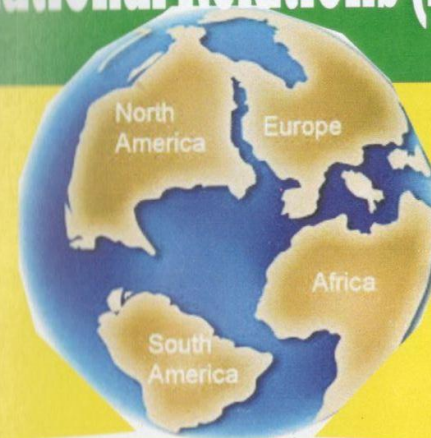




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All correspondence and contributions should be addressed to:

Prof. A.O.Y. Raji

Editor-in-Chief,

Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations,

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences,

Al-Hikmah University,

P.M.B. 1601,

Ilorin, Nigeria.

GSM: 08067990090

Email: araji@alhikmah.edu.ng

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Prof. A.O.Y. Raji

Editor-in-Chief,

Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations,

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences,

Al-Hikmah University,

P.M.B. 1601,

Ilorin, Nigeria.

GSM: 08067990090

Email: aoraji@alhikmah.edu.ng

Dr. T.S. Abejide

Managing Editor,

Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations,

Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences,

Al-Hikmah University,

P.M.B. 1601,

Ilorin, Nigeria.

GSM: 08139514787

Email: tsabejide@alhikmah.edu.ng

Editorial

Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations (AJHIR) is published annually (December). It focuses on the broad spectrum of history, culture, international relations, political economy, religious and related disciplines.

The Editorial Board was re-constituted in November 2017, with a specific mandate that hinged on three main thrust, i.e. clear the backlog of articles already processed via the peer-review mechanism; invite submission of well researched papers by prospective authors/contributors; and ensure timely publication of subsequent editions of the Journal.

While thanking most sincerely the leadership and the entire members of staff of the Department of History and International Studies for their full support and cooperation, the conscientious effort of the Editorial Board has resulted in the successful publication of Vol. 3 of the Journal in December, 2017, Vol. 4 in September 2018, Vol.5 in August 2019, and Vol. 6 in July 2020. It is our hope that Vol. 7 shall be completed and rolled-out from the press by January 2021.

We thank you all, most sincerely, for your support, understanding and patronage.

Prof. A.O.Y. Raji,

Editor-in-Chief.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INTREACTION IN MAINTAINING WORLD ORDER IN A MULITI-RELIGIOUS YORUBALAND

ABOYEJI, Oyeniyi Solomon Ph.D.

oyespeaks247@gmail.com/08039092115

Department of History and International Studies,
Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract

Religion is a dynamic institution and an integral part of every society in Africa. This study does not in any way deny the conflict theory, it rather seeks to place premium on the positive understanding of religion and lay conscious emphasis on the adoption of religion as a cohesive tool in the hands of religious leaders. Findings reveal that in spite of the proliferations of mosques and churches in Nigeria with the major aim to teach the law of God via copious quotations and stories; the country seems sinking under unending incubation of shocking vices and decadence. Hence, as religion performs a cohesive function, it can equally be an offensive tool in the hands of religious leaders where there is no understanding and tolerance by the adherents of African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. The study concludes that if religions are considered to be functional to nation building and individual wellbeing, it becomes expedient for all agents of socialization to give the crusade on the need to use religion as a vehicle to engender peaceful co-existence the seriousness it deserves. This research fuses the investigative approaches of a range of disciplines including both the primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: Religion, Maintenance, World Order, Interdependent Interaction, Yorubaland.

Introduction

The importance of African world-view on issues that attract global attention cannot be under-estimated. Even though Africans are exposed to Western education and culture, traditional thought is still the source of his basic world view. From ages, religion has been part of every society and the life of an average man revolves around his religion which dictates his code of conduct to cultural, socio-political and economic matters. Gone are the days Western historiographers labeled Africans as atheists. Prior this development was extreme and misconceived impression on Africa such as that Africans were generally too low in intelligence to have any religion or to comprehend God. For example, Leo Frobenius claimed that he had read a Berlin Journal that:

Before the introduction of a genuine faith and higher standard of culture by the Arabs, the natives had neither political organization nor strictly speaking, any religion...Therefore, in examining the pre-

