with the Supernatural (Ugwu and Ugwueye; 2004: 51).

Given this backdrop, the value African medicine which forms a major structure in the traditional religious institution has been as early as 1720 attested to by Father Julian Gorju who argued that traditional healers did not have the slightest ideas about matters of dosage but their remedies were astonishingly efficacious (Zeller: 1979). Traditional medicine does not engage in any orthodox form of diagnosis however it uses divination to unravel the causes of illness and recommends therapeutic measures to be applied to enable a patient regain health. It was in this regard that Mitchell wrote to explain that “divine healers are basically spiritual counselors and physicians. Individuals will typically bring a wide variety of requests to these priests”. Through the practice of both divination and medicine, “diseases thought to be source of pain, fear, hopelessness and which “unleashes” terror, excruciation with impunity are made powerless, managed, controlled and cured completely” (Ugwu : 2007 :25-26).

To this end, the practice and belief in African religion (medicine also) tends to be more manifest in times of crisis. In hospitals today, many ardent Christians on admission have medicine prepared in the traditional manner, stealthily brought to them because they believe it is more efficacious than European medicine which is without the touch of the divine healer (Ajayi: 1981: 120). I was once a victim as I sustained a waist pain while on some domestic activities at home in 2001 and when I tried my hands on some prescribed western orthodox drugs, they failed me. On advice that I should consult an orthopaedic, I acquiesced and got admitted at *Ugwu nkwo* where I was placed on traction for over a week without much noticeable improvement. Some of my brothers and friends most especially, Late Chief Willy Eze who sponsored my marriage (Wedding) were coming to sympathize with me and Chief Eze took the bull by the horns and went to Owere Eze and brought Mr. Basil Attama (a bone setter) who stole himself into the Ugwunkwo Orthopaedic hospital and after what appeared like a casual examination, he said “Ya ha” meaning this is where the problem is. He requested that I should start shaking one of my legs

and within splits of second the slip disk was returned to its proper position. He also rubbed into the affected part of my body some watery substance and gave me some herbs for further application. The tales of the resistance by the doctor and nurses that I should not be discharged until after six weeks and the pecuniary issues involved will be for another day. The end of it was that I got healed and resumed normal activities in my place of work. It is also common place that when one fails to get his promotion in some parts of Africa, they consult medicine men for help. Many have their confessional statements to make though for the fear that one may be tagged a diabolical person, we hide our faces and prefer to appear during testimony times in Pentecostal churches to tell the stories of how the God of Christians saved us. These and more are the real reasons why the African God is not yet dead in the psychology of the indigenous traditional religious adherents.

Regular sacrifices and offerings to God, gods and goddesses in Africa

Quarcoopome was loud and clear on the meaning of sacrifice when he explained that it is a “means of contact and communion between man and God” (1987:89). Sacrifice is also considered to be man’s best way of establishing or maintaining cordial and intimate relationship between himself and the Supersensible Cosmic Reality. (Ugwu and Ugwueye: 2004: 77). Sacrifice as a matter of fact has been either used interchangeably with offering or sometimes used in contradiction. This was why Magesa (1998:181) argued that;

Both sacrifices and offering involve the setting apart of an item usually associated with human use for the supernatural powers. Animals and food products are most often used for sacrifice and other forms of dedication (offering).

In a bid to distinguish between sacrifice and offering Mbiti (1969:59) was of the opinion that sacrifice refers to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole to God, supernatural beings, spirits or living dead. Offerings

on the other hand refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items. In African Traditional religious beliefs and practices, sacrifices and offerings are as regular as daily, weekly, monthly and annually. The broad purpose of sacrifice and offering in African religion is captured in the attempt to maintain an ontological balance existing between God and man, the spirits and man, the departed and the living. In brief, sacrifice is a way of maintaining the equilibrium between the living and the dead. Sacrifices are offered to God through the pantheons of divinities; the tutelary spirits who are also believed to be half way houses to God. The Supreme Being, the ancestors and most essentially the earth goddess receive obeisance, sacrifices and offerings daily. From morning till night, the practitioner in his religiosity demonstrates largely his acknowledgements of these forces through the breaking of the kola-nut, pouring of libation, invocation and immolation. He/she cannot sniff, eat or engage in any daily activity without first and foremost dropping some quantity of the snuff or pouring of water or wine or “*ekpetesh*” illicit gin on the ground for the earth goddess or other female deities that inhabit the earth.

Songs and dances are also part of worship and the African in his notoriety (religious) even dances rhythmically to God and the gods who are believed to live in the terrestrial as well as celestial space. When one dances and faces upwards (that looking up to the sky) as most men’s dances are designed, it shows the acknowledgement of the existence of the Supernatural Being whose abode is in the sky. On the contrary when one dances and faces downwards as is usual with female dancers, it is a recourse to the earth goddess or other goddess (sea goddess and marine spirits) who are conceptualized as goddesses of fecundity and who of course bless women with procreation. These practices though clandestine they may sound, are very rife, vivacious and sustained among African Traditional Religious adherents. This no doubt points to the fact that African God/gods are not dead but living.

Objectification of Religion through Symbols, Anthropomorphic Images and Effigies

God in African belief is unfathomable and as a result has no temples, shrines or grooves where he can readily be approached. However, God and the divinities are objectified to bring closer this majestic, incorporeal and far removed beings. This explains further why symbols and anthropomorphic images and effigies of various forms and shapes are used to represent God and other numerous spiritual forces in African Religion. Symbols are means of identification. It is used to represent sign or mark that has a peculiar relationship or meaning to a social group. Symbols are therefore something presented to the senses which stand for something else. They are not the actual things but have the character of making people have full conceptualization of the reality through a conscious association. (Anyacho: 2005. 21) Symbols help man to develop theology and to transmit complex information about God, deities and ancestors. Symbols enhance the believer's mediation during worship. The use of physical objects, pictures, sounds, music and bells, special odour from incense and the gesticulations of priests during worship are symbolic expressions which not only remind worshippers of what they already know but also spur them to behave in defined reverential manners during worship.

This makes them come to a closer relationship with the object of their worship. In this capacity, symbols contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of the relationship between realms of the sacred and profane. Many of these symbols help man to conceptualize God better and also aid him to approach Him with reverence and love. Suffice it to say that these representative object – symbols are not end in themselves. It was probably in this confusion that Buklawood in his study of Asaba people of Delta State wrote to say that “Asaba people bow down to idols of blood and stones” (Ajayi: 1981). As we had earlier remarked in this section of this lecture, the use of symbol is not a special reserve of African Religion rather it traverses every other religion. In this vein, it becomes exigent to state without equivocation that

worshippers do not pay obeisance to the images or effigies rather it is the force (metaphysically) behind those symbols that are the object of attention. In other words, a Christian or a Moslem does not worship the cross made of wood or iron or the crescent respectively. He mirrors and attempts to fathom God or other spiritual agents in these symbols.

In African traditional religion, there are many symbols employed during worship. These include *Ofo*, *Ikenga*, *Okpensi*, Sacred trees, *Omu nkwu* (Fresh palm leaves), holy water, sacred rivers, various works of pottery and arts, anthropomorphic images and effigies, sacred mountains, grooves etc. For a better understanding a few of these will be explained in this paper.

Ofo:– In Igbo religious life the *Ofo* stick plays a very crucial role. *Ofo* belongs to personal religious objects of worship – a way of approaching God and the gods.

It is a stick of varying sizes from about two inches long and half an inch in diameter. It has an oval shaped head and appears thinner towards the tail. It is obtained from the branch of Diaterium Senegalese plant. The *Ofo* branches fall off on its own when parent plant is fully grown. People do not cut it nor do they use it for cooking. According to Ilogu (1974: 18) it is believed that *Chukwu* – the Creator God, purposely created this tree to be sacred and by the manner its branches fall off unbroken, He (*Chukwu*) symbolizes the way families grow up and establish new extended families and lineages. Therefore the *Ofo* is the abode of the spirit of the dead ancestors, hence the authority and the sacredness of the *Ofo* as well as the special place given to it as the emblem of unity, truth and indestructibility for the individual or group possessing the *Ofo*.

