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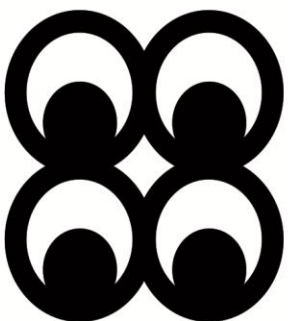
OGUAA JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND HUMAN VALUES



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Statement of Purpose

The aim of the Department of Religion & Human Values, at the University of Cape Coast, is to make the study of religion relevant to the social, economic and political needs of society. One of the ways of doing this is through its Departmental journal – the *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values*. The journal is for promoting research on issues concerning Religion and Society in areas such as Ethics and Philosophy, African Tradition Religion, Islam and Christianity and the Bible. The journal gives equal opportunity and space to scholars to present scholarly and insightful research in these areas of study. Every effort shall be made to have in every edition of the journal at least one article from each of these areas. The journal is published twice in a year – June & December. It is our aim that the journal becomes one of the journals of reference in Africa. Thus, we hope that articles sent to us would be marked by high standard and originality. *Oguaa*, the name of our journal is in recognition of the journal's setting, that it is published within the Oguaa Traditional Area. Oguaa is the traditional name for Cape Coast. Oguaa is also known in Ghana as the citadel of learning and academic excellence. The journal is, this, positioned to reflect this reality.

Author Guidelines

This journal adopts the footnoting style of citation, following the Kate Turabian style or Chicago Manual style (15th Edition). The full bibliographical detail of the book or journal is cited in the first instance and subsequently, only the last name of the author and the first two or three words of the title and page number are provided. If more than one book by the same author is used, they should be differentiated by their titles. For example, if one used Amina Wadude, *Qur'an & Woman: Re-reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: One world Publications, 2006). The first time any of these books is cited, the full bibliographical detail should be given. Thereafter, they should be distinguished in the following manner: Wadud, *Qur'an & Woman*, p.7 and Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad*, p.45. We accept both American and British spelling on condition that the author is consistent with one.

An electronic copy of the article should be sent to: religion@ucc.edu.gh or awuah.nyamekye@ucc.edu.gh or kwasi.nyamekye@yahoo.com

Editorial

This volume of OJRHV presents a rich diversity of reflections on pertinent issues ranging from religious foundationalism to Islamic ethics and environmental sustainability. The articles in this volume, as it were, mirror anecdotal and evidential proof of the pulsating religious culture of Nigeria and Ghana, which leaves little room for the various sectors of society to not participate in the implications of its vibrancy. The articles are a critical reflection on the interface between religion in its ternary expression as Islam, Christianity and Traditional Religion, and lived experiences as well as belief systems of individuals and groups in the Nigerian and Ghanaian societies.

Onyenuga and Akintan are concerned about a certain manifestation of what they describe as religious foundationalism because of the real and potential threats of divisiveness and violence that it engenders in the Nigerian society. Citing several examples, they discuss the way foundationalism has led to inter- and intra-religious violence in Nigeria. The authors lean on the work of Wole Soyinka to deconstruct the unnecessary negativity foundationalism engenders as alien to the nature of indigenous religion in Nigeria. In line with Soyinka, they propose that missionary religions such as Christianity and Islam in Nigeria have lessons to learn from the non-essentializing epistemes of Traditional Religion, especially its pacificatory stance in relation to other religions.

The importance of beliefs in the making of society is indisputable and the role of information in the formation of beliefs is equally strong. The reign of the media with their contemporary computer-technological power reaches to the seams that align information, beliefs, and society. Shittu and Olalekan take a critical look at this strategic positioning of the media in society as exhibited by two separate radio programs used to teach Islam in Nigeria. Anxious about the spillover that can occur from the inappropriate use of the media for religious education, they compare the two programs in search of the defining properties of the appropriateness of a radio program when it is used for Dawah.

Babawale and Shogunle set themselves an exegetical task of working out the geographical, historical and cultural influence of Mesopotamia in the construction of the creation and flood narratives in the Book of Genesis. They are convinced that the Genesis accounts must trace their origins to ancient Mesopotamian

sources and they engage in hermeneutics based on textual and historical points of relevance for validating their conviction.

It is pertinent to subject our beliefs to the test of knowledge, persistently making the effort to find a knowledge-based warrant for keeping or discarding our most treasured beliefs. This is what Ajayi seeks to do about the traditional religious belief in reincarnation, using the philosophical theory of epistemic justification. Ajayi's usage, however, delimits the theory to the determination of the conditions that render belief in reincarnation defensible.

The practice of tithing is a characteristic of different Christian religious groups in Nigeria today, especially of those that qualify to be part of what is currently discussed in the literature as African Christianities. Many of these Christian groups are either of the Pentecostal, Charismatic or African Independent Church persuasion. Fawenu is concerned that popular teaching tends to promote belief in automatic material blessing and prevention of tragedy as outcomes of regular tithing. Studying the phenomenon among the faithful of the United Missionary Church of Africa, Ajayi contends this reification of an originally biblical theological practice and suggests a well-formed teaching on the practice to offset its degeneration into a materialistic ideology.

In the last but not the least article in this volume, Opong discusses sustainable fishing in Ghana using the indigenous Akan fishing practices as a case study. He identifies the main fishing methods among the indigenous Akan of Ghana and points out how some of these methods can be blended with the modern system of fishing in Ghana to ensure sustainable fishing industry in Ghana which is now facing many anthropogenic induced challenges.

Students and scholars of religions and other disciplines in the humanities as well as readers with non-academic interest will find in the articles of this volume a glimpse into issues of social debate regarding religious attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that silently occupy the social space of the different sectors of the Nigerian society.

Awuah-Nyamekye & Kofi Appiah

Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values
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**Africa and the Challenges of Religious
Foundationalism: Thinking on Wole Soyinka's
Option**

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Abstract

The super-imposition of extraneous religious logic has caused serious problems in Africa. Though religion is a strong force to be reckoned with in national development, it has proved to be

problematic in a nation like Nigeria. Dangerous fanaticisms, sectarian violence, violation of human rights are some of the problems that emanate from a wrong episteme of religion. Beyond this, there is a foundationalist epistemology where adherents of various denominations push up the epistemic capacity of their religion as the ultimate standard of religious rationality. This has polarized humanity to such an extent that religious inclinations form a basis for the definition and recognition of the being of others. If John shares the same faith with James, then James is considered a brother and a human, but if they share a different faith, the question of humanity and rationality automatically sets in. This paper critically explores the concept of religion, foundationalism and generates a philosophical discourse that can enhance a mindset of tolerance. It explores the view of Wole Soyinka in his essay, *The Credo of Being and Nothingness* and asserts that the humanistic value in the African Traditional Religion could be a template for other religions and a feature to be propagated.

Keywords

Religion, Foundationalism, Religious Foundationalism

Introduction

Religion occupies an important place in human society. As a result of its role in society, the human being has been described not only as a rational being, but also as a religious being. An individual to a large extent, is by nature religious and there is always that urge in people to unite with the supernatural aspect of their existence. This urge is symbolized by the proliferation of various religious organizations and practices. Faith and beliefs are central to religions. Unfortunately, these belief systems have turned out to be the major ills of religious practices as different religions now engage in a battle for supremacy and authenticity over others. The outcome has been an attempt to impose the doctrines of one over the other thereby breeding hatred, most especially among their adherents and faithful. It is therefore not surprising that religion, considered as an important aspect of human existence, has also been the force that is responsible for the division that exists among people.

Some exclusive religions like Islam, Judaism and Christianity consistently wish to be seen as the only foundation for absolute truth about the knowledge of the supernatural. In Africa today, the problem has moved from the question of supernatural truth to the issue of state religion. The outcome of this is the constant religious crises arising from religious intolerance, sectarian violence and imposition of religious faith and beliefs. The challenges of religious foundationalism in Africa are enormous and the effects could be seen in almost every facet of our existence. Since most of these religions in Africa are products of colonialism, what future lies for the unity of Africa? Must we allow religion to destroy us or is there any need for the Africanization of foreign religions? This shall be the focus of this paper in the light of Soyinka's *The Credo of Being and Nothingness*.

Clarification of Concepts

Three major concepts seek clarification in lights of which they are being used in this paper, these are religion, foundationalism and religious foundationalism.

Meaning of Religion

From its etymology, religion is derived from the Latin word 'religare' which means "to bind back" or "to rebind". This implies that etymologically speaking, religion entails a process of reconnecting by worship a missing or broken intimacy between God and worshippers. The alternative less known and used etymological origin of religion is the Latin word 'relegere' denoting "to re-read."¹ Away from its etymological understanding, there have been various attempts to define the phenomenon of religion. These attempts have come from various perspectives, ranging from the psychological, sociological and anthropological to the philosophical and theological² and, most recently, they have come from a biological perspective.³ However, since this is beyond the scope of this paper, we shall not bother to investigate these plethora of definitions. But we should see religion as an attitude

¹Joseph, C. L. Shipwreck of faith "The religious vision and ideas of Wole soyinka Toronto: journal of Theology 2015

²Ohadike, D. Muslim-Christian conflict and political instability in Nigeria. University press. 1993

³Owutu 2013 p. 3

because it involves devotion and provision of orientation to life, both for individuals and communities. This orientation is based on self-realization and social harmony and also a personal experience that redounds positively to the public good when properly handled.⁴

Contextually, therefore, we shall adopt the meaning of religion as offered by Akinola who conceives of it as being “associated with the role of preaching the moral principles and rules that are expected to govern societies and the lives of its members.”⁵ Akinola’s definition of religion stems from the sociological theory of religion where religion is conceived of as a creation of the society for the control of its members. This definition further shows why religion is such a powerful force in the society. And because it is believed to possess a powerful force in the society, this definition also explains the continuous struggle for supremacy among different religions.

Foundationalism

Foundationalism as a school of thought has a strong root in epistemology and metaphysics.⁶ Though its root traces back to the ancient period of western philosophy when the Ionians sought to understand the basic material of the earth, it was Rene Descartes’ rationalism that gave impetus to it.

Descartes believed that there are certain truths which can only be known through their intrinsic nature. Similarly, Hegel talks about the absolute as the foundation of reality and knowledge generally. In the Hegelian view, knowledge becomes the self-manifestation of the absolute spirit. Though there have been variations in the foundational thought system that now accommodates empiricism, foundationalism is basically a rationalistic ideology.

Foundationalism is a theory of justification that claims that a belief is justified if it is derived from some basic beliefs called foundations. The theory of foundation is held by some theorists of epistemic justification that all our beliefs are made up of two kinds: those beliefs that are self-justifying and non-basic beliefs that need

⁴Soyinka, W. *Climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world*. Random house. 2004 P.10

⁵Soyinka, W. *Climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world*. Random house. 2004 P.10

⁶Ibid 120

to be justified by their inferential relationship to the basic beliefs. Proceeding further, foundationalists classify beliefs into those that are infallible and self-evident and those that are inferential. Foundationalism as a theory of justification posits that some beliefs are incorrigible and infallible and as such does not need to be justified; such beliefs are said to be self-evident or derived by intuition.⁷

Of utmost importance to us in this work on foundationalism as a theory of epistemic justification is the idea of intuition. Intuition is a state of awareness based on revelation. Like epistemic intuition, religion is often seen as a revealed experience. Employed in religion, therefore, it is believed by some religions that their intuitive experience is clearer and as such should serve as the basis through which other beliefs could be based, justified and evaluated.

Religious Foundationalism

Religion is characterized by the passion that it can arouse.⁸At the heart of every exclusive religion is the view that presupposes superiority to the other. Three major religions that can be described as exclusive are Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Because of their self-perceived nature of superiority, these religions tend to be the major forces that shape the progress of the society in history more than other known religions of the world. As a result of their influences in the society, the need to see one religion as a yardstick for the acceptance or denial of other religious doctrines and beliefs becomes the rallying point for their superiority.

The term “religious foundationalism” therefore is the view which bears out that the doctrinal base of a given religion constitutes an epistemic focus for evaluating other religions. The idea of religious foundationalism has been described by Bergson as giving rise to a closed society. It will, according to him, only produce a static society and its attendant ills. Bergson describes such religions as being humiliating to humankind. He regretted that “The spectacle of what religions have been in the past, of what certain religions still are today, is indeed humiliating for human intelligence.”⁹ In more simple words, a religious foundationalist

⁷Soyinka, W. *Climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world*. Random house. 2004 P.10

⁸Joseph, C. L. Shipwreck of faith “The religious vision and ideas of Wole soyinka Toronto: journal of Theology 2015

⁹Harris,2012 p.110

sees his or her religion as the ontological foundation which every religious person must embrace. It is the belief that for the doctrines of other religions to be accepted, such belief systems must comply with certain intrinsic paradigms.

Every religion is an attempt to understand the divine reality. No single religion has the final answer. Every religion, even the so called pseudo religions themselves, contains the moment of people's attempt to comprehensively give a satisfactory response and even answer to agitating minds matters concerning the ultimate reality.¹⁰ Meanwhile, whenever religion is particularized or absolutely rationalized, the very reality of religion as the absolute dynamism of the singular, immediate experience becomes elusive. In such cases, religion is concretized wholly in singular purposeful ventures and phenomenon. This is the moment it is also estranged from its foundation which is the disposition towards the coordination of the necessary of reality, the balancing of differentiation in determination; "Every religion, no matter how inadequately it seeks to express the experience underlying it, serves as a missing link."¹¹ Thus, identifying a religion as the core of every religious experience is wrong because religion is diversely conceived and interpreted.

Religious foundationalism, therefore, bears out that the doctrinal base of a given religion constitutes an epistemic focus for examining other religions. It presupposes that there is an intrinsic parameter which other belief systems must comply with. In line with this, a religious foundationalist sees his/her religion as the ontological foundation which every religious person must embrace.

The Challenges of Religious Foundationalism in Africa

Africa is a continent noted for different religious denominations. While some of these religions are imported, others are indigenous. But irrespective of its origin, an African shows a higher level of commitment to his/her chosen religion. However, there is an epistemic problem when adherents of one religion tend to see the idea of God and how to best worship him from the standpoint of their faith. Whenever an attempt is made by one religion to establish the consciousness that one religion is better than the other, the problem of religious foundationalism is created. Religious

¹⁰Soyinka, W. *Climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world*. Random house. 2004 P.10

¹¹Ibid 123

foundationalism in Africa comes with its problems. Akinbuwa Kolade expresses this problem in the following words:

Religion in Africa is highly vulnerable to misinterpretation and faulty dogmas. There is an excessive concentration on externalities and a one-sided perspective which falls outside a given paradigm. A problem then ensues that if a system is not in consonance with my belief systems, then it is irrational.¹²

The point above leads to the phenomenon of religious intolerance and insensitivity. The origin of religious crisis in Africa can be traced to the problem of acculturation. Echoing this sentiment, Bidney observes that one of the most widespread forms of axiological crisis is illustrated through the process of acculturation.¹³ Going further, he notes that for many native peoples brought involuntarily into contact with Western civilization, acculturation is, all too often, deculturation, since the old discarded cultural forms are not superseded by new forms. Bidney also maintains that such cultural crises may be regarded as the product of cultural inertia and of the withering away of given native institutions when brought into contact with alien forms of culture which they can neither resist nor assimilate.

The basic contradiction of foundationalist religion in Africa is that it remains totally blind to African communal system of life. No matter the level of polarization of African values by foreign extract, there will always be a gap between what is truly African and foreign values. As a member of the global society, Africa cannot be excluded from the trend of globalization. However, as globalization is associated with infiltration of global trends, there is need for the Africanization of these trends in order to meet the basic challenges of Africa and her system of thought. Africa is a communitarian society where brotherliness, tolerance, compromise and conscience are highly upheld. However, these values have been absconded following the individualism of foreign cultures. This individualism is also visible in the religious circle too. In Africa, the dominant religions now are Christianity and Islam. The individualism of these religions has created enemies between

¹²Soyinka, W. *Climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world*. Random house. 2004 P.10

¹³Ibid 124

people who are supposed to live in harmony like brothers and sisters. It has also destroyed bonds among people who do not share the same religious faith. Relationships are now mostly defined on the basis of religion. Sadly, religion in Africa has ethnic concentrates; and the higher as the worshippers, the more it becomes intolerant to other religious worshippers. It is this logic that now makes Africans to shed each other's blood without recourse to the biological bond that existed among them and have also heightened ethnicity in most African societies Nigeria included.