Mohammadan condition of the Negro races, we must confine ourselves to their description of their crude fetishism, their brutal and cannibalistic customs, and their vulgar and repulsive idols.¹

A similar illustration of this kind of prejudice was a conversation between Edwin Smith and Emil Ludwig. According to Smith, the former had told the latter that the missionaries were working in Africa trying to bring the knowledge of God to Africans. Emil Ludwig was perplexed that Africans were being taught about God. In his perplexity, Ludwig asked, "How can the untutored African conceive God? How can this be...? Deity is a philosophical thought which savages are incapable of framing."²

Like many other African scholars, Idowu contends that the use of the terms 'primitive', 'savage', 'native', 'tribe' 'paganism', 'heathenism', 'fetishism', 'Idolatry' outside their etymological context to describe African culture and religious beliefs by some arm-chair scholars are errors of terminology. As he further puts it, "all these show inadequate grasp of the fundamentals of African worship and betray the error of appearance for reality, the shadow for substance".³ A definition of religion by H.G. Wells proves the universal recognition of the fact that religion is inescapable and that man tries to escape it at his own peril:

Nearly all of us want something to hold us together, something to dominate this swarming confusion and save us from the black misery of wounded and exploded pride, of thwarted desire, of futile conclusions...It seems to me that this desire to get the complex of life simplified is essentially what has been called the religious motive, and the manner in which a man achieves that simplification, if he does achieve it, and imposes an order upon his life, is his religion.⁴

The same fact is conveyed by Otite and Ogionwo thus:

Since all known societies in general recognize supernatural beings and have religious institutions, it is a political, rather than an academic statement to say either that a particular society has no religion or that one religion is inferior to another. Societies have their religions as vital institutions with rituals and symbols by which to create areas of loyalty, reverence and oneness. Those who belong to one religion such as ATR, Islam, Buddhism, Catholicism, or Christianity, carry appropriate feelings of loyalty and identity in a unified system of beliefs and practices in relation to the postulated supernatural element.⁵

Hence, religion is an inescapable involvement of every member of the human race. Man's need to reach out to something higher and mightier than him when he is under stress appears to be both basic and universal. Man's feeling when mystified by the forces of nature, threatened by ferocious wild beasts and perplexed by death

and hereafter, brought about the birth of religion and so hardly did any human civilization grow in early times without giving due recognition to religion.

As many people have suggested different names for their religions i.e. Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism etc, so also is *African Traditional Religion*,⁶ coined by G. Parrinder in 1954 as the appropriate name to that which could be given to the practices, customs, norms and beliefs of Africans about cosmological concepts of God.⁷ Hence, there is no society; however 'savage' or 'backward', which does not find itself confronted with the Divine. According to Awolalu, "It is rare if not impossible to find a typical Nigerian who claims to be an atheist... If there is any one like that, further investigation will reveal that he has been exposed to non- African cultural influences."⁸

The Yoruba: a Sketch

The Yoruba ethnic group has never had a doubt about the usefulness of their historical traditions and the necessity for individual to know something about the customs and origins of their community. The word, Yoruba refers to both the people and the language they speak. The Yoruba nation is one of the largest tribes and most important ethnic groups in Nigeria.⁹ Although the Yoruba predominantly reside mainly in the South-west of Nigeria- Osun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, Lagos and part of Kwara State in the north-central region; they can also be found in almost every part of Nigeria (Kogi, Edo, Delta...), West Africa (Togo, Ghana, Republic of Benin, Sierra Leone...) and overseas (Cuba, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahia...).¹⁰ They trace common descent to the renowned Oduduwa and their origin is popularly traced to Ife where they believe the act of the creation began, hence, the saying "*Ifẹ Oodaiye, Ilẹ Owuro, ibi ti ojumo ti i mo wa* (meaning *Ifẹ*, the land of the most ancient days, where the dawn of the day was first experienced).¹¹ Johnson chronicles that "all the various tribes of the Yoruba Nation trace their origin from Oduduwa and the City of Ife. In fact Ile-Ife is fabled as the spot where God created man, white and black, and from whence they dispersed all over the earth."¹² They represent the highest level of cultural achievements in sub-Sahara Africa not only in arts and religion but also in culture.¹³