In some parts of Africa, one of the major objects handed over to the eldest man in a clan or lineage as a symbol of authority, honesty, truthfulness and sacredness of the people is the *Ofo*. It is part of the insignia of office of an *Ozo*-title holder in Igboland. *Ofo* has so many uses namely for prayers to God and to the gods, for swearing an oath in all grave cases, for making speeches by titled men indicating they are truthful especially as they kiss it before the

speech, used to indicate the presence of the ancestors, for removal of evil or any kind of abomination from the community by the priests, endows on the lineage head both political and social authority used as an apparatus for divination and used for prohibition and sealing of decisions at family, lineage and village levels. *Ofo* is still in use till date among the practitioners and mainly as a symbol of justice and uprightness. The holders avoid as much as possible anything that will contaminate them when they are in possession of the *Ofo*.

In this vein, African Traditional Religion still thrives and is really alive for those who care to see and understand.

Ikenga:- One other deity among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria carved in the image of ram shaped head is the *Ikenga*. This is a symbol of a young man's individual god of achievement. It is also the god of hunting. Every man has his own *Ikenga* which is believed to be a spark of God's strength and success in every field of human endeavour. According to Ogbukagu (2008:365-356) *Ikenga* serves as a man's right hand and therefore his power and strength. *Ikenga* seemingly acts as one of the sources of enormous power and courage. It is instantly identified by its two horns on its head and a drawn sword in his right hand and a ram's head in its left hand. In an achievement oriented society, the cult of the right hand is important. Through this, man's personal effort is sanctified.

Abosu – Holy Water:- This is also another way through which the African objectifies his religion. The traditional practitioner prepares holy water for his use in cleansing and other purposes by sending a virgin (male or female) to a flowing stream or river to fetch water. The lad will be instructed to while fetching the water back the source of the river and then place a fresh palm leaf across the mouth. He/she should be instructed not to talk to anyone until she reaches her destination (shrine or home) with the water and consequently dropping the fresh palm leaf. This quantity of water fetched through this process automatically becomes holy water. This process is still in vogue as those who consult medicine men still get this type of water administered unto them.

Today you can experience the use of this water hung on economic trees to prevent pilfering and tempering by passersby. Sometimes because of the syncretic nature of Africans, they obtain holy water and stickers from some Christian adoration ministries and stick them to their economic trees and sometimes also hang bottles of blessed Goya oil and water on these trees. This is syncretic worship. To this end, it is clear that Africans and their religion live on.



River used by Traditional Religious practitioners during worship to God and gods.

Anthropomorphic Images:- Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to that which is not human. To make real and life the idea of the sacred to man, he moulds into human forms the images of what he conceptualized as God, the pristine ancestors of his community which are usually placed at the centre of the village square or market and in some other places, they are placed at the entrance to the community. This draws their

attention for worship from time to time. It was in this vein that Idowu (1973) wrote to say that

...He (Olodumare) speaks, he commands, he acts, he rules, he judges, he does all that a person of the highest authority in whose control everything is will do. Unless man forms God in his own image, God will be reduced to mere abstract idea or an intellectual conception. There is no escaping from anthropomorphism if our worship of God is to be real and our conception of God whom we worship is to be concrete. This also applies to divinities who are real to the African minds.

Totems and Taboos as Proofs for the Vivacity and Reality of the Existence of God and the Gods in African Indigenous Beliefs and Practices

In all races of mankind and in every religion across the globe, there are animals, plants and places that are kept sacrosanct and that its regular uses are abhorred based on the individual's or group's *religious* affinity to them. These are otherwise called totems. Igbo (2000:53) sees totems as the word or name given to an animal, object or natural event, which has a special religious or spiritual association with a person or a group of people. To him it is a taboo for members of the ethnic group to kill or eat the totems that are worshipped and revered. As intermediaries between God/gods and man they are only conceived of as links to God and the gods in African religious beliefs. Such animals or objects or plants must have very special, mysterious qualities which endear them to the people and so deserve worship or veneration.

It is worthy of note here that each totem has some taboos guiding it. (Ngwu: 2006:10-11). Taboos which the Igbo call "*Aru*" or "*Nso ani*" (taboos against the earth goddess) and the Yoruba *Esse* or *Ewo* (abomination) mean "something set apart or sacred by religions customs or forbidden to certain persons or uses, of person, subject to a taboo (Webster: 1942:864) Ubrurhe (1986:45) sees taboos as negative sanction, a prohibition which if broken, no

human or supernatural Being mediates. The breaking of a taboo brings misfortunes, danger and the offender is exposed to the wrath of the divinity and the ancestors. To this end totems and taboos are seen as twin brothers whose placenta carries along the message of that which is forbidden on grounds of religions belief. The types of totem a community has is dependent on the conceived mystical qualities of such objects animals and plants and as such may include lions, tigers, elephants tortoise leopards iguanas crocodiles lizards, dogs, pisces (fish in aves-birds, mahogany, iroko, *nnunnu ebe*-tree, spenal stones, mountains (eg. Kilimanjaro or Everest), rivers, oceans etc. Such totems according to Quarcoopome are linked up to community's myth of creation (1987: 177). Taboos on the other hand could be murder, incest, adultery, stealing of tubers of yam, the meeting of two persons at a sacred road junction, a woman climbing a palm tree etc.

It is worthy to mention here that the breaking of a taboo is a serious offence against God, divinities, ancestors and even the entire people of the society since if the offender is not punished it will bring untold hardship catastrophe and disaster to the entire people. This was why even with his achievements, heroism and elevated position among Umuofia, Okonkwo was banished by his people for inadvertently shooting someone dead with his dane gun during the burial ceremony of Ogbuefi Ezeudu.

The Igbo communitarian spirit is such that if one finger gets soiled, it will affect the others. In other words if one looks askew at issues bothering on an infringement of a taboo, it could turn to affect such person or any member of his household. It was always better to shout it to the tree tops if noticed so that the problem will be nipped at the bud. To this end, it becomes crystal clear that totems and taboos are outstanding elements in African Traditional Religion which cannot be ignored. Therefore the observance of these don'ts keep the state in a peaceful and harmonious relationship with the sacred realm. This practice is still in vogue among the various ethnic groups in Africa.



Tiger – One of the Totemic animals used for worship among African tribes.



Encarta Encyclopedia, E.R. Degginger/Animals Animals

Python – As a Totem



Tortoise – As a Totem.



Guinea fowl – As a Totem.



Iguana Lizard – As a Totem.



Iroko tree – As a Totem



Mahogany tree – As a Totem.

At this juncture it will be relevant to point out that one might go on and on to enumerate how religion is deeply affecting the lives of Africans in private and public circles which critically demonstrate that this stubborn discipline, this inseparable, intertwined, dovetailed area of African life – RELIGION CAN NEVER BE LOST TO ANTIQUITY OR EVER SUBMIT TO THE CHOKING, SUFFOCATING CHALLENGES OF IMPORTED RELIGIONS – CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM AND THEIR CONCOMITANT SNARES AND DELUSIONS THAT ARE REGULARLY SEEKING SURREPTIOUSLY FOR ITS EXTINCTION OR DEMISE.

MY RESEARCH AREAS AND INPUTS AS AN ACADEMIC

In 1986, when we (class of 36) were told to choose project titles, I was a bit uncertain about the area of religion to take to as I virtually had penchant for all the areas. At a point after deep rumination on the matter, I settled for African Traditional Religion and to start from home, I chose to write on “The Future of African Traditional Religion in Obollo Eke” in the Old Isi-uzo L.G.A of Anambra State. The choice was borne out of the fact that charity should start at home and that due to the looming presence of Christianity in our environment, I felt that sooner than later there will be a total eclipse of African beliefs and practices. The research provided me the opportunity of interacting with both the traditional practitioners and Christian in which I discovered that most African Christians were just but paying lip service to the Christianity.