Accordingly, the idea of religious freedom is widely upheld as one of the fundamental rights of humans. This poses a serious problem as to the right possessed by a person or group of persons who hide under the canopy of religious beliefs to propagate terrorism out of religious convictions. It is on this note that Mary Glendon holds that religious freedom is at risk even in countries that officially protect religious freedom.¹⁴ Hertzke is indifferent too to the idea of religious freedom. He describes it as a paradox, maintaining it is:

A profound paradox of our age, that, just when evidence of the value of religious freedom is mounting, the international consensus behind it is weakening, attacked by theocratic movements, violated by aggressive secular policies, and undermined by growing elite hostility or ignorance.¹⁵

What Hertzke implies here is that the value of religion cannot be underestimated. However, just when people have become exposed to its value and the freedom to be associated with such values, the idea different people tend to have of it is now causing problems as to what should really constitute the object of religion. The reason for this result is not far-fetched; it is simply the belief systems that are promoted by these religious movements. In other words, these theocratic movements violate secular policies and in place of these policies implant in the mind of the people their belief. Often times, these are masterminded by the elite for self-aggrandizement. The outcome, then, is religious hostility caused by religious ignorance.

¹⁴Soyinka, W. *Of Africa*. Yale University Press. 2012 Pp 41-42

¹⁵Townes 20

As noted by Nwozor, the Boko Haram insurgency has been at the epicentre of Nigeria's security crisis since it showed its terrorist activities in 2009.¹⁶ He stated further that while we still struggle as to pinpoint the leadership composition of the Boko Haram sect, we cannot claim ignorance of their ideology and terrorist activities since 2009. Bagaji et al identify the relationship between Boko Haram and Maitatsine sects in terms of shared anarchic philosophy and objectives.¹⁷ The Boko Haram sect is professedly anti-west and considers terrorist strategy as a veritable jihadist tool to conquer the "infidels."¹⁸ The infidels in this context are those who are outside the template of orthodox Islam or those who condone or are sympathetic to western education and civilization.¹⁹ Thus, the literal meaning of Boko Haram is "western education is sin". The arbitrary targets of Boko Haram's sustained terrorist attacks appear to create analytical problems with regard to who it categorises as an infidel. There has not been any boundary in the targets of its attacks: it appears to attack everybody but with preponderance on Christian institutions. Essentially, the targets of the attacks masterminded by the Boko Haram have not followed any particular pattern to lead to a plausible conclusion about their driving motives and ultimate goals.

The immediate deducible interpretation of their motives is that it intends to undermine the sovereignty of the Nigerian state through the creation of general insecurity by turning the country into a territory of anarchy. Their strategy could be likened to religious anarchism as it manifests the nature of, and also exemplifies the mainstream, terrorist tradition of the organisational planning and armed resistance.²⁰

The peculiarity and invincibility of the Boko Haram sect lie in its daredevil attacks, loose organisational structure, facelessness and surreptitious operational modalities.²¹ The terrorist organization, before now, had no particular demand from the government other than the abrogation of western education. Over the years, however, it has become

¹⁶Soyinka, W. *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. 1988 P. 238

¹⁷Mbiti, John. *African religions and philosophy*. Heinemann. 1990 P. 1

¹⁸Idowu, E. Bolaji. *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba belief*. Longman, Nigeria. 1982 P. 5

¹⁹Joseph, C. L. Shipwreck of faith "The religious vision and ideas of Wole soyinka Toronto: Journal of Theology 2015

²⁰Senghor, Leopold Sedar. "Negritude: A humanism in the twentieth century." In Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (eds). *African Literature: an anthology of criticism and theory*. Blackwell Publishing. (2007) 195-202

²¹Soyinka 2014 p. 158

glaring that the sect has trappings of religious fanaticism. This position is also observed by Onuoha in his evaluation of the ideological position of the terrorist group thus:

Its ideological mission is quite clear, namely to overthrow the Nigerian state and impose strict Islamic Sharia law in the country. Members of the sect are motivated by the conviction that the Nigerian state is filled with social vices and corruption, thus 'the best thing for a devout Muslim to do was to "migrate" from the morally bankrupt society to a secluded place and establish an ideal Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation.²²

The philosophy of religious bigotry which motorizes the Boko Haram insurgency is undoubtedly a foundationalist ideology which is inimical to the growth of a multi-religious society like Nigeria. There are basic interpretations that designate the Boko Haram violence as religious war which has its major focus on ethnic cleansing. However, one of the major factors that characterize religion and ethnicity in Nigerian polity is the domination of the major religions (Christianity and Islam) along discernible geographical lines. Following the incessant targeting of Christian worship centres by Boko Haram bombers, the then president of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Ayo Oritsejafor, described the attacks on Christians as a "systematic ethnic and religious cleansing" and threatened that "we have the legitimate right to defend ourselves. We're also saying today that we will do whatever it takes."²³ Because the slaughtering of Christians took place in the Northern part of the country that is predominantly Islamized, the Hausa/Fulani became hated especially by those in the Southern part with Christianity as the dominant religion. In this way, religious foundationalism has provided a ground for ethnic hatred in Nigeria.

Wole Soyinka and the Credo of Being and Nothingness

In 1991, Wole Soyinka delivered the inaugural lecture in the Archbishop Olufosoye Lecture Series at the University of Ibadan

²²Ibid pp.147-148, 150-151

²³Soyinka(2014) p. 158

entitled "The Credo of Being and Nothingness." In this seminal public address, Soyinka reflects theoretically and philosophically on the question of religion in both private and public spheres. He also discusses his personal attitude toward various religious worldviews and traditions. In the lecture, Soyinka informs his audience that "the sphere of religion constitutes the ultimate challenge of the twenty-first century."²⁴ Again, Soyinka maintains that this credo is given credence to by the assumption: "I believe, therefore, I am. You disbelieve, therefore, you are not. Therefore, you count for nothing. You are sub-human. You are outside the pale of humanity, outside the concept of community."²⁵ Soyinka contended that this credo is dangerous. It has generated denial of human rights, denial of human life, religious fanaticism and violent outburst. He therefore posited the central task of his lecture thus:

My task today is to bring the two religions warring tribes of this nation to an understanding that they represent only a part of the many global strains of spiritual adhesion that constantly threaten to bring this world of ours to that presumably blissful condition of nothingness.²⁶

Soyinka conceives religion as the sphere of violence. For him, violence is the underlying concept that describes all religious activities and transactions in the modern world. Second to violence is the notion of intolerance and fear, which are produced deliberately by all religious fanatics, zealots, or extremists. Accordingly, he coined the term "religious imperialism" to describe the method by which religious zealots and radicals win converts to their faith. Speaking on the activities of these religious fanatics and extremists, Joseph concludes that "these elements constitute the negative effects of religion in both political realm and civil society."²⁷

Religious tensions between evangelical churches and Islamic groups are not uncommon in Nigeria. For instance, in Ilorin, Kwara State, fourteen churches were burnt to the ground by suspected

²⁴Netland, H. *Encountering religious pluralism: the challenge to christian faith and mission*. InterVarsity press.(2001) P. 221

²⁵Soyinka(2004) p. 131

²⁶Soyinka 1991 p. 17

²⁷Joseph, C. L. Shipwreck of faith "The religious vision and ideas of Wole soyinka Toronto: journal of Theology (2015)

Islamic fundamentalists in 1999. Besides, news of the introduction of Sharia law on January 2000 in Zamfara State led to wide spread violence in February/March, 2000 in which property were destroyed and more than one thousand people were killed.²⁸ From Maitatsine uprising of the 1980's to the Boko Haram of today, it has been violence associated with religious beliefs that is almost bringing government to her knees, while peace and security remain a difficult task to achieve.

The event that prompted Soyinka's reaction that the sphere of religion constitutes the ultimate challenge of the twenty-first century occurred at the University of Ibadan in May, 1986. There was a demonstration by Muslim students during which they burnt the figure of the risen Christ in the Chapel of Resurrection at the university. Over the years, there have been similar or worst cases of such religious uprisings. In September, 2001, as many as one thousand people were massacred in a sectarian violence that rocked Jos. On January 7, 2011, eight Muslim youths were waylaid and killed in the village of Barkin Ladi. The following day, scores of Muslims youth armed with bow and arrow, matches, disused tyres, petrol and gun laid siege to Igbo traders trading in Dilmi market and Bauchi Road killed 48 Igbo traders. In the evening of the same day, over 14 Muslims were killed in Jos and other surrounding areas in reprisal attack.²⁹

These attacks and counter attacks still continue as witnessed in the spasmodic rambles generated by the Boko Haram sect. Wole Soyinka exposes all these as elements of pathological ignorance. In a sarcastic manner, he advised the militants to even wipe out the (+) sign in mathematics since it bears a semblance of the Christian cross when he says "And the other side should have responded by abandoning the use of the bracket (+), it is suggestive of the symbol of the cross."³⁰ He embarks on this sarcasm to bear out the irrationality of religious fanaticism. He associates religious violence with religious absolutism and dogmatism. Like many other humanists and critics of religion, he rightly understands religious absolutism and intolerance as a threat to cultural advancement, democratic peace, and human freedom and flourishing. Soyinka discerns that religious fanaticism in general

²⁸Ohadike, D. Muslim-Christian conflict and political instability in Nigeria. University press. 1993

²⁹Owutu(2013) p. 3

³⁰Soyinka, W. *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books.(1988) P. 238

presents a challenge to the security of human society and indeed its survival, and in the case of radical Islam in particular, it stirs global fear and extreme reactions cross-culturally.³¹In his book, *Climate of Fear*, presented first as a series of lectures for the prestigious Reith Lectures at Oxford University, Soyinka alarms his English audience that “We have to speak to religion!”³² We ought to address the issue of religious indoctrination and the peril of religious radicalism and fanaticism. He continues, “We are obliged to recognize, indeed, to emphasize, the place of injustice, localized or global, as ready manure for the deadly shoots of fanaticism. However, the engines of global violence today are oiled from the deep wells of fanaticism, even though they may be cranked by the calculating hands of politicians or the power-hungry.”³³

Soyinka deploys the subject pronoun “we” to designate collective responsibility and mutual accountability in matters of religious peace and interfaith dialogue. In his assessment, every member of society is somewhat liable to contribute to a non-threatening social order and an environment suitable to the absence of religious terror and violence. He cautions that without the collaborative effort of every individual, unrestrained religious expression and precarious religious dogmas will continue to be a global crisis that haunts us.

In other words, religion is something that needs to be controlled, and human evil premised on one’s religious feeling and conviction heightens the human condition.³⁴

Soyinka links religious extremism with the pursuit of power and domination. Similarly, Sam Harris observes that religious extremists “see political and military action to be intrinsic to the practice of their faith.”³⁵ Religious fanatics and power-hunger politicians enjoy an inseparable alliance; more recently, “the poised blade of fanaticism has become more proficient and inventive over its agency of execution.”³⁶Lamentably, Soyinka declares, “the space of [religious] fanaticism aggressively expands into other nations of traditional tolerance and balance...The monologue, alas, continues

³¹Soyinka, W. *Climate of fear: the quest for dignity in a dehumanized world*. Random house. (2004) P.10

³²Ibid 120

³³Ibid

³⁴Joseph, C. L. Shipwreck of faith “The religious vision and ideas of Wole soyinka Toronto: journal of Theology (2015)

³⁵Harris, (2012) p.110

³⁶Soyinka, W. *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. (1988) P. 238

to dominate the murderous swath blazed by succeeding religions – Christianity and Islam most notoriously. Deviationism – or heresy – is one shortcut to death.”³⁷

Furthermore, Soyinka resituates the ambivalent discourse of race to the zone of religion as the conundrum of the twenty-first century culture. Religion is now perceived as a global phenomenon of shock and human calamity. In fact, Soyinka noted that every religion now develops sects, and even cults, which then proceed to act contrary to the fundamental precepts and articles of faith within that religion. These sects and cults then attempt to impose their beliefs as the superior faith. Taking this into consideration, Soyinka maintains that religious foundationalism is a serious struggle in the twenty-first century as was the issue of race in the nineteenth century. With dazzling rhetoric and linguistic force, he declares:

The nineteenth-century black American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois once declared that the issue of the twentieth century would be that of race. It is becoming clear that while the century, the last, did indeed inherit – and still remains plagued almost continuously by – that social issue, race was replaced toward the end by religion and it is something that has yet to be addressed with the same global concern as race once was. The issue of the twenty-first century is clearly that of religion, whose cynical manipulations contribute in no small measure to our current of fear.³⁸

Soyinka goes on to clarify his thesis that religion, not race is the predicament of the twenty-first century. He does that by first defining the integral components of religion and then by explaining the threatening implications of the program of religious fanaticism to cultures, peoples, and civilizations. What is at stake here is the dreadful and singular claim of religion: the call to absolute submission. However, he notes that religion, when it is imported by coercion or transmitted involuntarily, sustains “terror against terror, and the submission of the world to a regimen of fear.”³⁹

³⁷Ibid 123

³⁸Soyinka, W. *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. (1988) P. 238

³⁹Ibid 28

He contemplates further on how Western religious and cultural imperialism had created violent societies and communities in Africa, as well led to social rift and disharmony among the African people. He sees both Christianity and Islam as agents of colonial conquest and violence in the Continent. He expresses thus:

Cultural and spiritual violation has left indelible imprints on the collective psyche and sense of identity of the peoples, a process that was ensured through savage repressions of cohering traditions by successive waves of colonizing hordes. Their presence was both physical and abstract. Their mission was not merely to implant their own peoples on any lands whose climates were congenial—East and Southern Africa—but to establish outposts for surrogate controls where the environment proved physically inclement...The cultural and spiritual savaging of the continent, let us hasten to insist, was not by the Christian-European axis alone.

The Arab-Islamic dimension preceded it, and was every bit as devastating, a fact that a rather distorted sense of continental solidarity leads some scholars to edit, at the expense of Truth and Reality.⁴⁰

Both Christianity and Islam produced networks of power relations, hegemonic processes of dominance and oppression, and engineered the framework religious resentment among the African people. The religious hegemony allowed both religious traditions “to secure the consent of subordinates to abide by their rule. The notion of consent is key, because hegemony is created through coercion that is gained by using the church, family, media, political parties, schools, unions, and other voluntary associations—the civil society and all its organizations.”⁴¹In a complementary statement, Soyinka intensifies his thesis that “A new inhuman act, some new

⁴⁰Soyinka, W. . *Of Africa*. Yale University Press. (2012) Pp 41-42

⁴¹Townes 20

destructive conflict is certain to have [sic] surface somewhere, one that is traceable to one or other of the so-called major religions."⁴²

Soyinka and the lesson from African Traditional Religion

It is a proven fact that religion permeates every aspect of the African life; in fact, an African is a very religious and spiritual being. According to an African religion scholar, John Mbiti, "Africans are notoriously religious, and each people have 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."⁴³ Similarly, Idowu, E. B.'s writing about the religious world of the Yoruba people, notes

The real keynote of the life of the Yoruba is neither their noble ancestry nor in the past deeds of their heroes. The keynote of their life is their religion. In all things, they are religious. Religion forms the foundation and the all-governing principle of life for them...The religion of the Yoruba permeates their lives so much that it expresses itself in multifarious ways.⁴⁴

Consequently, it is possible to infer that religion serves as the social and humanistic source for the African moral vision and worldview, and the African humanistic values.⁴⁵

In his interpretation of African traditional religion—including the nature and attributes of African deities and the complexity of the *Ifa* in determining the divine will, Wole Soyinka presents African spirituality as a humanism in the same line of thought like Leopold Sedar Senghor, who, in his theorization of Negritude as "the sum total of the values of the civilization of the African World" (or "the sum of the cultural values of the black world") construes Negritude as a humanism of the twentieth

⁴²Soyinka, W. . *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. (1988) P. 238

⁴³Mbiti, John. . *African religions and philosophy*. Heinemann. P. 1 (1990)

⁴⁴Idowu, E. Bolaji. . *Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba belief*. Longman, Nigeria. (1982)P. 5

⁴⁵Joseph, C. L. . Shipwreck of faith "The religious vision and ideas of Wole soyinka Toronto: journal of Theology 2015

century.⁴⁶ However, while Soyinka explains the concept through African spirituality and the concept of God in African religion, Senghor focuses on African concept of ontology and reality.