Taxonomy of Religions in Yorubaland

Religion is more than a belief, it is a practice. Before Islam and Christianity in Yorubaland, every event had religious undertone because religion and culture are inseparable. Hence, traditions and cultures, in mutual collusion with African religion, established some ways of articulating acceptable religious attitudes from those unacceptable. Awolalu and Dopamu,¹⁴ Idowu¹⁵ and several other scholars have chronicled that African Traditional Religion is structured on the following named beliefs -Supreme Deity (*Olodunmare*), the Divinities and Spirits (*Orisa/Imole/Ebora*), Ancestral worship, Moral Order, Life After Death/Hereafter,

Mysterious Powers and Sacred Functionaries, etc. As there were national festivals such as *Ifa*, *Ile* (the earth), *Esu*, *Sango*, *Ogun*, *Orisa-Oko*, *Egungun* and so on among the Yoruba, so also were peculiar socio-cultural festivals in the various communities i.e. the *Eyo* Festival in Lagos; *Oro* Festival in Ikorodu, the *Awon* Mass Wedding in Shao; the *Agura/Opelu/Fedun* Festival in Omu-Aran; *Osin* Festival in Ila Orangun; *Ojude-Oba* Festival in Ijebuland; *Osun-Oshogbo* Festival; *Ogun Ojalu* Festival in Ogbomoso; *Ariginya* Festival in Ikare Akoko, Ondo State; *Asabari* Festival in Saki Oyo State; *Udiroko* Festival in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State; *Alaguso* Festival in Ijara-Isin, *Alawoji* Festival in Iwoland, *Ere-Esie* Festival in Esie-all in Kwara State. Their daily, periodic or circumstantial worship often featured elements ranging from invocation/prayers, sacrifices and offerings, music and dance and so on.

With the emergence of **Islam**, the Yoruba religious beliefs and practices did not enjoy their pristine nature *ad infinitum*. The most external influence on Africa at large before the 19th century was that of the Arabs and Islam. Islam is one of the great religions of the world, uniting many peoples. Islam literally means an act of total submission or surrendering to the Will of Allah. The conservative theory traces the origin of Islam to the time of Prophet Adam and his wife, Hawwa' (Eve) who were the first recorded created mankind on earth. The theory propounds that Islam started when mankind became conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being Who is Allah and thus, submitted themselves to His Will. The modern theory claims that Islam started in 610 C.E. when Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was called to prophethood in the Mecca city and was commanded to spread the message of Islam.¹⁶ As there are conflicting traditions of the origin of the Yorubas, if truly the Yorubas originally came from the East (Mecca), and of course, Oduduwa (the progenitor) travelled 90 days from Mecca and eventually settled down at Ile-Ife where he met with Bara Agbonmirègún (or Setilu) the founder of the Ifa worship; then, Islam possibly found its way to Yorubaland through Sahilbu (an Islamic cleric captured and brought by Oduduwa from Mecca to Ile-Ife). Johnson writes:

Oduduwa and his children had escaped with two idols to Ile Ife. Sahibu being sent with an army to destroy or reduce them to submission was defeated, and amongst the booty secured by the victors was a copy of the Koran. This was afterwards preserved in a temple and was not only venerated by succeeding generation as a sacred relic, but is even worshipped to this day under the name of *Idi*, signifying something tied up.¹⁷

There has been no precision on the date Islam penetrated to the entire Yorubaland. Adam Abdullah has suggested that Islam was first known in Yorubaland during the reign of Mansa Musa of Mali (d. 1337). He argued that the Yoruba were introduced to the practice of Islam by Mali traders and Malian ambassadors who used to visit Oyo; hence the religion is known as *Imale*.¹⁸ Ahmad

Baba of Timbuktu (d. 1610) is reported to have mentioned the presence of Islam in Yorubaland in his work.¹⁹ Gbadamosi gave the account of one Baba Kewu, a Muslim Mallam from Nupeland who challenged the action of Alaaḥin Ajiboyede (1562-1570) for killing some people on account of his son's death. This is true of Balogun that "the Nupe country was better placed than Yorubaland in terms of accessibility to Islam."²⁰ The presence of Baba Kewu in Oyo during the reign of that king indicates the presence of Islam in the town at the time. However, by the 18th century, Islam had become widely accepted in Yorubaland considering the fact that by this time mosques had sprung up in the different parts of Yoruba country: Oyo-Ile (1550); Ketu (1760); Iseyin (1770), Lagos (1775); etc. After the Jihad of Uthman ḍan Fodio and the Islamisation of Ilorin, Yorubaland experienced more influx of Muslims from the Islamised areas.²¹