Some Christian faithful then were attending masses and services with a view to trying priests (Christians) and testing the strength of their “Jesus”. Some traditional practitioners confessed that one would not just put all their eggs in one basket. This was a pointer to the syncretic nature of their worship. For instance the oldest man of a family (Onyishi) who is converted to Christianity will apparently drop his paraphernalia of worship, stop attending to his shrines and grooves but when major festivals like *Onwa ano*, *Onwa asaa* etc are to be observed, he will go back to offer sacrifices to his ancestors and keep fervently to the rituals to avoid incurring their wrath. Such a convert might go in for a confession thereafter but next year when a similar event comes up he still falls back. This shows that no matter the circumstance the African Religious practitioner is not only a “notorious” believer but finds it extremely difficult if not impossible to severe relationship with his God and gods.

It was also discovered according to Idowu that one or two things had happened to African culture (religion) over the years of interaction with Christianity. These he said were the problems of adaptation or extinction (1973). African Traditional Religion in this situation chose the path of cultural adaptation in which, naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, Ozo title

taking/Chieftaincy, death rituals, festivals, sale of traditional religious objects, erection of effigies and other traditionally related religious practices were rife and alive inspite of the Christian presence in Obollo Eke as early as 1949. It should therefore be noted that the people still love, adhere and practice their traditional religion proudly. This is the resilient nature of our traditional religion which will continue uninterruptedly for years to come. This original research was the beginning of beginnings as I chuckled over it during and after my field trips and told my mates that my experience no doubt had lit my burning desire for research. Shortly after my service and employment as a lecturer in College of Education Eha-Amufu now Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, in 1988, I enrolled in 1989 for Masters degree and after my course work I chose yet another topic entitled “The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion: A case Study of Obollo Eke and Nsukka Environs”.

As would be discovered later, my research interests at the onset and even much later dwelt more on the despised, vulnerable, and less privileged groups. The reason simply arose out of a psychological mindset which naturally informs one who is watching a football match or any duel involving parties to naturally take side in the game or duel based on his spontaneous and subconscious personal reasons. I really have interest in the disadvantaged whose lots should be catered and cared for to enhance an equilibrium balance.

The major aim of the choice of my M.A Dissertation arose from the suppression, oppression, subjugation, and humiliation women faced in our pre-colonial Nsukka environment and so in the 20th century, the practice would not just continue unabated inspite of the modern trends and issues. This idea of suppression was clearly pointed by Achebe (1981:10) when he expressed very patriarchal lordship of Okonkwo in his voice when Ikemefuna was brought into his household and the consequent withdrawal from further talk by the mother of Nwoye.

Achebe thus wrote;

When Okonkwo brought him home that day, he called his most senior wife and handed him over to her. He belongs to the clan, he told her to look after him. Is he staying long with us? She asked. Do what you are told woman, Okonkwo thundered and stammered. When did you become one of the Ndichies of Umuofia? And so Nwoye's mother took Ikemefuna to her hut and asked no more questions. (P.10).

Suffice the above conversation to mean that my early research took into consideration some of the ill – treatments women suffered under men simply because they are women.

In that dissertation, it was revealed that women are witty and hardworking but because of the patriarchal system, they get suppressed, become melancholic and withdrawn whenever it came to issues where men have to participate. The work expositively showcased their customary roles in the fields of religion, social, economic, political and informal education of children. They really had outstanding roles to play in the traditional religious culture of Nsukka people.

A leap further brought me into my Ph.D programme which had to last quite unusually because my mentor Late Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ifemegbunam Ifesieh took ill and was no longer very active to supervise my work. I had to write to Postgraduate School and Prof O. U. Kalu was now assigned to me as my new supervisor. The topic I had already gone very far with was changed and in earnest I started with the fresh topic entitled, “Children in Igbo Imaginations and Rituals: A case study of Northern Igboland”. I was very properly drilled and exposed to a wide range of literature in this regard. Following the Biblical assessment of both women and children especially in the events of the feeding of the four and five thousand where only men were counted leaving off women and children, (Matthew 14:21 and 15:38 respectively) and given also their insignificant place in most communities in Africa, it became exigent to explore this area of research to unravel the reasons behind their second class categorization. One of tasks in this research was how to define who the child was as among the Igbo

there is a relative derivation of who a child is. This was why the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1911:136) used the term child for the offspring of human beings, generally below the age of puberty, the term is correlative of parents and applies to either sex through some early dialectical uses point to a certain restriction to a girl. In this thesis, one was able to anchor especially in consideration of United Nations definition on the point that a child is an unborn or newly born human being, boy or girl, son or daughter that fall within the range of 0 – 13 years. At this juncture permit me to present the abstracts/ summaries and sources of my major researches especially my Ph.D thesis and major Internationally rated journal and other published articles.

To these we turn

“Children in Igbo Imaginations and Rituals : A Case Study of Northern Igboland”.

C.O.T Ugwu

Abstract: The main thrust of this study centres on how cultural factors and indigenous knowledge determine how people perceive children and respond to broad based efforts to affirm the rights of the child. Even though, there are earlier works on children but none of such works had made any in depth analysis of children in a smaller unit like the one on the Northern Igbo of Nsukka and Udi-Agbaja group of villages. The work has shown how cultural configuration or homogeneity and ecological factors could inform people’s attitudes and perceptions of the child. In dealing with the study of Children in Igbo Imagination and Rituals among the Northern Igbo sub-culture area, the child was considered to be any human being between the ages of 0-13years. This age range has been so chosen because they are the more dependent, vulnerable age set. It therefore means that from 14 years and above, one can fend for himself independent of parents or guardians. The work therefore took the following underlisted pattern into consideration; (1) Examining the ecological profile of this area and doing historical study of the people to elicit the cultural similarities. (2) Analysing the child in the context of common Northern Igbo names, language, proverbs and other modes of expression common

to the people. (3) Seeing the child in rituals of life crisis and doing the same along sex roles. (4) Children were also examined in masking traditions. (5) The rights of the child and the different faces of child abuse were discussed and analysed and recommendations made to better their welfare. The work which made use of the phenomenological culture area approach achieved a lot as the researcher is from the area and was able to conduct oral interviews within the scope of study without much difficulty in language translation. The work was however able to achieve the following results: - (i) That children are important in this religious eco-theatre as evidenced in names given to them and the language expressions of this culture area. (ii) The work also revealed that the Northern Igbo environment of semi-Savannah vegetation shaped to a large extent the people's perception and attitudes towards child-rearing and ritual practices. (masks for instance). (iii) That the indigenous perception of children determine the people's response to the broad efforts of the larger Igbo society, the country and the International Communities and organisations at large to accord them their due, inalienable rights in order to reduce to an abysmal level the cases of child abuse. Social change no doubt has influenced tremendously the Northern Igbo perception of children and this has led to transformations and re-contextualization of ritual practices.

Source: Ph.D Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Cultural studies, U.N.N, 2001.

“Man and His Religion in a Contemporary Society”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Summary: Man who is the supreme product of creation has a unique relationship with the Creator (vertical) and with his fellow human beings (horizontal). Here, attempts were made to examine the history, common elements in most world religions, contemporary issues in religion such as ecumenism and dialogue, proliferation of churches and religious freedom. The myths of creation among some selected West African tribes and the conceptualization of some deities that were seen to be in control of

human actions were also x-rayed. The positive and negative influences of imported religions viz; Christianity and Islam, the role of religion in our society past and present were also treated, all to the benefit of the homo sapiens. In 2002, the book was reviewed and updated in consonance with what obtains in academia and the issue of continuity in change with focus on the Pentecostal churches was included in this particular study. In this section, it was highlighted that, the mainline Churches namely Catholics, the Anglicans and the Presbyterians were as conservative enough as not to allow their adherents engage in Bible study, speak in tongues, clap, seek for miracles and give testimonies but on a closer observation that their population was decimating, they had a u-turn and such bodies or movements like the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion arose to satisfy the spiritual yearnings of the ever-miracle seeking members of their congregation. In this sense, there came the idea of the continuity in change.