Soyinka is of the view that in African religion,

The real cohesive factor of religion is the living God and that without this one factor; all things would fall to pieces. Life belongs to God. It is he who summons it into being, strengthens and preserves it.⁴⁷

In African religions, God is the Sovereign Lord who gives and sustains all life. Yet, because of his comprehensive otherness, he has freely chosen to manifest himself and reveal his will directly through the *Orisa*, who function as facilitators or mediators between God and humanity. With clarity and precision, Soyinka succinctly explains the ontological transcendence and relational immanence of the African deities thus:

In the process of their visitation, the gods assume form, shape, and character—and responsibilities. They acquire supervisory roles over phenomena, in some cases becoming thoroughly identified with them...the deities themselves appear to experience a need, periodically at least, to be united with the mortal essence, no matter the excuse—altruistic, self-sacrificial, in pursuit of moral redemption, or simply as an adventure in divine tourism...The gods are products of a primordial unity, as narrated in the myth of *Atunda*—literally rendered as “the one who recreates.”⁴⁸

All gods, according to the Yoruba, are manifestations of universal phenomena of which humanity is also a part. *Ifa* is replete

⁴⁶Senghor, Leopold Sedar. . “Negritude: A humanism in the twentieth century.” In Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (eds). *African Literature: an anthology of criticism and theory*. Blackwell Publishing.195-202, (2007)

⁴⁷Soyinka, W. . *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books.(1988) P. 238

⁴⁸Soyinka, W. *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. (1988)P. 238

with *odu* – those verses that form a compendium of morality tales, historic vignettes, and curative prescriptions – verses that narrate at the same time the experiences of both mortals and immortals for whom *Ifa* divined, counseled, and who either chose to obey or ignore *Ifa*. The skeptics are neither personalized nor hounded by any supernatural forces. The narratives are indicative that they simply go their way. The gods remain totally indifferent toward who does or does not follow them or acknowledge their place in mortal decisions. The priest of *Ifa* never presumes to take up cudgels on behalf of the slighted deity. No excommunication is pronounced; a killing fatwa is unheard of. The language of apostasy is anathema in the land of the *Orisa*. There is neither paradise nor hell. There is no purgatory. You can neither seduce nor intimidate a true *Orisa* faithful with projections of a punitive or rewarding afterlife...⁴⁹

However, this does not imply that African traditional religion does not permit punishment, especially for evil acts, but unlike the foundational religions, it does not function on the maxim of “I believe therefore I am and you do not believe, therefore you are not.” Yoruba traditional ethos is communitarian. This is equally seen in the synergistic rapport between devotees of different divinities. Festivals are organized peacefully without supremacist philosophy which in many instances create a framework between Christian and Muslims. We could, therefore, agree with Netland that the “secular African deities” affirm various religious systems and traditions and consider them “as equally legitimate religious alternatives, with preferences among them largely being functions of individual characteristics and, social and cultural factors.”⁵⁰ Again, Soyinka establishes the *Orisa* within its rightful place as a monotheistic religious tradition.

Soyinka accepts the maxim that “exclusive truth claims create an *us-them* mentality: to preserve *our* identity and religious purity, *they* must be removed”. He questions religious terrorism and imperialism as an adequate method to force people to the “one true God.”⁵¹ Soyinka finds great promises in the tolerant and adaptive nature of African religions and the “secular gods” of the

⁴⁹Ibid 131

⁵⁰Netland, H.. *Encountering religious pluralism: the challenge to christian faith and mission*. InterVarsity press. (2001)P. 221

⁵¹Soyinka, W. . *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. 1988 P. 238

Yoruba people, which he proposes could potentially contribute to human peace and cooperation.

From Soyinka's standpoint, what we must pursue, therefore, is not a competitive, bruising arena for the claims of ideology or religion but an open marketplace of both ideas and faiths. It is within this context, without any ambiguity, that the *Orisa* and their body of divine precepts, *Ifa*, prove of great humanistic value in the realm of religion. As a quest for spiritual enquiry, *Ifa* exemplifies this field of accommodation for all seekers, no matter what the structure of belief. This ancient religion, according to him, should be co-opted as a guide into our exploration of a noninterfering order of faith and spirituality and proposes that warfare between religions need not be.

Conclusion

Beyond foundationalism is the apt phrase to engender tolerant religious mindset. Africa has suffered tremendously from the negative implications of this pattern that see one religion as the answer to all baffling questions about life.

It is sufficient to call the world's attention to the fact that religions do exist on this continent that can boast of never having launched a war, yet those beliefs have proved themselves the bedrock of endurance and survival.⁵²

In line with this, there is a need for Africans to Africanize foreign religion in such a way that will suit their cultural life. The present credo of 'I believe and you disbelieve' has gone a long way to foment violence and endanger the strong ethos of African humanism.

⁵²Soyinka, W. . *Art, dialogue, and outrage: essays on literature and culture*. Pantheon Books. 1988 P. 238

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**Between Conservatism and Modernism in
Da'wahon Radio: A Study of Madrasatud Dalīlish
Shari'iy and ManhajuAhlus Sunnah Programmes in
Ilorin, Nigeria**

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Abstract

The exploration of electronic media, among other things, as a veritable tool through which the pristine messages of Islam are conveyed has not gone unrecognised by contemporary scholars in Nigeria. However, the manner and style adopted by advocates on propagating Islam differ and with this difference, the result of the act also differs. This work comparatively studied two radio *da'wah* programmes in Ilorin; *Madrasatud-dalīlish-shari'iy* and *Manhajahlus Sunnahwaljama'ah*, with a view to identifying the impact of each of the two programmes on the masses. Giving the structural survey of selected episodes, the study is descriptive, and comparative in focus; therefore, the researchers adopted a combination of

descriptive the comparative research methods. Findings of the work revealed that *Manhajahlus Sunnahwaljama'a* is largely satirical while *Manhajdalilish-Shari'a* is academic. It is, however, recommended that the focus and locus of any *da'wah* activity should principally be both mild and academic. This, as a matter of fact, could be actualized by creating an institution that regulates *da'wah* conducts in every society.

Keywords

Da'wah, Radio, Aqidah, Ibadah, Mua'malah.

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Introduction

Media is a necessity for *da'wah* activities in the contemporary period with the understanding that calling people to the way of Allah is a task that is expected to be undertaken by Muslims individually and collectively because of the need to reach out to a large people at the same time as enjoined by Allah in Q3:104. In recent times, quite a number of Muslim scholars arrogate to themselves the absolute knowledge of Islam and the ability to give best interpretation in its regard (Islam) to such an extent that a contrary opinion to theirs is waved off as heretical, apologetic and oriental. This trend poses a serious threat to the development of Islam and the thrust in Muslim scholars even among the faithful ones. It is evident from all indications that scholars of the contemporary age have taken it upon themselves to unleash novel styles for *da'wah* activities: some make and others mar the enviable and viable repute of Islam. This work gives a comparative study of *Madrasatudalilish-shari'iy* and *Manhajahlus-Sunnahwaljama'a*, Islamic radio programmes presented by Professor Abdulrahman Ahmad and Alfa Ali Jabata respectively on weekly basis. *Madrasatudalilish-sha'ri'iy* comes up at Harmony 103.5 F.M Idofian every Tuesday between 2:30pm and 3.00pm. *Manhaj Ahlus Sunnah waljama'a* on the other hand, comes up at Al-Barka F.M every Saturday between

11:00am and 12:00pm. Eventhough the two programmes claim preaching the pristine Islam, the style and method adopted by each differs and so, the two differ in audience.

Concept of Media

Gausu and Sunusi as quoted by Tajudeen, observed that media is like the air we breathe or the water we drink, irrespective of the level of pollutions, we simply cannot do without them.¹ Media is the ancient name of a region in what is now North-Western Iran, South of the Caspian Sea.² However, the media is being used in different ways to mean channels of communication. The phrase "mass media" comprises two words: 'mass' and 'media.' Mass means 'many', media connotes 'transmit to - and be received by - large numbers of people.'³

Media is used for all purposes: The building or destruction of political and economic structures or nation. Media is employed to acquire or maintain economic superiority, to win wars or peace and to create friendship or hatred. Above all, they are used to control people's hearts and minds. Media power is today one of the real indices of power in our global village.⁴

In communication theory, information is the driving force in any society as energy is to machines. The theory emphasises information as the key to social behaviour. Schramm, quoted by Tajudeen summarizes the main objectives of communication in four categories: to inform, to teach, to propose or persuade and to please.⁵ Furthermore, communication is an agent through which the uneducated are educated. In an attempt to uncover and identify the mainframe duty of media, Toki quoted Johnson as stating that the media is used:

... to transmit information to enlighten the public by reporting and explaining what is happening in the world around them and beyond, to serve as the public eyes and ears as

¹ T.O Tajudeen, *Da'wah* in the Print Mediain Kwara State, an Unpublished B.A Research Project (University of Ilorin: Department of Religions, 2006), 3.

² L.F Oladimeji, "Da'wah Trend in Islam: a Case Study of Jama'atut Tablig in Nigeria", A Ph.d Thesis, (University of Ilorin: Department of Religions, 2004), 24

³ Oladimeji, 34

⁴ Oladimeji, 1

⁵ Tajudeen, 21

a public watching, keeping a check on government and other institutions⁶

Media as in its general term (I.e. mass media) is broadly divided into two: print and electronic. Electronic media denotes something of relating to, or being a medium by which information is transmitted electronically. Such media include television, radio, satellites, channels, computer (Internet), and mobile phone. Electronic media connotes all gadgets that require electric current, and/or electrons for functionality with the supports of in-built microchips.⁷ Print media, on the other hand, stands for something of relating to, or writing for printed publications. It encompasses mass communication through printed material, artistic or journalistic, which has to do with paper. This includes book, magazine, newspaper, journals, booklets, brochures, house magazine, periodicals, or newsletters, handbills or flyers, billboards, press releases and photographs.

From the above, the media acts as the periscope through which government activities and behavioural patterns of other social institutions including the religious groups are reflected to the general public. On the whole, media is the way through which a considerable number of people receive information and entertainment, either through television or radio and other mediums such as newspapers and magazines. It is, however, important to mention that media in this work is restricted to electronic, specifically radio.

Da'wahin Islam

Da'wah, an Arabic word, sprang from the perfect tense '*da'a*' meaning 'he called', the present, '*yad'u*', 'he calls' and its common nominal form, '*da'iyah*', 'the caller'. Technically, *da'iyah* is one who invites others to the path of the truth.⁸ The abstract noun *da'wah* is the pivot around which this discussion revolves. *Da'wah* means 'to

⁶Tajudeen, 21

⁷ A. Gausu and I.K Sanusi " The Challenges of the Islamization of Media Practice: Some Preliminary Discussion" K.A Suleiman *et-al*, ed. Islamic Universities Prospects and Challenges (Proceeding of the First International Conference of Islamic Universities), (Kano IITI Nigeria Office, 2013), 91

⁸ J.L Esposito, the Oxford dictionary encyclopedia of the modern Islamic world. (London, Oxford University Press, 1978) 118.

call', 'to invite', 'to invoke', or 'to summon'.⁹ Technically, *da'wah* refers to spreading Islam to the threshold of people so that they can embrace it.¹⁰ It is a practical and communicative effort to call people's attention to Islam. It is to call to, call upon, urge, invoke a blessing on or upon, summon, raise alarm, demand, ask for help, solicit and invite to accept Islam.¹¹ *Da'wah* is generic in nature, putting into perspective its various contextual applications in the Qur'an. The utmost and fundamental principle of *da'wah* in Islam is implicitly refined and defined in the following verse of the glorious Qur'an.

Invite to the way of your Lord (Islam) with wisdom and fair preaching and argue with them in a way that is better, truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He is best aware of those who are guided. (Q.16:125)

Da'wah is like marketing a product which requires skills and training to attract buyers or clients and the call in the above verse specifically implies invitation in a manner that rules out aggression and foul language. The above quoted verse urges that divine invitation should be presented convincingly and through logical argument. It is a sequel to this that Adeyemo submitted that for the main objectives of *da'wah* to be achieved, it must embrace among other things; good presentation, refined style, resorting to wisdom and fair preaching, awakening the truth, taking cognisance of the audience and environment, being logical in argument, adopting modern technology and being persuasive.¹² Importantly, the pivotal role played by *da'wah* in the dispensation and dissemination of Islamic noble message has no equal. Hence, it is considered a collective responsibility (*fard kifayah*). This claim is thus solidly substantiated by Qur'an 3: 104. Muslims are enjoined to spread the good-will message of Islam because of their love for peace and are

⁹ A.A Abaya, "The Influence of Alhaji A.B Sallah on Islamic Radio Broadcasting at Radio Kwara Ilorin, an Unpublished B.A Research Project (Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Department of Islamic Studies, 2013), 5.

¹⁰ F. Stein Gas, Arabic-English Dictionary, 206

¹¹ A.A. At-Turk, "Da'wah Media a Collective Research sibility", *The Muslims World League Journal*, 001.401001 (Muharram 1437-December, 20011), 30.

¹² A.K Adeyemo, "Religious communication as a mass communication: A case study of effective *da'wah* in the contemporary society" '*Uluum Islamiyyah Journal, Malaysia: Universiti Sains Islam*. vol. 12, 2014, pp. 127-143.

forbidden from hoarding the good message. Necessity has it to mention that the task (inviting to the way of Allah) is not expected to be done perfunctorily, wisdom, fair preaching and above all, mild argument are the sine qua non for the activity as enjoined in Q16: 125

In equal measure, quoting the position of Sayyid Qutb on the qualities and responsibilities of *dai*, Sharawi observes that:

Da'wah is in need of wisdom because you only invite to the way of Allah such that have deviated from the path and anybody who deviates from the path of Allah will be found being friendly and accustomed with wrong doing. You need to deal with him gently to be able to bring him out of what he is accustomed to and place him on the straight path. Harshness in *da'wah* of this type will further drive him away.¹³

In this modern world, it is a challenging fact that Muslims of varying ideological inclinations are increasingly multiplying in number which thus poses more challenges to the *daiyah* who have to acquire extra acuity of vision and be well-equipped of knowledge and prowess to record success in his *da'wah* expedition. On the whole, *da'wah* needs overwhelming information channels such as media to reach out to the millions of people all over the globe. Much as the presence of media to facilitate the activities of religions' propagation would be considered a blessing in the contemporary world, the style adopted by the propagators can equally guide or misguide the populace. A study of two radio programmes will be an expositive to the claim.

A Study of Selected Episodes of *Madrasatud Dalilis Shar-ic*

Madrasatud Dalilish-Shari'iy is a radio programme anchored by Prof. Abdul-Rahman Ahmad Al-Imam, an indigene of Ilorin. Born in 1959, Al-Imam studied the Qur'an under his late father after which he obtained a Junior Secondary (*Idadiyyaah*) and Senior Secondary (*Thanawiyah*) certificates from Markaz Ta'lim Al-Arabi, Agege in

¹³ Muhammad Mutawalliy As Sha'rawiy. *Tafsirus Sha'rawiy -Al Khawatir*. Vol. XIII (Beirut: Mutabiuc Akhbaril Yawm., 1997) 8283. <http://www.shamela>.