Across the Islamization processes (the containment/isolation stage, mixing/syncretic stage and reform stage),²² most factors responsible for the wildfire spread of Islam in Yorubaland are hereby lumped together by Oladoja thus:

Many factors contributed to the rapid spread of Islam among the Yoruba including: conversion of family units rather than individuals, support of many traditional rulers and chiefs; the multi-functional roles of the scholar as a man of God, preacher, trader, adviser and medicine man as well as instruction of literacy and civilization. Islamic institution of polygamy, the impressive Islamic festivals; the Malam's use of talisman, charm and divination to offer protections were also admired by the people because they met their social and spiritual needs. The growth of Islam was tremendous. The religion became the way of life of its adherent within a short time of its acceptance. Even when Christianity came early in the 19th century, it did not retard the progress of the religion, rather it motivated its adherents to make Islam compatible with Western civilization. This was the concern of the Muslim organizations like Ansar-ud-Deen established in the 20th century.²³

Christianity

Christianity is one of the most widely distributed of the world religions, having substantial representation in all the populated continents of the globe. Christianity as a religion is traced to Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The Christian religion rests upon belief in divine revelation and through Christ; God is believed to have brought about the salvation of mankind. The knowledge of God and the service of God are the double themes of Christianity.²⁴ Following the abortive attempts in the 15th century, Christianity was successfully established in Nigeria in the 19th century. Three events of great historical significance in Europe (i.e. evangelical revival of the late 18th century, the formation of Christian Missionary Societies and

the abolition of slave trade), paved way for its introduction in West Africa and eventually in Yorubaland in the 1840s.

Missionary activities in Nigeria in the 19th century began in Yorubaland. In the 1830s, many freed slaves of Yoruba origin returned from Freetown to Badagry, Lagos, and Abeokuta. The first missionaries (the Methodist Mission) arrived in Badagry in 1842. From this cradle of Christianity in Nigeria, the missionaries turned their attention to Abeokuta after a protracted negotiation in 1846.²⁵ The Church Missionary Society (CMS) under the leadership of Henry Townsend, Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Gollmer embarked upon pioneering missionary activities in Abeokuta. Schools and churches were built by the CMS, the Methodist Missions and others (the Baptist Mission, Sudan Interior Mission, Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Missions and so on) that joined later. From Abeokuta, Christianity spread to other Yoruba towns (Baptist Mission stations in Ijaye in 1852 and at Ogbomoso in 1855, Society for African Missions' first station in Lagos in 1868, and so on), thus making it the gate way of the missionary activities in Oyo and Ogbomoso areas and later down Ilorin other Yoruba towns.²⁶

Interactions among these religions became inevitable. Indigenous Religion unlike the latter two religions was more or less passive and provided the background against which the two proselytizing religions contended. The impact of Islam and Christianity consequently brought a drastic reduction to the adherents of the indigenous Religion and also syncretism. The spread and popular adoption of these two more vigorous missionary and most contentious and competing religions caused historical erosion and pluralistic society with both positive and negative consequences till today. At inception, it was natural that the two non-indigenous religions should recognize each other as opponents and react to one another with suspicion verging on hostility. Nevertheless, religious crises and intolerance seem to be caused by the practitioners of these religions which is not reflective of the dictates/injunctions of the religions as well as the positive understanding of religion.