Source: *Man and His Religion in a Contemporary Society*, MCK Publishers, Nigeria 2002.

“African Traditional Religion: A Prologemenon”

C.O.T Ugwu and L.E. Ugwueye

Summary: Considering the dearth of literature on the subject of African Religion and the threats of extinction by modernity, attempts were made to provide meaning, origin, sources of data collection, and the reasons for the study of African Religion. The major structure/features that consist of belief in God, divinities spirits, ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine were discussed. The African understanding of death, hereafter and ancestor hood, concepts of sacrifice, festivals and the role of African religion in nation building were also high points in this treatise. Finally the co-authored book without being judgmental, examined the reasons for the probable continuity and discontinuity of African Traditional Religion in the face of modern challenges.

Source: *African Traditional Religion: A Prologemenon*, Merit International Publications, Lagos, Nigeria, 2004.

“Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspectives”

C.O.T Ugwu (editor)

Summary: This edited work on the cankerworm called corruption in twenty three chapters of properly edited materials from the arts, humanities, education and the social sciences examined the multifaceted nature of corruption in the Nigerian nation. While some of the contributors saw it from the perspective of causality, forms and shapes, others dwelt more on the prevalence of the problem in government (Federal, State and Local Government) Educational, Social, Economic and Religious institutions. Corruption in sports, the military in corruption, the Normalcy of Vice in Nigeria, the Old Testament and traditional nuances were also examined. This work has filled the gap in literature on the subject matter as most of the contributions did not only give their essay radical, fearless approach but were point black in condemning those on the corridor of power and other stakeholders who cannot forestall the ugly trend that has tarnished the Nation’s image locally and internationally.

Source: *Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspectives Chuka Edu. Publishers, Nigeria 2002.*

“Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences”

C.O.T. Ugwu (Editor in Chief)

Abstract: In also an attempt to provide academic leadership, and to encourage scholars with burning desire to publish, this journal was born. In the maiden edition Vol. I 2007, published by Academic and Publication Initiative for the Advancement of Human Knowledge, articles from over thirty scholars from various disciplines were published on a range of issues bothering both on national and international concerns. The gap bridged by the floating of this journal is not quantifiable.

Source: *Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. I Centre for Academic Research and Publication for the Advancement of Human Knowledge, UNN, A P Publishers, Nigeria, 2007.

“Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences”

C.O.T. Ugwu (Editor in Chief)

Summary: In this 2008 edition, there was a very circumspective peer review of twenty – seven articles submitted by scholars from various disciplines. This second volume of the journal published the following titles namely “Scientific cosmogenesis: An Evaluation of the Critical Issues of the Origin of the Cosmos”, “The Philosophico-Religious Foundation of Democratic leadership in traditional Igbo Society”, “Christianity and the Welfare of the Physically and Mentally Challenged in the Nigerian Society”, “Hyperfeminism and Biblical Christianity”, “Reflection on Irreligious ways of Living of Nigerians in the Third Millenium”, “Improving the Traditional Healthcare in Nigeria”, “Lessons from Traditional Chinese Medicine”, “The Judiciary and Democracy in Nigeria: Implications for National Development”, “HIV/AIDS and Stigmatization: A Religious Discourse”, “Work Ethics and the Public Service: Towards a culture of Service Delivery in Nigerian Public Administration”, “Oil and Security in Nigeria : Matters Arising from the Boom and Doom of Oil”, “Nigeria is a Secular Society but her Citizens are Religious”, “Historical Background to the Discourse on African Identity”, “Social Services Available to

Victims and Perpetrators of Child Abuse in Nigeria”, “Psychological Empowerment: The Key to Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace”, “Christian Religion and Nation Building in Nigeria”, “Revisiting the “Da Vinci” Heresy”, “Religion: A Viable Instrument for Social Reforms in a Globalized Nigeria: A Case for Islam”, “A leap into Socialism and the Crisis in Marxism: A Critique of Nkrumah’s Consciencism”, “East Asia’s Rise and The Possibility of Intra-Regional Wars”, “A Discourse Analysis of Realists And Idealists Predictions”, “E-Registration and Democratic Process in Nigeria: Challenges in Post 2007 Nigeria”, “Moral Education in the Millenium Development Goal of Qualitative Universal Basic Primary Education in Ebonyi State”, “Advocacy for Nutritional Health, Challenges to Effective Administration of Armed Robbery Law in Kogi State”, Implications of Infrastructural Facilities Provision in the “Implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Public Primary Institutions in Nigeria, Evaluation of Available Educational Facilities in Primary Schools in Quality Assurance in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria”, “Bride Wealth and Western Rights in Nigeria: The Psychological Dimension” and finally “Culture of Democracy in Nigeria and the Challenges for Sustainable Development”.

Source: *Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol. 2, Centre for Academic Research and Publications Initiative for the Advancement of Human Knowledge. UNN 2008 1 – 345.

“Corruption on Our Streets: Prostitution, Acts of Indiscipline”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Nigeria is experiencing a period of serious threat of extinction by corruption. Corruption is (of persons, their actions) immoral, depraved, dishonest especially the offering and accepting of bribes. It therefore, implies that any action by a member of a society, capable of denigrating already approved moral pattern of life is said to be an act of corruption. In every sphere of life of a Nigerian there is a wide spate of corruptible practices among the people. The major one denting and soiling our image locally and

internationally is prostitution. On a larger scale, corruption can be seen at the family, peer group, the school and even in the church. Poverty and our cultural orientation had been seen as the major causative factors. Corruption especially prostitution has dealt a serious havoc on the Nigerian populace. The church has through various strategies such as preaching, organization of workshops, seminars, symposia and conference on anti corruption, return of schools to missionaries, prayer, open air campaigns etc has made some positive contributions. At the end, some recommendations were made to forestall this cankerworm.

Source: *The Millennium Hope for the Afflicted in Nsukka Diocese*, A SODEJUPE publication, Nsukka, Nigeria 2000. 77 – 88.

“Religious Pluralism and Sustainable Environment: The Nigerian Situation”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The paper focuses on the challenges of environmental sustainability in the light of the pluralistic religious nature of Nigeria. Using a critical qualitative analytical method, it was found that respective practices of the major religions in Nigeria-African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, have been contributing to the deterioration of the natural environment in the country. Hence, the researcher, among other things, recommends a collectively unified religious effort towards conservation and sustenance of the country’s environment.

Source: *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 4 No 16* MCSER Publishing Rome – Italy, Dec. 2013. 55 – 66.

“Tourist Attraction: A Study of the Christian Religious Pilgrimage Experience”

C.O.T. Ugwu and Onyekachi G. Chukwuma

Abstract: This paper is a comparative study of tourism and pilgrimage with emphasis on Christian religious pilgrimage. In contemporary scholarship, pilgrimage is considered an integral part of tourism basically because both pilgrimage and tourism share much in common of which the major is that they involve travelling

to places of interest and attraction. Little wonder, the terms; religious tourism and pilgrimage are often interchangeably used. The paper highlights the points of convergence in both concepts and also examines the problems and prospects of Christian pilgrimage as a tourist attraction. Notably, some societies have witnessed tremendous socio-economic growth as a result of the activities of Christian pilgrims. Understandably, this study employs the comparative phenomenological method and the findings indicate that Christian pilgrimage has contributed significantly to the development of tourism in various cities where holy sites are located and obviously promises a bright prospect owing to the federal governments' involvement in sponsoring Christians to Jerusalem and other sacred spots.

Source: *Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences (NJSS)* Vol. 9 No. 1 Jan – June, 2013, Nigeria 23 – 41.

“Christianity and the Welfare of the Physically and Mentally Challenged in the Nigerian Society.”