1978 and 1981 respectively. He obtained Diploma in Arabic at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1982 and B.A, M.A and Ph.D in Arabic between 1984 and 2003 from Islamic University of Madina. He founded Imam Ahmad Islamic Centre in 1992, with Institute for Qur'anic memorization in 2004 under the auspices of the centre, all in Ilorin.¹⁴ His radio programme is majorly on the study of Hadith contained in the book of Sahih Bukhari.¹⁵ Below are some of the episodes he presented.

Episode 102: Ethics of Qur'an Recitation

The presenter, relying principally on the collections of Imam Al-Bukhari, discussed the modes and manners of reciting Qur'an either *at-tilawat*¹⁶ or in Salat. He quoted the fifth hadith in the book of revelation of the work of Imam Al-Bukhari which discusses the circumstance of the revelation of Qur'an verse as contained in the Qur'an thus:

Move not your tongue concerning (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and promulgate it. But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear) (Q75:16-19)

Narrated Said bn Jubair: Ibn Abbas in the explanation of the statement of Allah 'Move not your tongue concerning the Qur'an) to make haste therewith' (75:16) said Allah's Apostle used to bear the revelation with great trouble and used to move his lips (quickly) with the inspiration. Ibn Abbas moved his lips saying 'I am moving my lips in front of you as Allah's Apostle used to move his. Sa'id moved his lips saying: 'I am moving my lips as i saw

¹⁴ Interview with Mallam Muhammadul Awwal Ali Jabata, the founder of the Jabata Salafi Group

¹⁵ The Book of Sahih Bukhari is compiled by Muhammad bn Ismail Al-Bukhari and it is rated most authentic book of hadith and next to Al Qur'an in authenticity.

¹⁶ Recitation or reading the extracts or portion from the Holy Qur'an either in mosques or at home seeking His mercy and peace for the humankind.

Ibn Abbas moving his.' Ibn Abbas added, 'So Allah revealed Quran 75 verse 16 to 19.¹⁷

To unveil the substantial lessons embedded in the hadith, the presenter posited thus: the above hadith strongly affirmed the Prophet's ability to recall with high precision which stresses the uniqueness of his nature. Almighty Allah assured the Prophet that never would he miss anything out in the memorization and the intended meaning of the Qur'an. Though the Prophet (SAW) was proven to be unlettered, the texts of the Qur'an were imprinted on various materials through the efforts of the ten scribes of the Prophet (SAW) under his (the prophet's) auspices. The presenter stressed further the challenging fact that the collectors of hadith have been duly archived through the undaunted effort of the scholars of hadith. He however logically described the collectors of the above hadith as *afrād*.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Qur'anic verse below, according to the presenter, is akin to the Quranic verse which is the focal point of the hadith quoted above: "... Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed, but say, O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge" (Q.20:114)

The presenter inferred quite reasonably that the divine expression 'advance me in knowledge' and other similar verses suffice a Muslim as means of supplicating for increase in knowledge and understanding. He emphasized that the supplication should not be devoid of learning exercise as both go hand in hand. In equal measure, the presenter categorically submitted that whoever intends to acquire the reward of ten good deeds promised by Allah on each letter recited in the Qur'an as contained in an authentic hadith should endeavour to mutter the letters of the Qur'an in recitation, otherwise it is going to be largely regarded as a product of ponderous skimming. He accentuated the need to mutter in the Qur'an recitation especially in the last two units (*rakat*) of the obligatory prayers where recitation is required to be conducted silently. Additionally, the presenter aptly described how Ibn Abbas acted the muttering consequent upon the demonstration of the Prophet as the best way of inculcating knowledge in academics. Importantly however, without mincing

¹⁷Muhammad bn Ismail Abu Abdullah Al Bukhari. *Sahih Al- Bukhari*.Vol. 1 (Baerut: Dari Turukin Najat (1422 A.H) Hadith 5

¹⁸ Five men with unique names in the science of hadith

words, the presenter described the hadith as *musalsal*¹⁹. He contends further that going by the hadith, distortion cannot gain access into the Qur'an. He wittingly corroborated this statement with a Qura'nic verse that reads: "And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?" (Q.54:17)

On the whole, the presenter divided the revelation of the Qur'an into three stages viz: (i) stage of listening (ii) stage of memorizing (iii) stage of understanding. The stage of listening precedes all others. This is when angel Jubril brought forth the revelation and started revealing it to the Prophet (SAW). Next to the aforementioned is the stage of memorizing when the Prophet committed what was revealed to him into memory. The last stage is where the intended meaning of the Qur'an was descended on the Prophet. It is after having completed the three stages (task) that the Prophet then invited his companions and divulged what was revealed to them. In the end, a timely educative intervention or rendition is observed in the presentation of the presenter. The contention of the presentation is that concentration should be given to the recitation of the Quran in a way that the meanings and messages of the Qur'an are not distorted because the Prophet warned against it and threatened that those who recite the Qur'an in a way that the messages and meanings are distorted will have the Qur'an cursing them.

Episode 103: The Universality of the Message of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

The hadith seven (7) of the book of revelation, according to the presenter, is one of the longest ahadith in *Sahih Bukhari*. He strengthened the fact that the hadith, among others, lends credence to the universality of the Prophet's (SAW) mission. Substantiating the assertion further, the presenter quoted the verse that reads: "We have not sent thee but as a universal (messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not" (Q.34:28). The presenter contended that anarchy prevailed over the political lives of the Arab and the unprecedented scenes of the Prophet's mission speak volumes of why his mission captured people's imagination. The presenter posited that the

¹⁹ It is a tradition all of whose narrators in the chain of transmission up to the Ma'sum fulfill the conditions of trustworthiness at the time of narration from the viewpoint of sound character and speech

Prophet (SAW) adopted various methods in communicating his noble messages to the world among which were letters he sent to kings and leaders. He concluded that while some recipients swallowed their haughtiness and accepted the religion of Islam with fretted complacency and arrogance, others repudiated the content of the letter. The presenter thus brought forth the 7th of the book of revelation which was a report of the letter sent by the Prophet Muhammad to the then governor of Sham (Syria-Palestine). The hadith revealed how so close it was for Heraclius to have embraced Islam. He knew it was the truth, but his arrogance, greed for power, and fear of losing his esteemed throne overwhelmed him and beclouded his judgment. The message of the Prophet (SAW) reached Heraclius. However, in order to gather more information about the Prophet (SAW) and his religion, Heraclius invited Abu Sufyan, and his companions and asked him about Prophet Muhammad (SAW) but he was misled. The presenter related the position of the Prophet while in Makkah and his elevated position when he got to Madinah. Emphasizing on the universality of the mission of the Prophet, he discussed the level of the prophet's sophistication and prudence. The presenter, a teacher by profession, educated his listeners on the message of the Prophet and the need for it to be embraced by all and sundry without attacking anybody on his belief.

A Study of Selected Episodes of

Manhaj Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah Da'wah

The presenter of *Manhaj Ahlus-Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* radio programme, Muhammadul-Awwal 'Ali Jabata, was born in the city of Ilorin in 1961. Jabata had his Islamic elementary education under his father's tutelage. He proceeded in his study of Arabic and Islamic education to *Dārul-culūm, IsaleKoto*, Ilorin where he obtained his *Idadiyyah* (junior secondary school) certificate, before proceeding to the popular *Markaz Ta'limil Arabi*, Agege, Lagos, to bag his *Thanawiyyah* (senior secondary school) certificate. In pursuance for higher studies, he gained admission to Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt in 1985/86. After his first degree, he settled in his hometown, Ilorin as a preacher. Although he recognises the efforts of earlier *du'āt* (propagators) in Ilorin, Muhammadul-Awwal 'Ali credited

himself as the true *salafy* and discredits other *salafiyya*²⁰ scholars that are recognised and celebrated in the community. His presentations are mainly criticism of some scholars or Islamic groups. Below are some of these presentations which, though not numbered, are subtitled for reference purposes.

Episode on Ahmadiyyah Sect

The presenter unambiguously posited that stemming up an offshoot, sect or organization in Islam is devoid of basis, hence labeled any act of such as *kufr* (infidelity). He largely premised his argument on the verdict passed by *al-Lajnah ad-Daimah*²¹ on their response to the question on Ahmadiyyah sect which stated that the Pakistan government and the Muslim World League (Rabita Alamill Islamiyy) in Mecca have ruled the Ahmadiyyah outside the fold of Islam. He posited that the Ahmadiyyah group have declared that Mirza Gulam Ahmad, an Indian, is a prophet who has received revelations from Allah and that no one will be correct in his Islam unless he believes in him (Mirza) and on that basis, they are non-Muslims. The Presenter observed that all Muslim scholars have given a unanimous ruling that whoever makes the claim that after the Prophet Muhammad, there can appear a new prophet, is a *Kāfir* (non-Muslim) because he had spoken contrary to the view of Allah's Book, the hadith of the Prophet (SAW) and consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*²² which state that the Prophet Muhammad is the seal of all the prophets.²³ The presenter, in the same episode, discussed in details, major difference between Muslims and the Qadianis²⁴ and submitted that anybody who follows the group is an infidel because in the ruling of scholars, reference is made to the saying of Allah that "Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he a messenger of Allah and the last (seal) of the prophets (Q33:40). The

²⁰ *Salafiyyah* refers to the cluster of different *Sunni* Muslims that have an ideology which agrees with the teachings and practices of the first three generations of Muslims

²¹ This is the collection of the legal opinion of committee of scholars on Islamic issues

²² Muslim *Ummah* is a technical name for 'the Muslim Community'

²³ Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Daimahlil Buhuth al-'Ilmiyyah wal-ifta., Question 3 of Fatwa No. 1615

²⁴ Ahmadi claim to be an Islamic revival or messianic movement originating in Punjab, British India, in the late 19th century. It was founded by Mirza Gulam Ahmad (1835-1908), who claimed to have been divinely appointed as both the promised Mahdi (Guided One) and Messiah expected by Muslims to appear towards the end times and bring about, by peaceful means, the final triumph of Islam

messenger of Allah also confirmed this when he said: "I am the seal of (all) the prophets, there is no prophet after me".²⁵

Without mincing words, the presenter emphatically noted that crediting a human being with the sacred honour of messengership alone is enough proof to discredit or rule out such an offshoot from the sanctified fold of Islam regardless of their appellations with Islam. Other doctrines of Ahmmadiyyah which were strongly castigated by the presenter include: (i) the majority of the prophet's ahadith are ambiguously expressed (ii) denial of prophet Isa's return in a second coming to fight the Al-Masih ad-Dajjal and establish peace on earth (iii) rejection of some hadith such as the hadith of *rajm*²⁶.

Episode on Sufism

The presenter out rightly exterminated Sufism from the sacred fold of Islam for it defies basis in Islam. He labeled the adherents of the sect as infidels and contested that without any shadow of doubt, what readily come to sufi adherents' mind are corroborative evidences to consolidate their footing in Islam. The presenter argued that sufi adherents often express the support of IbnTaymiyyah for Sufism while IbnTaymiyyah in his book titled "*kitabbuqyatul Murtad fi radd alal Mustalsifah..*" classified the sufists into three : (i) a set who invents adhkar which were not practiced by the Prophet (SAW); (ii) a set who invokes other than Allah such as shaykhs, saints etc and (iii) a set that nurses the belief that Allah is omnipresent in person. IbnTaymiyyah, according to the presenter, considered the three categories to be innovators and anyone that innovates in the religion of Islam is an infidel. Other notable set of evidence chiefly relied upon by the adherents of Sufism as asserted by the presenter include the following verses of the glorious Qur'an on the omnipresence of Allah in person (*shakhsiyyah*): Q.20:5, Q.57:4, Q.9:40, Q.58:7, Q.43:43-46, and Q.16:128. According to the presenter, the verses largely signify that Allah

²⁵Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Daimahlil Buhoth al-'Imiyahwal-ifta., Question 3 of Fatwa No. 8536

²⁶*Rajm* means stoning an adulterer to death as a penalty for his offence. This punishment is not explicitly contained in the Qur'an but literatures on Islamic jurisprudence uphold it. Some scholars, especially in the contemporary period, object the authenticity of the said hadith and so, the issue remains controversial because Q.24:2 identifies the punishment for the offence of zina as 100 stripes of the cane and the word 'zina' connotes both adultery and fornication

²⁷

is quite informed and well acquainted with our actions; He is not present everywhere as misconstrued by the said sect. He argued further that if He (Allah) were to be present everywhere, that speaks volumes of His multiplicity which is considered a form of blasphemy. To further strengthen his assertion, the presenter quoted 1094 in the book of Al-Bukhari.²⁸ Importantly, the presenter congruently premised his argument on the concluding part of the hadith which clearly stated the abode that houses Almighty Allah.

Analysis of the Programmes

Whichever the approach employed, the central preoccupation of every *da'iyyah* is to convince his audience of the sincerity of his words. The presenter of *Madrasatuddalilish-shar'ia and Minhaj Ahlus-Sunnah wal jama'ah* and their approaches are two things that could be thought of differently. The presenter of *Madrasatud Daliilsh-Shari'iy* is academic in his discussion and his radio dawah presentations largely bear witness to his profession. He is not deep in ideological criticism. To avoid losing focus, it was not lost on him to make scheme of things. He relies principally on the collection of Imam Al-Bukhari as his chief source of information. His radio programme could be aptly described as an Islamic classroom session on radio; and the title of the radio programme equally attests to this. One could say that all his episodes on radio have been a blend of intellectualism and witticism. Even though he does not hide his partisanship with the sunni school of thought, he accepts, and sometimes, rejects the view of others with convincing proofs. Through the broadcasting of his programme, religious and sunnatic awareness have been craved in the minds of many Muslims, especially the youths. On the whole, he adopts the lecturing method of communication in stating the affairs of his programme. *Manhaj Ahlus-Sunnahwaljama'ah* radio programme is on the other way round. Criticism forms the bedrock of Jabata radio programme. He levels criticism on an iota of innovation birthed to the religion of Islam. In most cases, he ridicules to expose and criticise other scholars who do not fall in with his views. This method of preaching employed by the presenter, however, is not unconnected with the sect he belongs to. He is a member of *Ahlu-t-Takfiri* whose modus operandi is to accuse and declare other

²⁸Muhammad bn Ismail Abu Abdullah Al Bukhari.... V.8 Hadith 1094

Muslims infidels²⁹. The major contention of the sect is that any action of a Muslim that does not strictly agree with the prophet's is an innovation and anybody who innovates has sinned and anybody who sins against Allah and dies in the manner is a *kafir* (disbeliever) who shall be doomed in the hereafter. This stand is based on their interpretation of the hadith that reads: "Avoid novelties, for every novelty is an innovation, and every innovation is an error." And the tradition: "Whoever innovates something in this matter of ours (i.e. Islam) that which is not part of it, will have it rejected". The presenter, most often, dwells in his episodes on controversial issues and takes the side of conservative dogmatism that suits his group. Jabata adopts argumentative method of communication in his programme.

A structured interview was conducted among forty Muslims most of whom are scholars and academics. Thirty-seven respondents (37) unanimously agreed that *Madrasatud-Dalilish-Shari'ais* an Islamic radio programme, considering the fact that teaching and unveiling the pristine messages of Islam to the public is the watchword of the programme. Given the objective vintage point of the programme in its full flush, every issue discussed on the programme is placed under the microscope of clear illustrations and evidences ultimately sourced particularly from the authentic collections of Imam al-Bukhari. The programme according to the respondents, does not fail to shine a spotlight on what Almighty Allah and His messenger consider the best deeds which constitute the fundamental acts of Faith in Islam. The programme predominantly dwells on the jurisprudential issues and provides supporting evidences to them from the authentic sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) with reference to varying opinions among the Islamic scholars.