World Order and the Nigerian Situation

The greatest challenge of the 21st century international system is how to maintain 'world order'. All concerted efforts made towards co-operation among the member-states of the international (United Nations, Commonwealth), continental (African Union), regional (ECOWAS), national communities and Non-Governmental Organisations have not yielded the desired results. The maintenance of 'world order' does not necessarily mean a total support of the *status quo* (a static condition), it means a support for an orderly change brought about by peaceful, non-violent means since incompatibilities of interests between nations and bodies seem inevitable. The delineation of the scope of the generic term, "world order" becomes necessary owing to the fact that it has many facets embracing such specific terms as international political order, international economic order, international legal order,

international information order, etc. The term, incorporates not only order ("the state of affairs as they are...or a certain social structure which has remained the same for sufficiently long to afford some assurance that will continue for the foreseeable future in its present form"²⁷ but also orderly change. To Miller, 'world order' refers not to the absence of 'wars' only but also of 'conflicts', 'violence', and disorders. He describes as 'a situation which through its consequences (can impose) a threat to peace and security...'.²⁸

It is therefore, obvious still that the global system is bedeviled by a number of challenges ranging from religious bigotry/crises, racial segregation, environmental pollution, population explosion, Covid-19 pandemic, protests and agitations, etc. Since the 'world order' has its political, economic, technological and socio-cultural dimensions; this study seeks not only in preventing resort to religious crisis and promoting peaceful settlement of disputes but also in the avoidance of large scale economic disruptions and other societal decadence which are inimical to national development and individual well-being.

Over the years, Nigeria has been fertile ground for the perpetration of various acts of violence ranging from ethnic conflicts to religious conflicts and terrorist attacks. Nigerian society in which the Yoruba are integral part is full of divisible social and physical differences. The three dominant religions in Yorubaland and Nigeria at large are Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. The Nigerian situation vis-à-vis the major causes of religious intolerance and conflict among the adherents in the trio religions (most especially between Islam and Christianity) include the following:

- a. **Conflict Theory and the Offensive Use of Religion (Proselytizing Methods):** One of the root causes of the rampant religious crises among members of inter-faith in Nigeria is perhaps misinterpretation and misrepresentation of religious doctrine, which results in fanaticism, sectionalism, bigotry, hatred and intolerance. In this case, religious conflict can be viewed as a disagreement drawn out through religion. Religion has often times been used either as an offensive or defensive tool by adherents and preachers. No religion teaches immorality, inhumanity, bigotry, prejudice, acts of indolence and narrow mindedness. Jealous attempts to safeguard adulteration of faith, loss of membership and inter-faith conversion via what is taught and how- have led to suspicions, struggle for superiority, secessions and establishment of mission-minded programmes and schools across all levels.
- b. **Radicalization of Religion:** Religious education in Nigeria has been misperceived by many scholars and preachers consequently promoting the ideology of conflicting theories. Where this happens, religion remains a core, most divisive tool for regional politicking, social disharmony and an endless illusive imagination of reality in the name of religious patriotism. It is irrational for the adherents of the two notable religions with competing membership drive

to fight against each other, maim or kill one another since God can neither be described as a Christian nor a Muslim. Hate speech and propaganda that can incite the public or members of a religious body against another need be curbed. Religious education and sermons should be seen as a workable channel, a tool for transmitting knowledge and values pertaining to the importance and respect of all religious trends.

- c. **Politicization of Religion:** Often times, religious conflict does not only carry religious motive but politically inclined.²⁹ It has often been used as a means to an end in order to protest political exclusion. Danoye attests that "...political parties, while jostling for power, often pick(ed) their governorship and presidential candidates vis-à-vis their running mates for elections, with religious undertone. Where a Christian is the candidate, the running mate will be a Muslim and vice-versa."³⁰ This is the case of all the governors and deputies in all the states in Yorubaland.
- d. **Ethnicity (Multi-nation states):** A conversation once ensued between Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Premier of the North and Nnamdi Azikwe, the President of independent Nigeria (1963-66) and prominent nationalist figure:
Zik: "Let us forget our differences..."
Ahmadu Bello: "No, let us understand our differences. I am a Muslim and a Northerner. You are a Christian, an Easterner. By understanding our differences, we can build unity in our country."³¹
 It can therefore be said that no religious conflict can be purely religious without ethnicity playing its way. If Aristotelian school of thought holds that homogeneity is a condition for political stability, then, pluralism has the tendency to do otherwise if not careful. Of a truth is Higazi's submission that "the dominant discourses in conflict refer to political exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and religion..."³² Nigerians have not always been overly protective of their religions and their tribal groups. Many have turned to religious and ethnic fanatics and are willing to do anything in the name of their tribe and/or religion.
- e. **Religious Plurality** - The direct effect of this situation is the secularization of political and economic policies and values. Even though some of these policies have religious undertones, they are not pronounced. This is true of Ogunlola that:

Every year, the federal government declares minimum of eleven days as religious holidays. ...In spite of the attempts by government in Nigeria to give religious meaning and interpretation to politics and policies, the country has witnessed political instability, corruption, economic downturn, moral laxity which have plunged her into economic doldrums. This is fundamental because the rulers have often neglected the ethics of their religions while in office thereby

adopting a secular ethics, which has no respect of the divine and supernatural forces.³³

f. **Fear of Domination or Marginalization:** Owutu rightly observes thus:

When one group gains access to power, it uses state institutions to distribute economic and political benefit preferentially to its ethnic brethren, discriminates against subordinate group members. Consequently, this aggravates a sense of shared deprivation and strengthens identification with their group, thereby providing a basis for political mobilisation along ethnic and religious line [all in the spirit of this is our chance/turn].³⁴

Appearing on the pages of newspapers (Saturday, June 23) and social media apropos unspoken fears of domination is the headline, *There Will Be No Christians In Nigeria In Next 25 Years – NCEF Warns*.³⁵ Man is a political animal and so there is every tendency for ethnic groups and religious bodies to decry imbalances in the manner of admissions into institutions, recruitments and appointments, other representations and government policies. Christian 'rejection of the state's membership of an Organization of Islamic Conference has been borne out of fear of domination or conspiracy to Islamize Nigeria.

- g. **Government Policies and Religious Preferentialism:** The Nigerian society is religiously pluralized and this significantly influences political decisions and policies of the nation. It suffices to say that the religion of the rulers determines the religion of the subjects. In spite of government's take-over of schools since the 1970s, its pretense or denial to recognize the ideals governing the establishment of some schools calls for serious caution as schools range from mission schools, community, government and to private schools. For instance, the use of religious symbols in academic institutions and working environment is increasingly becoming a source of religious conflict and violence in Yorubaland. A good example was the *hijab* crisis in Osun State: *Hijab crisis: How Osun schools turned religious war theatres*.³⁶ The adoption of one religion at the expense of the others could lead to resentment, which could in turn lead to a religious war as it had happened mostly in the northern states (reprisal to the Sagamu crisis in Kano-22nd July, 1999; riots over the introduction of Sharia in Kaduna-21st-22nd February, 2000; the Kaltungo religious crisis in Gombe-8th September, 2000; religious riot in Kano in protest of the invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden in 12th October, 2001; on 7th-17th, 2001 in Jos; Miss World crisis on 16th Nov, 2002 in Kaduna; religious conflict in Numan, Adamawa on the June; Borno-Maiduguri on 18th February, 2006; Ilorin, December 31, 2017; etc. Inability of the government to manage the challenges faced also pose another form of problem.³⁷

Positive Understanding of Religion: A Veritable Tool for Co-existence and Nation Building

Man is the nucleus of the society and God is its life. The African system of society is such that it is vertical and horizontal in the functioning of its circuit. All religions are considered to be functional to nation building and individual wellbeing. Emphatically, religion can play both a positive and negative role as an aspect of the superstructure of a society. Discussing on religion, Lowis Coser attests that "although it may draw men together; it may also separate them and set them against each other".³⁸ Undeniably, scholars with the conflict theory rightly posit that religion can have negative understanding in the society, capable of disintegrating a unified nation through undue emphasis on the areas of differences than similarities by religious leaders; manipulations by religious authorities; drive for membership and attempt at imposition of a presumed 'superior' faith; maintenance of class distinctions even when the manifest function is to break them down by acknowledging human equality before God; religious affiliation leading to sectional unity so far religion has chosen the path of less national identification and so on. However, the concern in this work is to lay emphasis on the positive understanding of religion which has been a factor guaranteeing peaceful co-existence in Yorubaland.