C.O.T. Ugwu and Nkechinyere Onah.

Abstract: In virtually every society, the physically and mentally challenged are found. But the care and attention given to them vary from society to society. This variation could partly be due to the fact that the level of development is not the same in all the countries of the world. In developed countries much attention is given to them quite unlike the underdeveloped countries like Nigeria where most of them are abandoned to their own fate leading to beggarly and melancholic lifestyles. To this end, this sorry and pitiable state of the physically and mentally challenged demand our attention in this our contemporary world. Therefore, this paper focused on how Christian religion through church activities could assist in uplifting the condition of the physically and mentally challenged. Furthermore, recommendations are made for policy reforms which will involve the active participation of the church, government and other stake holders to improve the welfare of this important group in the Nigerian society.

Source: *Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 2*
Centre for Academic Research and Publications Initiative for the
Advancement of Human Knowledge, Nigeria, 2008. 32 – 43.

“Religion and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Religion, the world over has been both an agent of peace and crisis. The Nigerian nation would have experienced quite unimaginable years of truce, tranquility and congenial atmospheres as in the pre-colonial days save for the crisis generated by the two main and missionary foreign religions viz Christianity and Islam. Under the influence of politics, the conflict and consternation they have unleashed on lives, property and general progress of the populace cannot be quantified. Quite interestingly it has been observed that political crisis, ethnicity, racial prejudice, favouritism, illiteracy, government support, religious fanaticism, unguarded utterances from acclaimed religious leaders and host of other reasons have directly and indirectly occasioned religious conflicts in Nigeria. It is in view of these known causative factors that this paper is poised to proffer religious solutions with a view to providing lasting peace and unity in Nigeria. The successful adoption and application of the panacea will no doubt provide succour and solace to the seething Nigerian population.

Source: *International Journal of Religion and Philosophy, Vol. 1*
No 2 Makurdi, Nigeria. 2007, 81 – 93.

“Achieving Sustainable Development In Nigeria: Religious Dimension”

C.O.T. UGWU

Abstract: Long after independence in 1960, the issue of sustainable development has become very crucial. In a third world country like Nigeria, myriads of factors keep on militating against sustainable development. Nigeria has been facing a lot of crisis emerging from political imbroglio, ethnicity, bribery and corruption, depressed economic conditions and abysmally low level of poverty. It is these problems hampering the sustainability of development that religion as an institution is out to address with a view to enhancing sustainable development in Nigeria.

Source:*International Journal of Research and Development Vol II No 1* Nigeria 24 – 34, 2007.

“The Contributions of Traditional Religious Leaders to the Igbo Pre-Colonial Society”

C.O.T Ugwu

Abstract: The pre-colonial Igbo society had a sound religious culture that was hemmed in by able leadership of a theocratic class of men and women. These exemplary leaders, were of two categories namely those who received informal training and were subsequently installed during a public ritual ceremony and the others who were also initiated and installed into the guild of the religious experts and by so are recognized and commissioned to carry out their legitimate duties in the society. They were responsible for the smooth running of the society as they worked assiduously to ensure that there was cordial relationships at both the horizontal and vertical levels in the society. Each group of leaders tackled squarely, matters that will bring the members to a point of harmony, peace and equilibrium with the sacred order. In this manner the religious leaders frowned seriously at any act that will strain, coarsen and create a wall of difference between the living and the dead. This paper is therefore out to re-examine the contributions made by such religious leaders as traditional priests, medicine men and ritual elders in the pre-colonial Igbo Society with a view to recommending the incorporation of such salient qualities into our new religious culture. This will promote peace and order in our present day religious life.

Source: *Journal of African Religion and Culture*, Vol 6, No 1. 2006 Nigeria. 70 – 80.

“Religion and Human Stress in the Nigerian Society”

C.O.T. Ugwu and Ogueche, A.O.

Abstract: This work focused on the relevance of religion in human stress situation. It is common knowledge that nobody is free from one stressful situation or the other considering the vagaries and vicissitudes of life but what matters is how the individual involved handles it. The work also examined types of stress and stress management. The researchers were of the opinion that stress which is inevitable in human life should not break man. They emphasized that man as a contingent being should struggle to live up to his challenges without subjecting himself to undue stress that can affect his being. As a matter of last resort, man as a *homo-religiosus* should incline himself absolutely on the “Suprimus”, - that is God Almighty for solutions to his innumerable problematic and stressful situations in life.

Source: *Journal of Arts and Culture Vol 6. No 2. 2006. Nigeria* 110 – 119.

“Continuity of the Ritual Process: Children in Masquerade Tradition among the Nsukka Northern Igbo People”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Masquerade societies in a traditional Igbo society have their emphasis normally on patriliney. As a male dominated society, children and women are usually out of the scheme of activities when it comes to masquerading. This is predominantly arising as a result of the secret and clandestine nature of these masquerade cults and covertly for the protection of the chauvinistic roles of the

males. Surprisingly and quite interestingly, children in Igbo society apart from the roles of carrying cane bundles, collecting and honestly accounting for kola nuts (money) offered to the maskers also enjoy the rare privilege of “an - after - the - exit performance”. Suffice it to say that when the periods of the return, in dwelling and exit of Igbo adult masquerades are over, children still go on to sustain the tempo and gusto of festivals as if the adult masquerades are still performing in the community. It is necessary at this point to investigate these roles children play and the impact it has in both entertainment and in the maintenance of peace in the Igbo society with specific reference to Nsukka of the Northern Igbo group of villages.

Source: Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Maiden Edition, Vol. 1, 2007 Nigeria

“Religion and the Development of Human Values in Nigeria”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The Nigerian nation is enmeshed in a cesspool of corruption, moral decadence, political instability, social unrest and above all a degradation of human values. Our rights and privileges are continually abused and trampled upon to the dismay of individual personalities and government agencies. No laudable developmental goals can definitely thrive in this insecure and unwholesome environment. Given the enormity of the helplessness and despondence, Nigerians are left in, there is the immediacy, urgency and exigency to look insightfully into the essential human values and their characteristic features. This will be drawn from

our enriched religious culture with a view to recommending how religion can enhance the sustenance and development of good human values. Given also that Nigeria is a pluralistic society the work shall attempt to grapple with these decaying socio-cultural problems from the lens of the three major religions in Nigeria viz the Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam.

Source:*Journal of Religion and Society. Vol 1 No 1 2006. Nigeria* 18 – 27.

“Inhibitory Religious Practices Against Women in Igbo Society”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The Igbo society is a male-dominated society. Women are to be seen but not to be heard. These positions are no doubt accentuated by traditions, norms and values of these people. These cultural factors, which in themselves are echoed by the religious practices of the people, have lent weight to the kinds of treatment to which women were subjected. They range from mere male chauvinism, to other reasons that accord more recognition and cultural empowerment of men over and against women. Noteworthy also in this paper is the overwhelming influence of modernism on these suppressive tendencies of our religion and culture, which to a reasonable degree has released the women folk from the shackles, and manacles of inhibition. To this end, all hands are to be on deck to ensure that both genders should be given their pride of place to enable us to collectively move the Igbo society forward.

Source: *Journal of the Department of Philosophy and Religion*, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. 2006. 77 – 83.

“The Eclipse Of African Identity: Religion On Lens Of The Camera”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The African culture is rich, vivacious, dynamic and stable to a large extent. The people themselves have an enviable identity made feasible by this cultural heritage such that over several millennia of this continent’s existence it has provided the desired protection, succour and solace to its citizenry. The ecosystem in which these forces interplayed, and interacted symbiotically was conducive, temperate and auspicious for human existence. It is against this backdrop that this paper aims at examining the religious beliefs and practices of the Africans prior to the advent of European Christianity and Islamic religion. Surprisingly enough some of religio-cultural practices of Africans began to give way for the much more modern approaches to worship and practice of the new religious movements. It is these areas of undue influences and impacts that have consequently eclipsed our own traditional modes of worship that this paper has as its main thrust with a view to proffering solutions for mutual co-existence among these faiths.