According to thirty-five (35) respondents, the presenter adopts lecturing methods of communication in driving home his points and such pedagogic methodology is quite often successfully undertaken without violating the canonical content of the Qur'an, the clear Book of Allah. Thirty-five (35) respondents opined that the presentation skill of Professor Abdulrahman Imam Ahmad reflects a traditional BBC expository style of Islamic presentation which put listeners from various religion backgrounds at the liberty of critical reasoning on the acceptance of his teaching. The programme,

²⁹A.D. Shittu and A.R. Idowu. Trends in Dawah activities in Ilorin: An Appraisal of the Jabata Group, Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies (IJOURELS) 2018, 51-62

according to the respondents, has succeeded in weeding off the obscurity that has grown deep in the hearts of so many people on the content and concept of Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW). It is necessary to mention that quite a number of schools and organizations have designed their syllabus and schemes of work through the radio programme.

Despite the fact that *Manhaj Ahlus-Sunnah wal jama'ah* aims at enhancing greater understanding of Islamic faith of monotheism, and indeed to get rid of misinformation, ignorance, limited knowledge, misconception, misleading innovation and inequalities among Muslims, ten (10) respondents who are majorly proponents of his school of thought conclude that the method adopted by the presenter is suitable for the propagation of Islam while Thirty (30) respondents who are Islamic scholars contend that the programme is not Islamic because it condemns all other Muslims as infidels except its preoponents which is against the teaching of Islam. Majority of the respondents argued that his approach is too aggressive and capable of creating an unfriendly society. His condemnation of the early muslim scholars was highly criticized by the respondents and considered to be counter productive because an individual cannot successfully propagate the religion in isolation. Among the respondents are those who consider the presenter of *Manhaj Ahlus-Sunnah wal jama'ahas* a scholar who is breeding terrorists because of his radical approach to the propagation of Islam. Critics of the presenter among the respondents argued that the presenter directs his condemnation to the already practising Muslims only to bring about strictness and severity in the practice of Islam instead of winning new hearts to the religion. Thirty respondents who are notable scholars submitted that some of what the programme preaches is capable of misleading and causing disagreement among the Muslim fold. An example is the condemnation of curtsyng to greet in one of his episodes. According to the presenter, anybody that curtseys to greet has associated partner with Allah and such a person is no longer a Muslim.³⁰The weakness of the presenter's position, according to the respondents, is so stressed by his inability to support it with relevant authorities.

³⁰ A.D. Shittu and A. R Idowu 51-62

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper studied two Islamic Radio Programmes viz: *Madrasatuddalilishar'ic* and *Manhaj Ahlus-Sunnah wal jama'ah* aired in Kwara State Broadcasting Stations (Harmony 103.5 F.M and Albarka 88.7 F.M). With media, propagation of the religion of Islam becomes easier and more effective. However, the success and failure of *da'wah* activities is observed to largely depend on the style of the person inviting to the religion. It is highly demanded of every propagator to imbibe and exhibit the quality of integrity, honesty, self-control, patience, love, kindness, simplicity, leniency, tolerance, open-mindedness, intelligence and at the top of it all, wisdom. The two programmes studied in this work both claim preaching *sunni* but the focus of the two differ and their style vary. While the essence of propagating the religion is to reform the society, the objective will only be achieved if the input is properly screened. It is adequate to conclude that a wrong methodology of *da'wa* is capable of bringing disunity not only between Muslims and non-Muslims but between Muslims. It is based on the above discussed that this paper recommends that there should be an institution of *da'wah* in every locality that will be responsible for regulating *da'wah* activities and screening programmes. On the whole, periodic workshops and seminars should be organized by the institution for *da'wah* activities, in order to keep propagators updated and acquainted with the modern development and how to relate and interact on media. These workshops may not necessarily involve bringing people together, it could be done virtually or relayed on radio.

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**Mesopotamian Reverberations in the Genesis
Account of Creation**

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Abstract

The influence of Mesopotamia cannot be overemphasized in biblical studies especially as it concerns the study of creation story. This goes a long way to recognize some similarities between the Mesopotamia narratives and the biblical account. Most comparisons had been carried out between the Genesis narration and ancient creation narratives to the flood stories and the purpose is to discover the basis and to affirm the authenticity of biblical narration. This work therefore examines the 'reechoing' role of the location known as Mesopotamia, and its place in historical narratives of creation stories and associated stories. The paper adopted the historical-critical method and textual analysis. The

paper concluded that the biblical creation account and associated stories had their origin in the Mesopotamia and among the city-States that inhabited her prior to the emergence of biblical Israel.

Keywords

Mesopotamia, Reverberations, Genesis, Creation

Introduction

It is clear that nations in the ancient Near East are important in the Old Testament studies but more emphasis is given to the documents traceable to Mesopotamia as it has a lot of parallels to the account of the Bible about creation. These parallel accounts had broadened the understanding of modern readers of the Old Testament accounts to have a clear view of the important role played by creation stories in the ancient times.

Mesopotamia is understood to be one of the earliest or the earliest city to be civilized and as such, the effect of the city cannot but be examined in exploring early documents about creation and ancient practices of cultural differences. The understanding of this can help to infer into or to infer from Mesopotamia, in order to have a valid proposition of the components of ancient period.

Being an early place of civilization, Mesopotamia is seen to be of greater prominence than biblical Israel, which appears to be a relative late comer. But an examination of Mesopotamia's narratives and the Hebrew narration is interpreted by some theologians as more significant of the younger gaining superiority than the older as in the case of Joseph, Jacob, and David among others. Only a brief focus was related from the Mesopotamia environs when major emphasis was given to the Israelites' history which came as a 'junior' to Mesopotamia.¹ The early writings which are based on the creation and flood narratives are attributed to two sources; J and P. These two sources are traced to have been responsible for the availability of the biblical source of the stories. Thus, the composition of the story is perceived to have been paralleled with the Mesopotamian narratives.

This paper attempts to establish the necessity of Mesopotamia in the composition of creation story(ies) as found in

¹Shea, W. (1984) "A Comparison of Narrative Elements in Ancient Mesopotamia Creation-flood stories with Genesis 1-9". In *Geoscience Research Institute* Vol. 11, Pg. 9-29 Accessed on July 10, 2019.

the Genesis account, with special focus on the narratives stated in Genesis 1-9.

The scope to be covered is as a result of the similarities found in the prescription of God in the creation narrative to Adam about being fruitful and multiplying the earth which also reads the activities of creation. As a matter of fact, many scholars have discovered the relativity of Genesis narration with some other ancient documents and these events are almost directed towards Mesopotamia as the place of occurrence.²

Geographical Location of Mesopotamia

The study of Mesopotamia is very significant as stated above and a proper understanding of the subject would be important in driving home the purpose of this work. In view of this, the geographical location of Mesopotamia will be briefly examined in this section of the paper. The word 'Mesopotamia' is from a Greek root which is interpreted as "between the rivers". The rivers, Tigris and Euphrates are traced from Genesis 2:11-14 in the narrative of Garden of Eden.³

Both rivers are located in the modern day Iraq, Turkey and Syria. The name 'Mesopotamia' appeared first in the fourth century BC, and it referred to the land located in the northern part of Syria, east of Euphrates. After a very long time, the nomenclature of the location was changed to Iraq and it became an Islamic dominated area when the Muslims conquered the area after 630's. The location of Mesopotamia is characterized with the following geographical attributes.

Water Bodies: The Mesopotamia region was well understood for the availability of water which actually comes from several natural water bodies. As the interpretation of the name implies, Mesopotamia, which means between rivers. In other words, it is a land located between water bodies. The water bodies, Tigris River on the Northern boundary and the River Euphrates on the southern boundary are basic sources of water and components of the city. Both rivers are discovered to flow from those two cardinal points to

²Kramer, S.N. (1971). *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. University of Chicago Press.

³Waters, T.K. (n.d) "Mesopotamia: Geography and Climate"

the Persian Gulf which forms the eastern boundary of Mesopotamia.⁴

Political Geography: The availability of water bodies in the land is a very important factor for the fertility of the land. And as a result, ancient civilization decided to inhabit the land. The most prominent civilization occupying the land was the Akkadians (occupied the middle of Mesopotamia), Sumerians (they occupied the southeastern end of the city) and Assyrians. As a result of the civilization of the occupants of Mesopotamia, they gained more prominence and each of this civilization had great influence whose effect and contributions is effective even in the modern age.

As a result of the instability of the rivers, irrigation systems were adopted as a method of preventing the occurrence of flood and to generate water for their land. The only source of food for the people was to grow crops for themselves and since there was little or no rain at the time which preceded Noahic era. As a result of this factor, the farmers needed to water their plant by all means which made them connect to the rivers and dig canals to draw water for their farm lands. In ensuring that things go on smoothly in the farms, the farmers adopted various means in regulating and controlling the water on their farm.⁵The occupants of Mesopotamia were known for occupations based on the art of the land they occupied. Bottero,⁶ reiterated that the land is divided into two geographical classifications basically; Northern Mesopotamia and Southern Mesopotamia.

Northern Mesopotamia: The upper part of Mesopotamia also known as Northern Mesopotamia is a very fertile part of the land as a result of the frequent rain and rivers flowing down from the mountains. The flow of water from the northern arm provided more chances of irrigation.⁷

Southern Mesopotamia: The lower parts of the Mesopotamia known as Southern Mesopotamia is recognized for its marshy land

⁴Waters, T.K. (n.d) "Mesopotamia: Geography and Climate"

⁵Leick, G. (2002). *Mesopotamian: The Invention of the Cities*. Scarecrow Press.

⁶Bottero, J. (2001). *Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* John Hopkins Press.

⁷Shea, W. (1984) "A Comparison of Narrative Elements in Ancient Mesopotamia Creation-flood

Stories with Genesis 1-9". In *Geoscience Research Institute* Vol. 11, Pg. 9-29 Accessed on July 10, 2019.

Shea, 1984

and there are many flat barren plains. The settlers in this part of the land had to make contact with residents of other parts for the purpose of trading and gathering foods to support their homes, according to Kramer.⁸ The Southern Mesopotamia was known to be a place for Chaldean marshes, the river of Babylon, the inland freshwater sea of Naja and the area is surrounded by red cliff standing far above the ground.

Fortunately, the first permanent settlements were being discovered in the lower part of Mesopotamia, which is the reason for being referred to as the cradle of civilization.⁹ After some time, the land of ancient Mesopotamia increased in population and size that the movement of people to the land caused the land to take a new face, as even the lower part of the land was later understood to be fertile. The modern day Mesopotamia location is traced to current Iraq. In the 1980s one of the many conflicts that were recorded in the area was the Iran-Iraq war. But there is the possibility for the area which had been the cradle of civilization, to have rejuvenation and regain its lost glory of being a centre of attraction.

Occupants of Ancient Mesopotamia

Archaeological excavations that started around 1840s CE revealed human settlements dating to 10,000 BCE in Mesopotamia that indicate that the fertile conditions of the land between two rivers allowed an ancient hunter-gatherer people to settle in the land, domesticate animals, and turn their attention to agriculture. Trade soon followed, and with prosperity came urbanization and the birth of the city. It is generally thought that writing was invented due to trade, out of the necessity for long-distance communication, and for keeping more careful track of accounts.¹⁰

The land of Mesopotamia, known for its characteristic of civilization, was understood to be a very populated area and a place of great prominence. The influence of the land was felt across other nations and their culture was of vast effect on the cultural practices of other nations, as other nations looked unto them as the model for advancement, welfare, development, commerce, and technology. Mesopotamia, according to Kramer, was occupied by

⁸Kramer, S.N. (1971). *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. University of Chicago Press.

⁹Shea,

¹⁰Jacobsen, T. (1978). *The Treasures of Darkness*. Yale University Press.

varieties of nations but dominated by the Sumerians, Akkadians, Persians, Babylonians and Assyrians, who are all ancient civilizations. The land was really home for some of the world's most ancient famous States with highforms of development.¹¹

The influence of the occupants of the land was across board as their effect lasted into the modern days. The Akkadians' language was used in writing great ancient materials whose literary works are used in the modern day. One of the great literary works traced to be documented by their language is the Epic of Gilgamesh. The Sumerians were known as the earliest civilization and they are very pronounced for their creation of wheel and the base-60 numerical that is used today. The Assyrians were known for their military strength and one of the greatest empires in world history.¹²

The Mesopotamians were also known for the development of new technologies, some of the technologies includes; glassmaking, food control, metalworking, textile weaving, and water storage/irrigation.¹³ They were also part of the early Bronze Age people in the world. This shows the existential distance of its existence. The people made use of copper, bronze, iron and gold in constructing various items, especially weapons of war as other neighbours depended on them for these weapons and they were ready to patronize them. Basically, these expensive items were used in large quantities to decorate their palaces, in order to show the strength of their activities.¹⁴

Being the cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia, unlike Greece and Egypt, was a combination of various cultures and people as they were bonded only by their gods (though, the names of each gods varied according to location and period), scripts or writings and the way they treated women according to Mark.¹⁵ Despite the fact that they lived in the same land, they had different customs, laws and even languages, as those paraphernalia of the Akkad did not merge with those of Babylon. It could therefore be deduced

¹¹Kramer, S.N. (1971). *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. University of Chicago Press.

¹²Shea, W. (1984) "A Comparison of Narrative Elements in Ancient Mesopotamia Creation-flood Stories with Genesis 1-9". In *Geoscience Research Institute* Vol. 11, Pg. 9-29 Accessed on July 10, 2019.

¹³Jacobsen, T. (1978). *The Treasures of Darkness*. Yale University Press.

¹⁴Bottero, J. (2001). *Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* John Hopkins Press.

¹⁵Mark, J. J. (2018). "Mesopotamian" in *Ancient History Encyclopedia* Accessed on July 10, 2019

that, Mesopotamia encapsulated multiple empires and civilizations rather than being a single civilization. Mesopotamia was referred to as 'cradle of civilization' because of great developments that occurred in the part of the land occupied by the Sumerians in 4th BC (4000BC).¹⁶

Mesopotamia was known in the ancient time as a place of learning. Their influence was not limited to the creation of weapons of war only but also they were vast in education, it is believed that Thales of Miletus, who is known as the first philosopher studied there. A Babylonian saying about 'water' is traced to Thales and his fame was dominant in the area.

Furthermore, Mark held that there were over a thousand deities in the pantheon of the Mesopotamian gods in the multiple cultures and many stories concerning the gods (which includes, the creation myth, the Enuma Elish). It is generally accepted that biblical tales such as the Fall of Man and the Flood of Noah among many others originated in Mesopotamian tradition, as they first appear in Mesopotamian works such as The Myth of Adapa and the Epic of Gilgamesh, the oldest written story in the world.¹⁷ The Mesopotamians believed that they were co-workers with the gods and that the land was infused with spirits and demons (not the modern Christian understanding of demon).¹⁸

Creation Accounts in Ancient Near East

There are lots of creation narratives from the occupants of Mesopotamia which are much related to the content of the Hebrew narrative as recorded in the Bible. The occupants, as already noted in the previous section, were highly civilized people and they must have needed responses to the origin of the world and Man which is a very important reason for the establishment of a creation story. This section thus, presents the creation-flood narratives of the residents of Mesopotamian (Sumerians) and the Babylonians as submitted by Shea.¹⁹

¹⁶Kramer, S.N. (1971). *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. University of Chicago Press.

¹⁷Mark, J. J. (2018). "Mesopotamian" in *Ancient History Encyclopedia* Accessed on July 10, 2019 Mark, 2018

¹⁸ Mark,

¹⁹ Shea, 1984

The Sumerian Creation Story: The Eridu Genesis

i. Texts

There are three major fragments of tablets comprising the Eridu Genesis and they have been known for long and treated separately, only recently have they been united to form their original Creation-Flood story which began with a reference to Creation, continued with a description of antediluvian life, and ended with the story of the Flood. The reconstructed story formed by the tablets from Nippur, Ur, and Nineveh follows below the three narrations.

ii. Antediluvian Life

The first thirty lines of the Nippur text are missing. The first available column recites the birth goddess Nintur's remedy for the nomadic and uncultured condition of humankind. She gave instructions for the building of the antediluvian cities not only as centers of culture and civilization, but especially for the worship of the gods, including herself. The narration is as stated below in a poetic tone:

May they come and build cities and cult-
places,
that I may cool myself in their shade;
may they lay the bricks for the cult-cities in
pure spots, and
may they found places for divination in pure
spots."
She gave directions for purification, and cries
for quarter,
the things that cool (divine) wrath.
She perfected divine service and the august
offices,
she said to the (surrounding) regions:
"Let me institute peace there".