From the positive point of view, religion has been regarded as *integrative* (*societal glue*). In other words, the three forms of religions in West Africa have integrative and solidarity functions as they stress sharing, participation, fellowship, contributory help, brotherhood, love, etc. Communal living and collectivism stressed by the alien religions gave birth to associations and groups (*Janmo*, *egbe alasalatu*, *obinrin rere*...See Hebrews 10:25, Acts 2:42a, John 15:12, Hebrews 13:1-2, I Peter 2:17, Hadith 14-15) which are carry over practice(s) of brothers' keepers among West Africans.³⁹ Hence, religion has become a tool for social use- a tool for unity and commonness in purpose and pursuit among peoples of though different cultural backgrounds but the same faith. For instance, Muslims from different continents of the world come together during the annual *Al Hajj* pilgrimage; Christians gather from across the globe to worship in Jerusalem; and traditional worshippers gather together during their annual festivals such as *Osun* *Osogbo*, *Ere-Esie*, *Eyo* festivals, etc. In the overall, religion is no doubt a tool for social interaction, eradication and minimization of racism. This tends to increase love, hospitality and unity among individuals from different nations. Aside their religious exercises, members of the same faith or unit under a faith identifies with one another both in times of achievement, distress, ceremonies, etc either or both in cash and kind.

Furthermore, it has also been expressed on the positive point of view that religion has been seen as a source of *cognition* (*knowledge acquired*). The basis for this understanding is justified that each religion has its own articulated message

most of which centrally focuses on the relations between the supernatural being (deity) and man. The traditionalists have the mental codes in the forms of taboos, Ifa corpus; the Christians have the Holy Bible and the Muslims, the noble Qur'an and *Hadith* as books of instructions. Observably, each message is peculiar to nature or the environment. It is this peculiarity that often distinguishes one religion from the other. Hence, religion helps to reinforce social and moral codes, either directly by positing such codes as of divine origin and deserving of divine judgments or indirectly by offering the mythic basis within which the given normative expectations are rationalized or exemplified. The trio-religions have central themes ranging from the belief in God as the Creator and His attributes; love and peace (Q.1:90); giving, justice and equality, man's free will; inevitability of death, good governance, stewardship and accountability, vengeance, and too many to catalogue. Religion is thus, identified as an agent of socialization and social control as it is one primary source for the building of moral character (*omoluabi*, taboos, commandments) and religious culture. For example, religion psychologically lessens the possibility of collective political action as it keeps people away from seeing their lives and societal conditions in political terms. Religion is an important source of morality. In all religions, the higher moral being requires obedience from adherents and demonstration of genuine love and welfare towards one another. The manifested attributes often determine the healthiness of both the horizontal and vertical relationship.

Another aspect of the positive understanding of religion is its *adaptive* nature. Every religion has its sets of beliefs and practices which are expected to be strictly observed. The basis for this position is that since all the religions carry their messages, any attempt to shift from or convert from one religion to any other requires adaptation and new identity. In other words, the positiveness of this understanding is that when an individual changes from Religion A to Religion B, such a convert believes that the new faith would lead them closer to God and give them better assurance in life and hereafter than the previous. A good and recent reference is the caption: *46 Christians Embraced Islam in Sagamu, Ogun State-Know Islam*.⁴⁰ Reasons for such conversion might be for religious development, a new way of personal understanding of God, better form of association, sought for deliverance, inter-faith marriage, liberalism and so on. The inter-mix nature of Yoruba society owing to inter-cultural cum inter-faith marriages would be a continuous good example of religious understanding and harmony in Nigeria. Of course, the issue of *syncretism* is a subject of debate as most who actively participate or form the audience in traditional and cultural festivals (i.e. *Egungun*, *Oro*, traditional herbal care or trade fare) either profess to be Muslims or Christians.

Conclusion

In the last World Cup, Ahmed Musa, the Super Eagle's number 7 player made two goals which won the match for Nigeria against Iceland on Friday, 22nd June, 2018. Interestingly, we all happily celebrated as Nigerians without religious, political and cultural and tribal/ethnic affiliations. If Nigerians can be united in purpose and positive mindset, it suggests that our political and religious differences can be overshadowed if all efforts are channeled towards national unity and cohesion.