Source: Essence Interdisciplinary International Journal. Globalization and African Identity, Vol 5, 2007. Nigeria 67 – 73.

“Reforming Nigeria: Focus On Gender And Religion”

Ibenwa, C.N. and Ugwu, C.O.T.

Abstract: The urgency and critical need for reform in our present Nigeria society is to say the least indisputable. Nigeria is really undergoing evolutionary stages on her developmental path. To this end, it becomes exigent that such vital nodes like gender inequality and crisis arising from our religious beliefs and practices will be addressed. It is therefore against this backdrop that the researchers are poised and equipped with facts to grapple with the age long problem of discriminatory and inhibitory practices against women in our society, which had arisen from our cultural practices. Again, the Nigerian nation has been embattled since the colonial era based on religious differences most often as a result of the battle between Christianity and Islam and at some other times, it becomes a direct clash between these two afore mentioned imported religions and the indigenous traditional religion. These two major issues of gender and religion require re-engineering, reconstruction and reformation to make Nigeria move on smoothly on its organic path of progress and development. These will be tackled in this paper.

Source: Journal of Social and Policy Issues Vol. 3 No1 International Research and Development Institute, 2006. Calabar, Nigeria 66 – 75.

“African Traditional Religion and Culture: Relevance in Reconciliation in Nigeria”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Nigeria as a nation is in state of crisis, which has almost defied all possible solutions. This work has its focal point on the lasting solution traditional religion and culture can proffer to Nigeria's social political, economic and religious problems. The first part of the paper examined the key terminologies and their meanings. The preceding sub-heading established the major similarities between traditional religion and culture. These elements or traits were seen as the basis for their effective role performance in the Nigerian society. The main thrust was on the relevance of traditional religion and culture in the reconciliation process in Nigeria. Suffice it to say that for the nation Nigeria to be in peace, harmony and on a progressive land, requires the constant guidance and bridle by traditional religion and culture. Finally, the paper ended with a recommendation that faith, obedience and loyalty are the auspicious conditions under which this role can effectively be played.

Source: *Journal of African Religion and Culture*. Vol 5, No 1, 1999. Nigeria 17 – 21.

“Igbo Traditional Religion In The Inculcation of Moral Values And Education”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The relevance of traditional religion in the inculcation of moral values and education among the Igbo of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This paper has been able to elicit some of the traditional moral values emerging from their religion. The inculcation of these values in the young ones at the early stage of childhood development speaks volume of the importance of traditional moral instruction. It was also noted that in the inculcation of these morals and education there were agents whose responsibility were to impart knowledge unto the younger ones in order to have a peaceful and harmonious society that will take the entire nation to greatness. In conclusion, it is clear that the recognition of these values in their culture and the readiness of the agents to inculcate them have all gone a long way to create an enabling environment for growth of moral education and instruction among the young ones in Igbo land.

Source: *International Journal of Arts and Technology Education*, Vol. 2, No1, Nigeria, 2002. 116 – 123.

“African Traditional Religion in the Security of Human Lives and Property”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Man from the day of creation has been very conscious and desirous of his survival in his ecosystem. This is so much so because as the most intelligent of God’s creatures, he is aware of the many insurmountable challenges facing him, some appear physical while others are spiritual. In view of these, he devices several means or strategies to enhance the security of his life and property. The security of his life is sought for through so many avenues to ensure that he not only lives but aims to live to a ripe old age. This quest for ancestral attainment of ripe old age is no doubt a prerequisite for acceptance in the ancestral world. It is therefore the thrust of this work that these various strategies via the spectrum of religion are examined with a view to recommending survival strategies here in this mundane world of nothing.

Source: *Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Maiden Edition, 2007. 21 – 33.

“The ‘Cleansed’ Society: The Igbo Traditional Religious Attitude Towards Corruption”

C.O.T. UGWU

Abstract: The traditional societies were not per se sacrosanct. There were elements of corruption here and there. However the citizens abhorred, condemned and frowned seriously at any corruptible behaviour. Corruption which has to do with deprivation and utter neglect of justice, love, charity and fairness was not loudly pronounced in our traditional societies because of the inseparable attachment the people had with religion which permeated all spheres of their lives and made them disassociate themselves from anything evil or corrupt. The traditional practitioners had very close affinity to God, whom they approached through pantheons of spiritual forces. They also had a very clear idea of the living dead – the ancestors whom they venerated from time to time and behaved in a manner that appeared to suggest that their conducts morally and otherwise were constantly being evaluated or assessed by the ancestors. Given this background, this paper will be making a clarion call for all to be more religiously conscious and adopt a life of moral rectitude as those in our traditional societies in order to get our present society cleansed of its corrupt decaying qualities.

Source: Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspectives, *Chuka Edu Publishers, Nigeria, 2002. 191 – 199.*

“Forms of Corruption in Nigeria: The Way Forward”

C.O.T Ugwu

Abstract: The Nigerian society is in a very serious state of moral, social, political, economic, legal and educational decay. Corruption has already made our foundation frail, weak and woolly. In the religions scene, Nigeria is beset with daunting doctrinal skirmishes and these have led to further splits and divisions. There are a lot of charlatans, and cheats in the Nigerian religious landscape who claim to have the “finger of God” anointing them. From the economic angle, there are here and there Nigerians who are

wallowing in abject poverty and penury while a few of their leaders are brandishing before the poor the products of their loot. In the business circle proper, there are imitations of any kind meant to deceive the gullible public. We have Bournvita or Bonita instead of Bournvita, Maltius in place of Naltius, Boast instead of Boost etc. Corruption has sneaked into our social life as we practice nude culture as a result of the early exposure to pornographic films. This will trail the child to adulthood and cause more havoc to our younger children. In the political scene, thuggery, rigging, assassination and all worth not obtain. This has contributed to our poor image locally and internationally. Educationally Nigeria has also failed as our products are empty and cannot deliver. Our civil service and security network are porous and can be beaten by anybody even with a toy gun. There were suggestions as to the way out of this quagmire at the end.

Source: Corruption in Nigeria: Critical Perspectives. Chuka Edu Pub. Nigeria 2002 16 – 28.

“Healing the Wounds of the Nation: African Religion in the Enhancement of Unity in Nigeria”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The Nigerian nation has since after our independence in 1960 witnessed serious moral, political, economic, social and religious crises. This no doubt is emerging from the lack of trust, peace, harmony and unity among the citizens. The heterogeneous nature of the country, with the multi ethnic groups and coupled with the colonial government’s style of leadership were all accountable for this yawning gap in achieving a lasting national peace. Africans have been known to be a united group of people whose communitarianism, deeply religious nature and humanitarianism had sustained unity as opposed to western materialism which more or less encouraged individualism. The strict adherence and obedience to all parts of the structure of African Traditional Religion enhances unity among them. The belief in God, divinities, spirits, practice of magic and medicine, and ancestorhood which formed the structure has helped to

maintain peace and tranquillity in Africa. African religion unlike other foreign religions are not only receptive to other religious cultures but most importantly amenable. They can accommodate and look askew to avoid generating crisis. In traditional African religion, the dominant values include love, promotion for the family and the family name, filial piety, honour, and respect not only to parents but also to all elders as well as men and women of honour. These of course promote and enhance unity at the microcosmic family lineage and village levels and consequently the entire nation. Festivals which bring people together for merriment is also another element in Africa that helps to ensure unity among the people. At the end some constructive recommendations were made to ensure that the religion will continue to offer its quota towards the unity of the Nigerian nation.

Source: Issues in the Practice of Religion, National Association for the study of Religion (NASR) Nigeria, 2006, 267 – 274.