When An-Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursaga [Nintur] fashioned the dark headed (people) they had made the small animals from (out of) the earth come up from the earth in abundance and had let there be, as befits (it), gazelles, (wild) donkeys, and four-footed beasts in the desert". Enki (the god of wisdom) and Nintur were

particularly active in creation. The reference to the fashioning of the "dark headed people" (the Sumerians' name for themselves) and the making of the animals indicates that a creation account probably preceded this passage.

It is probable that the missing section of the text related the development of humankind's plight. This idea is confirmed by the text from Ur which refers to a time when there was neither agriculture nor weaving of cloth. While these conditions produced poverty among the people, they lived in relative safety because there were no dangerous beasts, insects, or serpents, and "as there was no fear of attack, man had no opponent".

The next readable portion of the text discusses the establishment of kingship which was believed to be a gift from the gods. As the chief agent responsible for carrying out the gods' commands, the king directed the construction of cities and provided cult places and services for the gods. He also guided the people in the irrigation and growth of crops. Each city received half-bushel baskets from the harvest. Nintur assigned a patron deity to each of the five cities. At the top of the next column another break occurs.²⁰

The legible portion contains the end of the list of kings who reigned in these cities. The rest of this information has been preserved in the first portion of the Sumerian King List. Antediluvian kings had remarkably long reigns. Two cities had one king each, and one city was listed as having had three kings. The longest length of reign 64,800 years was listed for three different kings. Three more kings supposedly ruled 36,000 years. The shortest length of reign is 10,800 years. The scribe of this source totaled the dominions of all the cities to 352,800 years for the duration of kingship during the antediluvian world.

Although attempts have been made to relate this king-list to the antediluvian patriarchs listed in Genesis 5, there is no linguistic correspondence. Neither have precise correspondences been found between the figures given for the lengths of reign and the lengths of life in these sources. Both convey, however, a similar picture of a relatively small number of long-lived antediluvian generations. The biblical list leads to a much shorter overall time span for this period.²¹

²⁰ Shea, 1984

²¹Waters, n.d.

Jacobsen was the scholar who synthesized the text of these fragments into a coherent story.²² He has selected three main themes to explain the significance of this text. In the first theme the culture that developed from Nintur's directions is considered to be superior to man's nomadic state. In the third theme Jacobsen holds that the Flood story was well-preserved and known in the ancient world because it is a story of survival rather than one of destruction.²³ The second theme is important for literary critical studies. For the section of the Eridu Genesis which deals with the antediluvian kings and their cities, Jacobsen has noted:

In style this section is clearly modeled on the great Sumerian King list and its formulaic language and arrangement. As to its import one is somewhat at a loss the closest one can come is probably to credit the inclusion of this section in the tale to pure historical interest on the part of its composer.²⁴

Since similar passages in Genesis also can be viewed historically, Jacobsen's conclusion about this section of the Eridu Genesis is significant for comparative purposes. Next, Jacobsen compares the Eridu Genesis with the biblical parallel found in Gen 1-9. The tripartite divisions of both narratives obviously correspond. The first two sections deal with Creation and the antediluvians, especially through lists of the leading figures of that period. Both conclude with a story of the Flood.²⁵

Jacobsen has further noted that both sources have arranged these main segments along a linear time line, rather than grouping them around a folk hero as is more common in such literature.²⁶ This arrangement allows the successive events to relate logically to each other as cause and effect. Such arrangements in literary compositions from the ancient world are so unusual that Jacobsen was compelled to suggest a new designation.

²² Jacobsen, 1978

²³ Jacobsen

²⁴ Jacobsen

²⁵ Jacobsen

²⁶ Jacobson

The Babylonian Creation Story: The Atra-Hasis Epic

i. Texts

The Atra-Hasis Epic is named after its human hero who served as the Babylonian Noah (Noah is the biblical hero who escaped the flood solely with his family). Several whole and partial copies of the cuneiform tablets comprising this series are known. All tablets and fragments have been edited together in a definitive edition of the textual series by W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard.

ii. Creation

The commencement of the Atra-Hasis Epic is set in a time before the creation of man, a time when Enlil forced the younger gods to dig rivers and canals. After forty years the junior gods rebelled, burned their work tools, and marched on the house of Enlil:

Let us confront the Chamberlain,
That he may relieve us of our heavy work.
The counselor of the gods, the hero,
Come, let us unnerve him in his dwelling!

Awakened and warned by a servant, Enlil called an assembly of the gods to deal with the situation. To satisfy the younger gods, Enki proposed that man should be created to be labourers. They agreed to this suggestion and summoned Nintu, the mother goddess, to cooperate with Enki in the project. Made from clay mixed with the blood of a sacrificed god (We-ila), man would be a mixture of the divine and human. We-ila's identity and nature remain obscure, and perhaps his name is a deliberate distortion of the word for man, Awilum.²⁷

Enki opened his mouth, and addressed the great gods, "On the first, seventh, and fifteenth day of the month I will make a purifying bath. Let one god be slaughtered so that all the gods may be cleansed in a dipping. Let Nintu mix clay, that god and man may be thoroughly mixed in the clay". These instructions were then carried out, as is related in an almost word-for-word repetition of the instructions.

²⁷Metz, H.C. (2004). *Iraq A Country Study* LLC: Kessinger Publishing

The date of man's creation has not previously attracted much attention. Purifying baths for the god to be sacrificed took place on the 1st, 7th, and 15th days of the lunar month. Though not exactly chronological weeks, these quarters of the moon are relatively close in length. The god's execution and the creation of man apparently followed directly after the purifying bath on the 15th day of the month. This places man's creation at the end of one lunar quarter or "week." Similarly, the biblical creation of man took place on the 6th day of a 7-day week.²⁸

Although the name for the 7th day of the lunar month was derived from the number seven, the name for the 15th day of the lunar month – the day of the full moon was derived independently from this numerical cycle: *sa-pa-at-tu* or *sapattu*. Since the second sign in this word can also be read as 'ba', this word can be read either as *sapattu* or as *sabattu*.²⁹ The significance of this resemblance to the Hebrew word *abbat* (the final case ending vowel has been lost in Hebrew) has long been debated. While there is no serious phonetic problem in linking these words, it has been unpopular because this word – if it is the same – has been applied to different objects in the two cultures. The Hebrews applied it to a rest day which recurred at the end of a 7-day week, while the Babylonians applied it to the day of the full moon which recurred monthly.³⁰

By linking *sabattu/abbat* to the creation of man, the Atrahasis Epic supports the idea that the names for these institutions may have been derived from the same source. *Sabattu* appears to have been the day in which *We-ila* was killed and his blood mixed with clay. This was the great initiating point in man's creation, though more steps in this process remained to be accomplished. The clay/blood mixture ensured that man would be a combination of the divine and human. In a sense, therefore, man was created on Sabbath. In Genesis man was created on the day before Sabbath, but this difference is much less important than the over-arching connection between Sabbath and the creation of man. It is unlikely that such a specific linkage occurred in both accounts by chance. Both accounts can be traced to the same basic conception which was known to both cultures.³¹

²⁸Wallis, E.A. (2005). *Babylonian Life and History*. Barnes and Noble Press.

²⁹ Wallis,

³⁰Bertman, S. (2005). *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* Oxford University Press.

³¹ Jacobson, 1978

Therefore the idea of the link between Sabbath and the Creation of man can now be found in an extra-biblical source from the first half of the second millennium B.C., and as is commonly believed by Assyriologists, many elements in this type of story undoubtedly derived from still older written or oral traditions. From the biblical point of view the differences involved in the Babylonian account would have been introduced by gradual corruption from polytheistic conceptions.

The second phase in the process of Creation involved Enki, Nintu, and some assistant birth goddesses who broke bits of clay from the central stock and formed these pieces into inert statuettes of seven men and seven women. These were located adjacent to the birth "bricks," the place of parturition for Babylonian women in labour. The womb broke open in the 10th month and mankind was born. At this point Nintu diverges to give advise on marriage and obstetrics. Evidently the reading of this story served as a good-luck omen at the time of childbirth.³²

The Hebrew Creation Story: Genesis 1

Having considered the narration of the Mesopotamian society, the Biblical account is also necessary to be presented in order to understand and feel the echo in the Hebrew narrative. The narrative appears to have taken place in Mesopotamia. Since it had been discovered earlier that one of the rivers mentioned in Genesis narration is found in the land of Mesopotamia.

The Hebrew narration of creation started with the presupposition of the understanding of God as the only being in existence. Only God was therefore presented as the subject to perform all acts and forms of creation. The Spirit of God was seen to have arrived paving a way for the full commencement of creation work. All creatures (plants, aquatic animals, land animals, firmament etc) were created by the spoken word of God.³³

The creation of man was the last day's work. It presents God having a discussion to some set of individuals who were not actually specified. But some scholars are of the opinion that the 'us' must have been the other persons of the God-head.³⁴ The discussion was presented as a two side discussion but there was only one speaker. The subject of discussion was to create man in the

³² Shea, 1984

³³ Mark, 2018

³⁴Black, J. *et al* (2018). *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*. Oxford University Press.

image and likeness of God, and the purpose was for man to dominate the creatures that had been created earlier. The purpose of this creation was for God to have an earthly representative.

This is not so much in contrast to the purpose behind the creation of man in the Epic of Atra-Hasis whose purpose was for man to substitute the gods from their labour.³⁵ Consequently, the creation narrative was concluded by the explanation of the Sabbath. God was seen to have rested on the seventh day after the work of creation. The Sabbath later became a practice for the Jews as was to be prescribed in the Decalogue.

Significance of Mesopotamia in Creation Story

From the early period of studying the creation narratives, the study has always been incomplete without the mention of Mesopotamia. One could be emphatic that the Mesopotamian factor in creation story is of lasting effect and its importance is the focus of discussion in this section of this paper. These significances are presented as below:

Mesopotamia's idea of royalty is presented in the Genesis story of man's creation according to Shea.³⁶ The Mesopotamians understood royalty to mean ruling over vassal nations, and this idea was also portrayed in Genesis 1:28. Man was then to act as kings or as superiors over the other creatures. This purpose of creating man is of utmost significance in the story because it distinguishes the Biblical account from other Mesopotamian narratives.

Mesopotamia is also important in its use of time for the calculation of creation duration. There had been various arguments about the exact timing of the creation days, but the availability of the '60' minute/hour as used by the Mesopotamians had helped in solving the puzzle. The same time calculation is in use even in contemporary world. In affirming this position, Metz³⁷ expressed that the well-being of a community depended upon close observation of natural phenomena. Scientific or proto-scientific activities occupied much of the priests' time. An instance is stated of the Sumerians, who believed that each of the gods was represented by a number. The number sixty, sacred to the god 'An',

³⁵Kriwaczek, P. (2014). *Babylon: Mesopotamia and the birth of Civilization* Thomas Dunne Books

³⁶ Shea, 1984

³⁷ Metz, 2004

was their basic unit of calculation. The minutes of an hour and the notational degrees of a circle were of a Sumerian concept.

Also, Mesopotamia has helped in proving the authenticity of the Bible as ahistorical material far from a divine self-claim of the Bible. Mark noted that the archaeologists who sought physical evidenceto support the biblical stories found exactly the opposite.³⁸Cuneiform was deciphered by the scholar and translator; George Smith (1840-1876 CE) in 1872 CE. The story of the Great Flood and Noah's Ark, the story of the Fall of Man, the concept of a Garden of Eden, even the complaints of Job had all been written centuries before the biblical texts by the Mesopotamians.³⁹ This relays the fact that the narratives of the Bible are only historically credible and may not necessarily be divinely inspired.

Furthermore, Mesopotamia is of great landmark as a result of her early civilization in ancient times. Their teaching and philosophy appears to be the basis on which other neighbouring nations would build their philosophies, including the Israelites. The cultures of the Mesopotamians were adopted by other nations and theybecame a basis for them to build their cultures as the Mesopotamians were cynosure of all eyes. This had really made it possible to document stories (which are discovered in modern age as archeological evidences) and the education of people was also an advantage for proper writing.

Conclusion

The study of antiquity is basically characterized by the effect from Mesopotamia, as the effects cut across all spheres especially in studying the practices of the Israelites and their history. The creation story found in the biblical account is seen to have some Mesopotamian resemblances and parallels. This has more advantage to echo the historical credibility of the biblical narratives.

Modern readers are therefore to recognize the importance of the practices and culture of the Mesopotamians as it has gone a long way in giving a proper understanding of the events which had taken place in the early period of the existence of man. If the Mesopotamians were complacent and had not come up with ideas and philosophies that could have led to documentation through the various means, there would have been lot of erroneous and heretic teachings about the origin of the world and man. The influence of

³⁸ Mark, 2018

³⁹ Mark,

Mesopotamians are not limited to the creation narrative only as their effects are also felt in other incidences that took place in the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

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**Knowledge, Belief and Justification of the African
Conception of Reincarnation**

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Abstract

The study examines the epistemic justification of reincarnation in African Philosophy. It is also an attempt to investigate the problem of reincarnation and the belief in the ancestral world. It deploys the critical tool of epistemic justification to determine the conditions that render the African conception of reincarnation defensible. Epistemic justification is a philosophical theory aimed at investigating the extent to which a person's beliefs are knowledge-based and therefore worth holding. The paper defends the thesis that African idea of reincarnation is justifiable and that belief in reincarnation can coexist with the belief in the ancestral world without contradiction. Humans are reborn and come back into this world several times until they have sufficiently paid for all their past misdeeds and purified themselves, before their souls are released to go to the ancestral world. A person's destiny is never fulfilled in the first trip; hence a rebirth or reincarnation takes place to give the individual a succeeding chance or chances to fulfill his or her original destiny.

Keywords

Belief, Evidence, justification, knowledge, Reincarnation,

Introduction

Reincarnation has been an issue of academic interest, especially in African countries. One would find lively discussions, for example, among the Yoruba, Igbo and Nupe of Nigeria, Akamba of Kenya, Akan of Ghana, Lango of Uganda, Luo of Zambia, and Ndebele of Zimbabwe. Millions of people throughout recorded history have believed in reincarnation. The idea is found among some Greek philosophers and is known to have existed in some ancient religions such as Druidism, and later on, Spiritism, Theosophy and Eckankar. It is also found in primal societies around the world, in places such as Africa, North America and Australia.¹

Those who do not believe in it are apt to think that those who do are indulging in wishful thinking. The question now is: Can a belief in reincarnation be justified epistemically or not? As soon as we attempt to confront this question, however we are faced with the fact that the belief has been expressed in many forms, some of which may contain confusions, and others not. Many of those who believe there is an afterlife would unhesitatingly identify the doctrine of immortality of the soul as the right version of this belief. It has two implications. First, it implies the dualistic view that people are composite beings, consisting of an immaterial soul and a physical body. Second, it implies that the immaterial soul is the real person, and the body is merely temporary residence. Belief in the immortality of the soul is the first step in the doctrine of reincarnation. This is because a soul has to be immortal to qualify to reincarnate, while the doctrine of reincarnation is metaphysico-moral because one's moral probity is believed to be a function of what material form one's soul will take in a reincarnation. That of immortality is purely a religious one.² Even though human bodies disintegrate after death, reincarnation is automatic, and it obeys spiritual causal laws. The paper explores the evidence of memory, family resemblance, birth marks for the belief in our epistemic justification of reincarnation.

¹Obeyesekere Gananath, *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth*, (California: University of California Press 2020) p.15.