In the history of humanity, religion has been used as both the tool for cohesion and dis-integration. The function of a thing can be divinely or structurally determined while its use can be humanly determined. The positive understanding of religion vis-à-vis integration, cognition and adaptation has conspicuously made religion a tool for co-habitation in the Yoruba states. Cultural cum family link and religious liberalism have been strong cohesive forces that would guarantee continuous indispensability and interdependent interactions of religions among them. On this note, where all the religions emphasize strictly on the golden rule, religious conflicts would be thinking of the then and not of the now. Comparatively, he who knows one knows none. In the science of religion, the knowledge and belief of Christianity can never be used to justify the knowledge of belief in others, and neither can the others be able. It is therefore important that adherents of the trio religions see themselves as human, regardless of the belief and other knowledge. This is the aspect of religious culture which needs to be emphasized in the overall interest of the Yoruba as a cultural group, Nigerian state at large in an attempt to achieving global order.

It is on this note the following facts, observations and suggestions are hereby made all stakeholders and to whom it may concern:

- The place of religion as a positive tool for co-habitation and nation building depends solely on the in-depth understanding of the leaders, the nature of the society (liberalism or particularism), individual orientation and sincerity of those who are engaged in the practice of these phenomena. Religious particularism must be avoided and since these religions have more in common than differences, the common features should be emphasized.
- Every religion has its way of life (culture), each of the religions in question should be understandably taken for what it represents (tenets). From the adaptive understanding of religion, religious leaders and adherents of religious faiths need to recognize the right of individual to freedom of religion. Conversion into a new faith should not be frowned at since faith is about personal conviction. Some Yoruba individuals overtime have had experience that cut across the three religions. Therefore, nobody should be forced to practice a religion that is not his choice.

- Similarly, members of a faith are fast in condemning conversion from one religion to another. While the members of the faith he/she withdraw their services of brotherhood; members of the new faith take-over to embrace to give the needed spiritual, monetary, physical and moral support. Therefore, one culture can expand only at the expense of another culture (Arnold J. Toyynbee). It is in the light of this that the researchers emphasize that the kinship ties are more enduring than the religious ties/affiliation which could be temporary. A person can lose the membership of a religion when he switches to another but the kinship bond endures forever, with no love lost irrespective of the religious change or differences.
- Furthermore, religious leaders should not shy away from getting actively involved in politics as they have the potentials that can make them serve with the fear of God and service to humanity as their motto. Living with the situational and appropriate adoption of secularization of the state, their mouths must not be shut by government functionaries via any means (bribery, threats, denials) to decry the ills and decadence in the society for the sake of good governance, posterity and their divine mandate.
- At no pressing instance should government at any level adopt any religion as a state religion and politicians should refrain from manipulating religion as a tool of oppression and disunity.
- A survey of another man's religion is expedient not only for the sake of comparison but in order to understand the tenets of other religions. This would enable one to see the reciprocal influence of religion(s) on one another and the fact that religion is not only God and man affair but also man to man relationship.
- Since Nigerian society in which the Yoruba are integral part is full of divisible social and physical differences, the promotion of secular ideological attitudes and values should be upheld in order to achieve its set goal on "progressivism, rationality and absolute freedom from sectionalism and promote flexibility, tolerance and enhancing unity in the society"⁴¹ Religious education should therefore be repositioned to situational management of conflicts in Nigerian society.
- Religious plurality is affecting the stability of Nigerian societies and is deeply affecting its education both in theory and practice. As rightly posited by Awwalu, "the metaphor of religious issues and crisis in Nigeria is an intellectual discourse open to criticism, but it is a factor to resolve vis-à-vis educational initiatives"⁴² Serious attention needs be paid to some of the aims of the National Policy on Education which had long been jeopardized. For example, sections 1(a) and (b) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) respectively states that "the overall, philosophy of education is to promote living in unity and diversity in harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble,

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- 11) The first Ife before the deluge was known as *Ifẹ Oodaiye* (where the day dawns); the second after the flood swept the whole area was called *Ifẹ Ooye* from Ooyelagbo (Ifẹ, the city of survivors) and the third called *Ile-Ifẹ* was founded with the arrival of Oduduwa and his group). See M.A. Fabunmi, *Ifẹ: The Genesis of Yoruba Race*, Ikeja-Nigeria: John West Publications Ltd, 1985, 19-27.
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- 22) The history of Islam in West Africa can summarily be explained in 3 stages: the containment (isolation) stage where converted African kings and rulers segregated Muslim communities (Muslim government); the mixing (syncretic) stage where West African rulers blended Islam with local traditions and the reform stage which tend to get rid of mixed practices but rather entrench the Sharia law (or ensure a theocratic state)
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