“Sources and Enforcement of Morality in Igbo Traditional Society”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: The critical place of morality in Igbo traditional society cannot be overemphasized. Prior to the advent of Christianity and western culture, the Igbo had an enviable moral consciousness embedded in their religion and culture. These moral elements were enshrined in their code of ordinances, mores and lores which were as a matter of fact decreed by the land. They were called “Omenani” or “Odinani”. From this backdrop, there were duties assigned as to who should be looked upon as a model, of what the Igbo moral principles should be as well as who should ensure that they are religiously and devotedly protected. In this paper, God, divinities, spiritual forces, the ancestors, sacred specialists – Medicine men, priests, rainmakers, bone setters, diviners, seers etc (those who do not short change members of their community), chiefs, eldest men (Onyishi) are all the sources and (models) of morality among the Igbo. Given the sources of moralities as enumerated above, the next level is who are then eminently

qualified to enforce them based on the provisions of the ordinances. In this article the family both nuclear and extended can enforce morality. The ancestors, some divinities in whose position oaths can be administered, the masquerade institution, covenant rituals and our traditional religious leaders have all been identified as the enforcers of morality among the Igbo. At the end some recommendations have been made to preserve our moral elements which are the major ingredients of our religion.

Source: Religion, Morality and West African Society – Proceedings of the West African Association of Theological Institution (WAATI), Nigeria, 2000 114 – 129

“The Changing Roles of Woman In Igbo Society: Implication For Primary Education”.

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Before now, the major roles of women were concentrated on the kitchen and training of children at home. They were to be seen and not to be heard. They were suppressed and so were not expected to appear in the public domain. This was the feature of a patriarchal system where men dominated over women and children in virtually every sphere of life. Today, based on the influences of modernity especially the influence of education there is a shift of emphasis from their old domestic roles to the larger space of participation in religious matters where some of them are ordained ministers who preach to both men and women. The old conservative position did not give such room as women may not be clean all through any month of the year to appear publicly to interact with people especially titled men in our community. This position has been debunked, dismissed and dropped. Women have also been seen in social, political, and educational circles performing very wonderful and commendable roles. We have on record the mother of Ransome Kuti who was the first lady to drive a car in Nigeria, and Allele Williams was also the first female vice chancellor in Nigeria. She was the Vice Chancellor of University

of Benin. For the caring, character moulding and strict roles of women, they have been able to prepare their children for primary education and so improved these children's life style tremendously.

Source: *The Nigerian Primary Education System: Trends, Issues and Strategies for Improvement*, Vol. 2 No 1, APQEN Nigeria, 1991, 39 – 49.

“Integrating the People: Igbo Traditional Religion as an Agent of Socialization”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Prior to the advent of the European missionaries who christianized the whole of Africa, (Igbo inclusive) the people had enjoyed a high degree of spirituality based on their indigenous religious beliefs and practices. In this paper, attempt is made to see how the traditional Igbo religion has through numerous rituals and other religious practices brought the people together, bound them as a social unit. These rituals were examined through Gennep's four rites of passage namely birth, puberty, adulthood and death rites. In addition Igbo traditional festivals and masquerading traditions also showed high evidences of integration which are occasioned by religion. These and more were treated in this paper with some recommendations for improvement.

Source: *Social Sciences: Issues and Perspectives* Vol. 2. No 1, Great AP. Express. Nsukka Nigeria, 2006.

“Contributions of Christian Religion Towards Economic Emancipation in Nigerian Society”

C.O.T. Ugwu

Abstract: Economic emancipation has to do with setting free from control the development and regulation of the material resources of a community or nation. The Nigerian economy is in shambles as poverty and unemployment have ravaged the entire landscape. The Christian religion especially the Roman Catholic mission had supplied medicine to households (means of sustaining the people physically and economically) as a regular means of winning

“friends” whom to convert. The paper explored the economic state of the nation from pre-colonial period through colonial to post-colonial periods and noted that in the pre-colonial period the people’s major economic resources were based on farming and its related activities and in the colonial period there were excavation from different sites of mineral products which improved their economy. Oil was also another source as the colonial masters had started drilling within the period. This period was much characterized by the moral teachings of the missionaries aimed at controlling the avarice in man. Today, Nigerians have exhibited an unhealthy attitude which are reflective of an even deeper malaise namely: lack of commitment to a viable moral base and the consequent lack of moral integrity. It is in response to these economically associated problems that Christian religion through loan schemes constituted co-operative societies, which have really helped Nigerians. The Society for Development of Justice and Peace (SODEJUPE) programme, NALT-NUSHO an Anglican International Organization based in America have all done well in cushioning the effect of economic burdens on Nigerians. Recommendations were also made as a way of providing solutions to the problem.

Source: *African Journal of Biblical Studies* published by Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies. (NABIS). Vol. XIII No 1 & 2, 1998 Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.

The above inputs were made feasible because I fervently believe that I had the calling in my discipline coupled with the fact that I had very right students who put me to challenge in both classrooms and in our numerous research activities. I remember fondly how in one of my lecture sessions in the seminary at Spiritan School of Philosophy, Isieniu (after a discourse on reincarnation) a student asked me whether goats also reincarnate. I immediately replied that if at the epicenter of every religion is the being called man, then lower primates cannot reincarnate but only man. If I had answered otherwise it could have defeated the objective of my lecture as most goats look alike in shape but only vary in colours. These and many more such provoking but exciting experiences I

had and they really sharpened my intellectual adroitness and poised me more into prolific writing. Over the years here in the University I have really mentored so many and has so far in my records over 25 M.A degree graduates and 8 (eight) Ph.D's most of whom are lecturing in Nigerian Universities. The list below shows their Registration numbers, year of graduation and titles of **approved** thesis. To God be all the honour and adoration.

MY Ph.D SUPERVISEES IN UNN

S/N	NAME	REG. NO	TOPIC OF RESEARCH/STUDY	YEAR OF GRADUATION
1	Ogueche, Ambrose Obodoeze Ojiakor	PG/Ph.D/07/42616	The Church and Harmful Traditional Practices Against the Rights of Women among the Nsukka People of Nigeria.	October, 2007 Ph.D
2	Onah, Nkechinyere Gloria	PG/Ph.D/07/42468	The Prevalence of HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Enugu State, Nigeria: Exploring Gender, Cultural and Religious Perspectives.	April, 2008 Ph.D
3	Ugwueze Anthony Ifeanyi	PG/Ph.D/08/48606	Religion in a Scientific and Technological Era: The Nigerian Experience.	February, 2009 Ph.D

4	Ibenwa Christopher Ndubisi	PG/Ph.D/07/43768	Fanaticism and Religious Riots in Northern Nigeria: Its Implications for Societal Development.	June, 20 Ph.D
5	Aba Cyprian	PG/Ph.D/09/50657	African Eschatology: A Survey of the Igala Traditional Religion and Cultural Experience.	July, 20 Ph.D
6	Ojetayo Gabriel Kehinde	PG/Ph.D/08/48385	Survival of African Traditional Religion in a Pluralistic Religious Nigerian Society.	July, 20 Ph.D
7	Onwubiko Amaechi Jude	PG/MA – Ph.D/06/42106	The Apostolic Church and The Management of the Niger Delta Crisis in Gokhana – Land, 1931-2010	July, 20 Ph.D
8	Aneke Eric C.	PG/Ph.D/09/51231	Socio – Religious Significance of Ritual Horse or Cow Among the people of Nsukka Cultural Area of Igboland, Nigeria.	March, Ph.D

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Africans from time immemorial have been identified as a very religious people. They had a very strong belief in a monotheistic God as well as a pantheon of gods even long before the early European missionaries arrived with their own religious culture. Their religion then satisfied their spiritual yearnings and addressed

their problems. It was real to them and they lived it out. From cradle to the grave, Africans demonstrated quite profusely and copiously their inclination and attachment to their religion. It is noticeable in pregnancy and birth rituals, puberty, adulthood and death rituals, in their festivals, in their myths of creation, in their medical and healing practices, in the use of symbols and anthropomorphic images and of course in their conceptualization of totems and taboos. Even though these features were clearly written for those who cared to see and read, the missionary agents who encountered African culture had some prejudices and bias against African religious culture and condemned it in totality.