² Campbell Momoh, "Godlessness in Ancient African Metaphysics", *Journal of Philosophy and Development*, 2 (1&2), 1996, p. 65.

Nature of Epistemic Justification

Epistemology is the technical term for the theory of knowledge; it is a branch of philosophy concerned with nature, possibility, source, scope and limits of knowledge. Justification is crucial for avoiding error and increasing our state of knowledge. The theory of justification is a part of epistemology that attempts to determine the standards (of knowledge) required for the defense of the beliefs we hold. In the context of this paper, we can say justification is the reason why we hold a belief in reincarnation. The theory of justification is influenced by the definition of knowledge as 'justified true belief.' Epistemology is always linked to ontology-assumptions about the state of being. It asks: what is the nature of reality? When a claim is in doubt, justification can be used to support the claim and reduce or remove the doubt. Knowledge would not be possible without belief justification. If I did not have the kind of belief I do – if, for instance, I were wearing dark sunglasses and could not tell the difference between a green field and a smoothly ploughed one that is really an earthen brown – then on the basis of what I now see, I would not know that there is a green field before me. To see how knowledge fits into the picture so far sketched, consider two points. First, justified belief is important because at least the typical things we know we also justifiably believe on the same basis that grounds our knowing them. Second, much of what we justifiably believe we also know.³

Africans believe that reincarnation usually occurs within the same immediate or extended family. The reincarnated person is usually identified by means of birthmarks, statement a child makes when it becomes able to speak, and behavioral resemblances between the child and the deceased person presumably reincarnated.

However, an oracle is usually consulted to confirm identification. It is believed that the deceased inhabit a discarnate realm. The Nigerian version of the African conception of reincarnation includes belief in a group of souls called *ogbanje* who are born, die in early life and are reborn in the same family often repeatedly.⁴ Others include those who died accidental deaths, committed suicide, or died prematurely. Reincarnation cannot be partial or apparent; either it is, or it is not. Granted the truth of the

³ Robert Audi, *A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, (New York: Routledge and Kegan 2003), p.20.

⁴ G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, (London: Francass and Company,1966) , P. 121.

continual existence thesis, Onyewuenye is of the opinion that “the description of some African scholars of the ‘return’ of the living dead as reincarnation is due to the influence of western anthropologists and administrators who had earlier labeled it as such”.⁵ He regards such a conception as foreign and blatantly unchristian. But the truth is that reincarnation is not supposed to be part of Christian doctrine; it is an African religious idea.

Africans strongly believe that in reincarnation the dead actually came back to give guidance to the living or to prove that they still exist. Reincarnation is come back again after death to live. The Yoruba people of Nigeria also believe that at death a soul or personality passes into a realm of discarnate being. The three widely held beliefs are that (1) status loses no importance in the discarnate realm; they are more concerned about their status in the discarnate realm than they are about the fact of dying. (2) The discarnate realm is regarded as a joyless limbo from which the discarnate soul, with a few exceptions are eager to return to terrestrial life, they therefore consider terrestrial life to be desirable, and they have no aspiration to stop being reborn, this attitude is word affirming not world renouncing. (3) The ceremony of the second burial of a deceased person influences the condition of the discarnate person by helping them to achieve tranquility in the discarnate realm and a satisfactory positioning for reincarnation. “If this rite is not properly conducted, the deceased person’s spirit may become displeased and bring misfortune to the negligent offspring.”⁶ The second burial takes place within a week, a year or more in *Igbo* in Nigeria, this burial can be a costly affair because of the animal sacrifices.⁷ In traditional Nigeria it is believed that persons who die young will reincarnate more quickly than those who die at an older age. Also, bargain made before reincarnating with one’s personal god (*ori*) may result in more favorable opportunities for advancement in social status in the next life. The newborn infant is usually examined for birth marks or birth defects; this may be found to correspond with marks or mutilations that a deceased person had on his or her body. If the marks on the body correspond with sufficient closeness to wounds or other marks on the body of the deceased, this observation may settle the baby’s identification immediately.

⁵Innocent Onyewuenye, *African Belief in Reincarnation: A Philosophical Reappraisal*, Enugu: Snaap Press, 1996), p.16.

⁶ Francis Arinze, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*, (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. 1970), p.17.

⁷ Basden, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

Family can also consult an oracle specializing in identifying the correct previous personality; this is usually done, when someone holds a hen's egg firmly in his or her hand while a list of deceased persons is recited. When the recitation gets to the name of the person who has reincarnated in the infant's body, the eggs shatters. The consultation take place when the infant is about a month old.⁸Sometimes the child may show behavioral resemblance to that of a particular deceased person, this can lead to the identification of the reincarnated person. The child can also make statements that indicate memories of the possessions owned by a deceased person or of events in that person's life. This usually occurs when the child learns to speak. The Yoruba tribe of Nigeria also attaches importance to naming ceremony, they give children several names, which indicate the identification of the person who reincarnated, e.g. my father is back means *Babatunde*, my mother is back means *Yetunde*, my child is back means *Omobowale*. Other names express thanks for the birth of a child or disappointment, especially if a woman is expecting a male child, but gave birth to a female child. In Yoruba tribe of Nigeria, an *Ogbanje* child lives only a few months or years and then dies. Some *Ogbanje* dies suddenly without any premonitory illness. A single *Ogbanje* may be reborn, die and be reborn in the same family only to die again. The word *Ogbanje* means "to make several trips to and from a place".⁹ It is believed that the *Ogbanje* children take an oath in the discarnate realm to die young in the next life. *Ogbanje* children may make unreasonable demand on their parents, sometimes with a limit or stronger threat as they will die if not given what they ask for. The parents in depression to keep the child alive often accede to such demands. This can lead to favoritism and cause tension among other family members.

Our belief in reincarnation provides us with knowledge. It is something that answers the question— how do you know? If your knowledge is perceptually based, it is plain that the answer to this question is something in support of the known belief to which perception contributes. In general, possessing factual knowledge implies having something available that shows the known proposition to be true. When you possess factual knowledge, the answer to the question: - How do you know?—constitutes what is

⁸ Northcote Thomas, *Anthropological Report on the Ibo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria Part1, Law and Custom of the Ibo-Speaking Peoples of Ibo of the Awka Neighbourhood, South Nigeria*, (New York: Negro University Press, 2020), p.30.

⁹ John Noon, "A Preliminary Examination of the Death Concepts of the Ibo" *American Anthropologists* XLIV (6), 1942, p.641.

called your epistemic justification. Epistemic justification is the sort of justification that is a necessary condition for factual knowledge. Our epistemic justification of reincarnation is the evidence of the truth of the proposition.

The evidence one has at a time is restricted to what is both available and acceptable. One might say instead that everything that is available is part of the evidence one has, but that what this body of evidence makes rational or justified depends upon the epistemic status of that evidence. On this view, acceptability determines not what counts as evidence possessed but rather what is made rational or justified by the evidence possessed.¹⁰ Justification has long been considered a necessary condition of knowledge. Justification is required to distinguish knowledge from a guess that happens to be right, a justified belief is one supported by evidence, by reasons. The narrower question is, can we be justified in believing in reincarnation without knowing that one is justified? The opposing answers to this question bring out two rival conceptions of justification and of the nature of epistemological principles. To the externalist, being justified means being in a position to know. Knowledge differs from a lucky guess in that the knower stands in the appropriate relationship to the fact which is known, it is this relationship that makes a belief non accidental, non arbitrary, and hence justified. Whether or not one is in this relationship is a matter of fact, it does not depend on the knowledge of one's cognitive situation. Epistemological principles identify the nature of the appropriate relationship between the person's cognitive state and the world, and thus the necessary conditions for justification. Our cognitive state must satisfy these conditions. This may occur without the reflective knowledge that one has satisfied them.

Justifying Evidence and Beliefs in Reincarnation

Knowledge acquisition is central to the being of the human person. The desire to know is innate in every human being. Every day we make claim to certain knowledge. We go as far as arguing for the thing we claim to know. But the questions are: What actually do we know? Is knowledge relative or subjective? Can there be absolute claim to knowledge? These and many more form the subject matter of epistemology.

¹⁰ Earl Conee, and Richard Feldman, *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology*, (Oxford: Oxford: University Press, 2004), p.167.

The belief in reincarnation has been in existence for quiet sometimelow, and appears to be gaining ground in African philosophy. The paper examines the justifying evidence of the values and beliefs of the African people in reincarnation. Reincarnation is a basic concept that has attracted the attention of many thinkers, including ancient philosophers; this is due to the fact that the doctrine is directly connected with such enduring but perplexing questions as the nature of a person, life and death which humans have always been interested in. Reincarnation has been defined as “the passage of the soul from one body to another usually of the same species,¹¹but not all forms of reincarnation. The Buddhist does not believe in the existence of the soul, even though they teach reincarnation. Reincarnation is simply the belief that a person who lives on earth can be reborn. The element involved here is understood differently depending on one’s orientation. There are many pieces of epistemic evidence to justify African belief in reincarnation, these include, (1) Family resemblances and behavioral pattern: some babies resemble their departed ancestors so much that it may seem obvious that such ancestors reincarnated that particular baby. For example, the baby will have birth marks and scars that are peculiar to the ancestor who is believed to have reincarnated the baby. On the other hand some babies exhibit certain character traits of an ancestor in forms of skills, talent and behavior. (2) Memory transfer: There are cases where children recount the history of an ancestor, their actions and incidents that happened for a long time before their birth. Some reincarnated children can find certain things hidden by them in their previous life. (3) Divination: In some family when a child is born, the parents or any of the child’s relation will consult a diviner to ascertain which of the families ancestor has reincarnated. It is this knowledge of the incarnate person that will enable the parents to know how to treat or handle the child. This will also determine the name given to the baby. With the increase in the popularity of reincarnation, it appears that there is the need for proper examination of the justification of the belief.

Reincarnation can be defined as the rebirth of a dead individual. The first pre-condition for reincarnation is the death of a reincarnated person.¹² It also means successive animation of

¹¹ Thomas, *Op.cit.*, p. 70.

¹² Sophie Oluwole, *Witchcraft Reincarnation and the Godhead*, (Lagos: Excel Publishers, 1995), p.42.

different human bodies by one human mind.¹³ Here, the soul returns after death to live in a new body. The Igbo “word for reincarnation is “ilo uwa,” which means a return to the world., They believe that a person returning to the world, to life after death, exhibits concrete signs of his former person.¹⁴ The Akan people of Ghana speak of reincarnation as essential so that each individual can reach his or her full potential for compassion. It is like a man who dips a bucket in a deep well. The weight of the bucket when lifted up from the well would tell whether it is full of water or not. If it is felt to be light and not full, down goes back the bucket until the weight assures the man the bucket is full. So is the soul’s coming forth and going back into the source. He is not lifted up and taken into service with the source until his bucket is completely filled with good – until the destiny of the soul is fully realized. And then it is a glad home going for the fully integrated soul. The return of a soul to earth is not therefore like a condemned criminal to be hanged, but more like a little child ready to learn more and to do better.¹⁵In Africa especially among the Yoruba tribe there is the belief that it is not the entire spirit of the deceased that reincarnates in a new baby but some of his spiritual qualities. This is because if we say that the whole spirit of the dead father or mother is reborn, it could not at the same time reincarnate and still remain in the ancestral world. But rather, it is the spirit that remains in the ancestral world, while features of it are reborn in one several children. This is often justified on the basis that there are three different facets of human personality. While a particular facet transforms into an ancestral spirit, another goes to the spirit world, and the remaining one reincarnates or gets born again. To this end Azenabor writes:

We understand that the ancestors in the ancestral world are those that have completed their 14 times of reincarnating processes and now stay permanently in the ancestral world. While the reincarnating ancestors are those still to complete their, times reincarnating processes. In this explanation there is also the idea of family continuity that the bond of

¹³ Peter Geach, *Reincarnation in God and the Soul*, (New York: Schocken Book Inc. 1969), p.1.

¹⁴ Innocent Asouzu, *The Method and Principles Complimentary Reflection in and Beyond African Philosophy*, (Calabar: University Press, 2004), p. 169.

¹⁵ J.B. Danquah,, *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion*, (London: Frankcass, 1968), p. 81.

family relationship never breaks. It continues to manifest in several sequences of offspring's.¹⁶

There is the belief among the Yoruba elders that the ancestors reincarnate, they illustrated their claim through memory transfer, and this is a situation whereby a child recounts the life history of an ancestor who died long before he was born. Even though critics have argued that a child could possess a mysterious power through which he discovers this, this could not be the case in all situations. The Yoruba doctrine of 'Abiku' (born to die children) and family resemblance have also been justified as the evidential basis of the belief in reincarnation. The joy of the 'Abiku' is to migrate from womb to womb and to die either as babies on an important occasion. The deceased still remain the father and mother who they were before their death in a more powerful and unhampered way over their survivors, "The Yoruba still say Baba mi": my father, or "iyami": my mother when speak of their deceased parent. They speak to bringing the spirit of the deceased into the house, they rarely say that I am going to speak of the spirit of my father, but rather I am going to speak to my father.¹⁷ In an attempt to put an end to the sorrow that 'Abiku' create, the ears, fingers, legs, upper lips may be amputated. A belief in reincarnation can be justified on the basis that such children are born with one deformity or the other. However, how could a living man be rightly identifiable with a man who previously died? Absence of a birthmark, different fingerprints would disapprove personal identity. "It seems that we cannot rightly identify a man living again with a man who died unless material conditions of identity are fulfilled. There must be some one or two relation to material continuity between the old body and the new".¹⁸Hence, why should we worry about material continuity? Would not mental continuity be both necessary and sufficient? The answer is that it is necessary but not sufficient because for example, supposing the claimant knows all the things he ought to know, but epistemic evidence about scars and old fractures indicates that he cannot be the man. If memory is not enough for personal identity, but if a man's living again does involve some bodily as well as

¹⁶ Godwin Azenabor, "Reincarnation in an African Metaphysics", Jim Unah (ed.) *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy*, (Ibadan: Hope Publishers, 1996), p. 365.

¹⁷ Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, (London: Longman, 1962), p.192.

¹⁸ Terence Penelhum, *Immortality*, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973), p.18.

mental continuity with the man who lived formerly, then we may fairly call his new bodily life a reincarnation. Talking about family resemblance, at birth babies are carefully examined to identify any resemblance they bear to past parents. The first name of the child indicates this: father has come back or mother has returned. The Yoruba tribe of Nigeria calls the child who is born immediately after the death of the grandfather, *Babatunde* – father has returned and the girl, *Yetunde* – mother has returned. The Igbo tribe of Nigeria gives names such as *nne-na*: the mother of her father and *nná-nná*: the father of his father. *Nneji*: my bother sister, *nná-ji*: my half brother, half sister. “People pay to the child the same reverence they were accustomed paying to the deceased grandparent”.¹⁹ Children do resemble their dead ancestors, hence, this can be supported from the Yoruba proverbs “Eni bi ni la njo” i.e. man normally resembles his progenitor. Carter argues that:

Putatively, reincarnated person often display skills and talents, that are claimed to have been inherited from former reincarnations. They often adopt pattern of behaviors that would have been natural for the persons they claim earlier to have been. They also claim to know things that could, presumably, not have been discovered by them in their present life. Such circumstances generally contribute much of the popular interest surrounding reincarnation stories.²⁰

But the truth of the matter is that there is a difference between similar behavior patterns and similar identification marks. We have seen a situation whereby people so much resemble one another, behave the same way and they are not reincarnation of one another. “It had also been argued that the story of Karma and reincarnation are untestable because of technical difficulties.”²¹ If we say that it is precisely the responsibility of the Karma theory to convince us that rebirth takes place at all, that there are many Karmic residues, for example, the parallel complaint may be recorded against the physicist who postulates unobservable micro particles. In both cases what is it to be explained is observable in

¹⁹ Onyewuenye, Op.Cit., p.22.