First they began by comparing notes in relation to a singular founder availability of creed or scripture, and the place of a reformer. They also went further to use opprobrious and depreciatory languages to address both the religion as well as adherents. They used such words like native, pagan, primitive, savage, heathen, idolatory, tribal, animism, juju, polytheism and many more such incomprehensible languages. They also in this regard demonstrate their superfluity of ignorance in most African languages like the Igbo in which most of the spellings they wrote were not only wrongly spelt but also pronounced wrongly. Such words like “*Chukwu*” was spelt as “*Tsukwu*”, “*Igbo*”, “*Ugwu*”, “*Igba*”, “*Akpu*”, “*Ogbu*” etc were pronounced as “*Ibo*”, “*Ugu*”, “*Iba*”, “*apu*”, “*obu*” respectively because of their inability to pronounce diphthongs.

This led so many Igbo authors astray as they felt that since such ideas were coming from their colonial masters and mentors they were the correct renditions to be followed. In addition to all the wrong hermeneutical approaches they gave to African Traditional Religion, culture and society, they also stated without mincing words that African (belief in) God was “otiose”, “comatose”, “incertus”, “absconditus”. These concepts have been debunked and the correct place of African belief in God properly delineated. African God in the first place is the same Universal God worshipped by both the Europeans and other races in other continents in the planet and so there is no exclusivity and

peculiarity in the strict sense of the usage of the African God or gods. Every religion has other divinities (no matter the appellation) who work in God's theocratic governance of the universe. Christianity believes in the divinity of Christ, the saints and angels who are God's messengers. The same applies to Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism etc.

To worsen this problem of lampooning our religion, our own African indigenous writers on religion joined the arm chair, etc European authors to bastardize our indigenous religion. Professor Nwoga, Ikenga –Metuh etc belong to this class. These were all done out of intimidation and fear of the colonial masters who could deny a particular colony then of independence for non-compliance or for any act of insubordination and obduracy. It was shortly after independence and due to the products of nationalistic movements that personalities like Zik and others dropped their English names and became as assertive as answering only but Igbo names that were more intelligible. Most English names we answer were claimed to be names of saints but their meanings we do not know.

Imagine such names like Beetle, Bottle, Green, Frog, Grogan, 'Lutz' etc. Why did we accept names like "Donatus", "Christopher", Lilian, Amanda etc. when we have better theophoric names like Ifeanyichukwu (nothing is above God), Chukwukadibia (God is greater than a Doctor (Orthodox and unorthodox)), Chimuanya (my God is alive or awake) etc. Given all the changes experienced by Africans it is the position of this lecture, that African Traditional Religion has come to stay as the reality of the existence of God and the gods even in the 21st century is loud, clear and indubitable.

Additionally, this lecture has been able to showcase my areas of research over the years from 1991 – till date and my inputs in academia. The summaries and abstracts of some of my research materials I had earlier presented in the preceding pages of this lecture.

Appreciations

I am immensely grateful to Almighty God whose protective hands had seen me through all these years of struggle and titanic barrages of experiences. It had not been easy from one class to the other, from youth service to employment, from marriage to procreation. God, I cannot thank you enough.

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My mother who is here deserves a national honour as a strict disciplinarian. She stirred all of us into hard work. She worked us up to sweep our large compound, sent us to fetch water early in the morning, drilled us through domestic work and instilled moral teachings in us. As a stern teacher, she did not spare the rod. I was particularly under her very regular beating especially when I broke my own earthen ware pot on my way back from our hilly, slippery stream – (*acho*) during the rainy seasons. Mama I salute you. You have really seen how your beating has elevated me to this position where I am teaching you today.

I am most appreciative of my beautiful wife who had toiled and moiled with me for over twenty years of our marriage and has now been branded “Mrs. Patience and Endurance”. She had been my strength and close sister in times of problems. I cannot thank God enough for the gift of this my flesh. I am proud of Somtochukwu (*Njom Obollo ee chee nu egwu*) and Kaosisochukwu (*Pingeleges*)

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I am very much indebted in gratitude to my Late elder sister Rebecca Angela Ugwu who assisted me quite immeasurabl during the pursuit of my career at both Secondary and University levels. May her gentle soul rest in peace.

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1982/83 when I also obtained it here in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. As a man whose magnanimity knows no bound, he insisted that he should purchase this Ph.D gown I am putting on now for me during my convocation and he really did. I salute you and your wives Ezinne Stella Ugwu (*nee Ugwuwarua*) and Daberechi Ugwu (*nee Nwogwugwu*) and members of your family.

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Madueme, Rev. Fr. Prof A. Icheoku, (Economics) Professors, P.C Onokala (Former Dean Faculty of the Social Sciences), I.A Madu (Dean Faculty of the Social Sciences) and Prof. Phil Ogbonna Eze (Geography), Professors Obasi Igwe, E.O. Ezeani (*Odina nwa*, Council Member), Jonah Onuoha – (Current Head of Department), A.M.N. Okolie, Ken Ifesinachi (Political Science), Rev. Fr. Prof. Ben. Eboh (Philosophy), Professors P.N. Ibeagha (Current Head of Department of Psychology) and Ifengwazi (Psychology), Professors Uzuegbunam, C.N. Oguonu (Associate Dean), Rose Onah, Fab. Onah, F.C. Okoli, C. Ofuebe (PALG), Professor Nkoli Ezumah (Social Work) and Professors E.U.M. Igbo (Chairman Faculty Curriculum Committee), Vero Okeke, E.E. Anugwom (Sociology and Anthropology) May the Almighty God continue to bless you all for the honour and support you gave to me during my tenure as the Dean of the Faculty.

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Umero, Umuokoliko and Umuasime relations I thank you all for attending this ceremony en masse.

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To my Ph.D Supervisees who have graduated I thank you. Your role in this ceremony cannot be quantified. Surely the Almighty God shall reward you all. These are Ogueche Ambrose Obodoeze Ojiakor, Onah Nkechinyere Gloria, Ugwueze Anthony Ifeanyi, Ibenwa Christopher Ndubisi, Aba Cyprian, Ojetayo Gabriel Kehinde, Onwubiko Amaechi Jude, Aneke Eric C.

To my Ph.D Supervisees at the verge of completion of their programme, I say may God guide you to the end. I very much also acknowledge the assistance of my M.A supervisees who had put in their best including their special appearance in uniform to grace this occasion.

Even though I had mentioned Profs D.N. Ezech and M.I. Okwueze the two of whom are key players in the history of my life, I need to add that while Prof. D.N. was the first to make a first class Honours degree in my town, I was the second and while he was the first Professor from UNN I was also the second in position. On the other hand, while Prof Okwueze M.I. was the first Inaugural lecturer from my Department, I am now the second. It should be noted that the three of us come from the same Local Government – Udenu and have been interacting in the most positive manner since we discovered the ingenuity in one another. Special mention should here be made of the former Chairman of Senate Ceremonials Committee Prof Obioma Njoku and the incumbent Chairman Prof/Mrs Ngozi Nzewi and her hard working members. To you I say bravo for sustaining the tempo of this academic exercise in our dear University. I so much appreciate.

I cannot end this section of my lecture without profusely and vociferously thanking Prof Alloysius Michaels Okolie who presided over all the sessions of my Committee of Friends meeting

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The Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen, Great Lions and Lionesses, at this point permit me to fold my mat.

Thanks.

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Photos from the Lecture



The Vice-Chancellor Prof. B. Ozumba and the Inaugural Lecturer Prof. T.O.C. Ugwu



Inaugural Lecturer Prof. T.O.C. Ugwu, Professor of Religion



Inaugural Lecturer Prof. T.O.C. Ugwu and wife Mrs. Ugwu



Past Inaugural Lecturers and Prof. Uche Nzewi (Chairman - Senate Ceremonial Committee)
with the Inaugural Lecturer Prof. T.O.C. Ugwu, Professor of Religion