²⁰ Codell Carter, “Reincarnation and Personal Identity”, *Second Order:An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vi (1), 1977, p.57.

²¹ Arvind Sharma, *A Hindu Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion*, (London: Macmillan Press, 2015). p.148.

two cases that the explanation involved postulation of unobservable. Meanwhile, this can be a problem but we know that technological advances may in time make possible testing of both types of theories, if we build bigger and better microscopes. However, one of the strongest claims of the traditional African in support of reincarnation is divination. This happens when a child is born. This method also rules out the problem of untestability of Karma and reincarnation. In Hinduism the parents of the new born baby consults a diviner to ascertain which ancestors have been the concept of 'Samsara' which means rebirth or reincarnation. At the point of death the soul leave the body to inhabit another body in accordance with Karma. Hence, coming back to this world means one has not yet sufficiently purified oneself from all one's misdeeds; one is not fit to go to Brahman. To Hinduism one's lifetime is too short to accomplish such a task, hence one needs to undergo innumerable births. Our life on earth is a mixture of joy and sorrows. There are indeed many pleasures of life, and also many creatures that have a good share of them. The central theme of the doctrine of Karma and reincarnation is that whatever you sow you will reap, the law of action reaction, the law of cause and effect., that is whatever action is done by an individual leaves behind for them joy or sorrow in the future. Thus, when the fruits of the action are such that they cannot be enjoyed in the present life, the individual has to take another birth as a man or any other being in order to suffer them. Everything a person does is a boomerang which will surely bounce back on them. There is nothing like forgiveness whereby a person will do evil, and then asks for forgiveness, the doctrine of Karma rules out the idea of forgiveness. "It is better not to do evil than to do it and expect that you will not reap what you sown."²² That would be an illusion. Behind every evil suffered there lies a previous evil deed which accounts for it and for which it is retribution. This is why the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria holds certain misfortune that happens at birth is due to specific punishment for forgotten misdeed in the previous life. Behind every evil suffered there lay a previous evil deed which accounts for it and for which it are. The law of Karma does not allow anybody to suffer innocently; it does not allow anything to happen to a person if he does not deserve it by his previous misdeeds. This is why a Hindu does not complain about anything that happens to him. He does not ask why me? Why should such a

²² Joseph Omoregbe, *A Comparative Analysis of Asian and Western Philosophies*, (Lagos: Joja Press, 2004), p.23.

thing happen to me? He knows that he is now reaping what he sowed in the past, either in this present existence or in his previous existence. He knows that he is not suffering innocently or undeservedly, the law of Karma does not allow such a thing to happen, "Karma is inexorable, infallible and unfailing."²³ The doctrine of Karma is central to Indian philosophical schools of Hinduism. Here there is nothing like freedom, when a man thinks that he freely decides to do certain things he is not aware that certain forces beyond his control made him to take that decision. In the same vein, Spinoza observed that belief in human freedom and claims is due to inadequate knowledge and ignorance. Men think themselves free in as much as they are conscious of their volitions and desires, and because they are ignorant of the cause by which they are led to wish and desires.

However, everything about man, his thoughts, his desires, his decisions, actions and his whole life, are all controlled by natural forces. Man can never escape pleasure or pain because his body, which is a product of his good or bad actions, is by nature transient. After pleasure pain, and after pain pleasure, creatures cannot escape these two; they are intimately associated as water and mud. In traditional Africa, there is a code of conduct in the form of societal norms entrenched in the traditional thought and practice of the people. Man is brought up, trained and nourished with acceptable character.

Every action, whether good or bad, must have its result for the doer. If in the present life a man is on the whole good, his next existence is better by just so much as his good deeds. He becomes a great and noble man, or a king, conversely, a wicked man is reborn as a person of low position. Hence, death is not the end of life; it is only a means where the present earthly existence is changed for another. Man must strive to do good generally to his fellow men and he would be rewarded accordingly. This leads us to what is called "Iwa" (character) in Yoruba. "Iwa-rere" is a good character "Iwa buruku" is a bad character. In traditional Africa, through myths, legends and other short stories, right attitudes are regularly inculcated into the youths both at the family level and level of the community at large. Societal facts are not isolated from philosophy, that is, the beliefs and ideas that people hold about themselves, their world and their goals in life. Nobody can live without some conscious or unconscious working assumptions about the nature of the universe and man's place in the world, about themselves, their

²³Omogbe, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

world and their goals in life. As long as people want to live, to live well and even to live better, they must develop some kind of philosophy that will enable them to distinguish between the relevant and the irrelevant, the valuable and the valueless.²⁴ Every individual can act as his own philosopher as long as he tries to know carefully what makes life worth living and tries to justify the goals he chooses.

Conclusion

Reincarnation in the African concept is the philosophical or religious belief that the non-physical essence of a living being begins a new life in a different physical form or body after biological death. This occurs when the soul becomes transmigrated into a new infant to live again. The doctrine of rebirth offers a philosophically sound solution to the problem of evil. But even if our claim is correct, we may still be left with a philosophical problem of evil in relation to God. How is God to be related to evil? If we accept the existence of God, then, He allows it to exist. Evil has permanently raised doubts about God's existence. Many philosophers have claimed that given evil, that there are conclusive grounds for denying that God exist. If the claim is justified, theism and in fact particularly the Christianity must be based on a fallacy. As far as truth is concern they should disappear, and every belief and practice that supports them should disappear. These are the consequences which would affect profoundly the way many people live. If God is accepted as just and as the supervisor of the operation of rebirth, then the problem in relation to God can still be kept at bay.

²⁴ K.C. Anyanwu, *The African Experience in the American Market*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1988), p. 421.

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**The Nexus Between Tithing and Prosperity in
United Missionary Church of Africa, Nigeria**

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Abstract

Tithing, which refers to the practice of giving one-tenth of one's income or produce for religious purposes, is a prominent Judaeo-Christian practice. Extant studies have focused more on the controversy surrounding the applicability of the Old Testament tithing law to Christians than its connection to the lived experience of tithers. Therefore, this study juxtaposes the practice of tithing with lived experiences of tithers in United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Northcentral Nigeria with a view to ascertaining the extent to which compliance to the tithing injunction elicits God's blessing. This enquiry becomes germane due to the emphasis of pro-tithing churches on the inevitable nexus between prosperity and tithing. In-depth interviews were conducted on 32 purposively selected pastors and deacons: eight from each of the four language-groups districts – English-speaking district (ESD), Nupe-speaking district (NSD), Yoruba-speaking district (YSD) and Hausa-speaking district (HSD) – of UMCA. Copies of a questionnaire were administered on 757 randomly selected church members across the four language-group districts. Qualitative data were subjected to

content analysis, while quantitative data were subjected to percentages. UMCA members think of blessing attached to tithing largely as economic emancipation, health and security. However, the survey shows that occasional tithers experienced sickness: ESD (44.4%), NSD (54.3%), YSD (32.2%) and HSD (42.0%); financial difficulty: ESD (45.1%), NSD (78.3%), YSD (49.3%) and HSD (58.6%); and robbery: ESD (23.8%), NSD (16.0%), YSD (16.4%) and HSD (14.0%). Also, regular tithers avowed experiencing sickness: ESD (42.4%), NSD (77.9%), YSD (41.7%) and HSD (53.2%); financial difficulty: ESD (53.8%), NSD (95.4%), YSD (66.3%) and HSD (61.6%); and robbery: ESD (32.0%), NSD (27.7%), YSD (30.2%) and HSD (18.9%). Conversely, a good percentage of non-tithers claimed that they do not have such experiences in connection to defaulting in tithing; ESD (55.6%), NSD (66.7%), YSD (70.0%) and HSD (78.6%). The paper argues that a balanced teaching on material prosperity that does not give false hope and expectations to people should be re-emphasised among Christians generally and in UMCA specifically.

Keywords: Tithing, prosperity, financial stewardship, Malachi 3, divine blessing.

Introduction

Tithing is a prominent Judaeo-Christian religious practice which involves giving of a tenth of one's farm produce or income for the purpose of supporting the religious institutions, particularly, the levitical priesthood¹ and fending for the poor.² It is a biblical injunction which has elicited immense debate among which includes issues of the origin of the practice, the continued applicability of the ancient injunction to contemporary Christians and the connection of tithing to the prosperity of the tithers etc.³ It is in respect of the latter that I have particularized the definition of tithing in the contemporary pro-tithing Churches as obligatory remittance of a tenth of "one's income or profit on business to a Church or clergy for ecclesiastical use without which divine blessing reflected in material prosperity and protection of the

¹ L. Moretsi, "Tithing: an Evaluation of the Biblical Background," *In die Skriflig* 43 no.2 (2009):404.

² Miracle Ajah, "Deuteronomic tithe laws and their humanitarian implications for Africa," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 14 no. 2 (2018):338-339.

³ Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu, "An Interrogation of Perspectives on Pre-Mosaic Tithe-related Narratives," *KWASU Journal of Religious Studies*, 2 no.1 (2018):66.

Christian is not guaranteed.”⁴ Extant studies as well as most recent discourses have focused more on the controversy surrounding the applicability of the Old Testament tithing law to Christians than its connection to the lived experience of tithers particularly in terms of financial prosperity as well as security of life and properties. Therefore, this study juxtaposes the practice of tithing with lived experiences of tithers in United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Northcentral Nigeria with a view to ascertaining the extent to which compliance to the tithing injunction elicits God’s blessing. This enquiry becomes germane due to the emphasis of pro-tithing churches on the inevitable nexus between prosperity and tithing. Prosperity teachings posit that it is Christians have the right to enjoy blessings of physical health; financial as well as material wealth by following certain rules.⁵ James N. Amanze underscores tithes and offerings as fundamental condition that prosperity preachers do emphasize.⁶ Therefore, the survey verified whether or not payment of tithe by members of UMCA has significant or statistically detectable effects on their economy, health and security. Based on the knowledge of multiple ethnic and language composition of the church in numerous local assemblies, the study was conducted using randomly selected assemblies of the church across eight of the districts of the denomination in northern Nigeria. The districts were classified into English-speaking Districts (ESD), Nupe-speaking Districts, Yoruba-speaking Districts (YSD) and Hausa-speaking Districts (HSD). The districts of the Church selected for this study are located in the North-central region of Nigeria where the Church has strongest presence.

Stratified random sampling technique was used in administering closed ended structured questionnaire to selected assemblies in those clusters of four districts. The questionnaire constructs covered three different sections carefully inquiring about socio-demographic information (6 questions), personal understanding of biblical tithing (9 questions), and personal

⁴ Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu, “Re-Awakening Deuteronomic Response to Poverty in Nigeria: A Case of Tithe in United Missionary Church of Africa,” in *Perspectives on Nigeria’s Challenges in Nation Building*, eds. Abdullahi M. Ashafa, Gaius Jatau and Ayemga Tor (Kaduna: Department of History, Kaduna State University, 2020), 175.

⁵ Samuel O. Okanlawon, “Theological Perspectives of Prosperity Preachers,” *Ife Journal of Religions* 13 (2017):2

⁶ James N. Amanze, “How Prosperous is the Prosperity Gospel? An Examination of Impacts of the Theology of Prosperity in Africa from a Sociological Perspective,” in *African Christianity in Local and Global Contexts: A Festschrift in honour of Rev. Prof. Isaac Deji Ayegeboyin*, eds. Samson Adetunji Fatokun, Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo et al. (Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, 2019), 130.

experiences of the target population of respondents on tithing (16 questions). However, due to brevity of space only portions of the data that has immediate bearing on the objective of this paper are presented here. One thousand copies of the questionnaire were distributed and seven hundred and fifty-seven were retrieved. This implies that 75% of the distributed copies of the questionnaire were used for this analysis. The questionnaire was administered with consent of the respective respondents carefully sought; their anonymity assured and promises to handle supplied information with utmost confidentiality.

Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted on 32 purposively selected pastors and deacons: eight from each of the four language-groups districts of UMCA described above. Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis, while quantitative data were subjected to percentages. The thesis of this paper is that tithing alone does not necessarily guarantee prosperity reflected in economic emancipation, health and security of life and properties as usually construed and emphasised in the teachings of pro tithing churches.

Tithing in UMCA

UMCA is a pro-tithing Church that has subsisted for over a century in Nigeria. The Church was established in 1905 by expatriate Missionaries (led by Alexander Woods Banfield) belonging to the United Missionary Society from the North America but yielded to the complete leadership and administration of the Church to Nigerian Indigenous Christians in 1978.⁷ The United Missionary Society has its historical root traced back to Simon Menno, the progenitor of the Mennonites Brethren.⁸

There is hardly any official document that treats what UMCA believes and practices on this subject. It appears every pastor is left to teach the subject as felt led by the Holy Spirit. This may be because emphasis of the expatriate Missionaries who pioneered the Church were primarily on evangelism for the subject

⁷Bamidele Olusegun Fawenu, "Tithing in African Christianity: An Enquiry into its Origin in United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Nigeria," in *African Christianity in Local and Global Contexts: A Festschrift in honour of Rev. Prof. Isaac Deji Ayejoboyin*, eds. Samson Adetunji Fatokun, Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo et al. (Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, 2019), 214.

⁸ D. D. Engbrecht, "Merging and diverging streams: the colorful and complex history of the Missionary Church," *Missionary Church*, retrieved Dec., 10, 2014 from <http://www.mcusa.org/AboutMC/History.aspx>

to have gotten a mention in the constitution of the church or Pastor's Manual as the case is of the church's articles of Faith. Odebiri confirms this observation when he said that apart from lessons in annual Sunday school manual on giving where tithing do come along; UMCA does not have any document that exclusively discusses its position on tithing. Therefore, each pastor is left to teach on it by himself trusting that everyone will be biblical.⁹ Akangbe corroborates this by saying that tithing in UMCA is "more or less a tradition, a thing we are practicing, without specific document that makes it binding on people." This most probably informs the prevalence of non-uniformity in emphasis and method of collection across the denomination.¹⁰ In the same vein, Ogunkunle explains that UMCA does not have any specific document that captures her stand on this subject matter apart from what the Bible says. It was simply on the basis of the fact that tithing is in the Bible and the church is Bible-believing that the leadership of the denomination institutionalized congregational tithe; remittance of 10% of income of each local assembly to the National Headquarters.¹¹

The freedom and latitude given to individuals on the teaching may not be too far from the denomination's stand on the Bible as found in the second item of the Church's articles of faith. It reads as follows: "We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books both the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, is inerrant in its original manuscripts and is the final authority in matters pertaining to faith and conduct. We accept the right and duty of personal judgement, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16; I Peter 1:25; II Peter 1:21)."¹²

However, archives from the National Headquarters reveal a strong desire to formulate the denomination's position on tithing. Although no specific official document was intended, the need to teach it and encourage church members to faithfully practice it reflects in discussions at a number of General Board Meetings with evidence of steps taken to teach it to pastors during Pastors' retreat meetings and specialized seminars. The closest that is available in terms of official document (apart from the mention of tithe as

⁹G. Odebiri, UMCA National Vice President, *Interview respondent*, December 31, 2014.

¹⁰ M. F. Akangbe, Former Provost UMCATC *Interview respondent*, January 8, 2015

¹¹C. O. Ogunkunle, Chairman, UMCA Theological Education Board, *Interview respondent*, January 5, 2015.

¹²*United Missionary Church of Africa Ministers' Manual*, 5.

source for generating income for the denomination which occurs only twice in the reviewed constitution of UMCA of 2009) is what is reflected in "Plan '86 (A 5-year plan for the United Missionary Church of Africa)." The content under Finance and Stewardship of the document states as follows:

The Scriptures emphasize that we are responsible to God for all that we have; we are stewards. As such we are to understand stewardship: God is the owner of everything, and he graciously gives to man, who is then expected to carefully use what God owns. Give according to what we have. Wisely administer all that is left after giving our tithes and offerings. Realize that stewardship concerns not only our money and possessions, but our time and talents also. When God's people give their tithes and offerings faithfully, the financial needs of the church will be fully met. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3:10). Finance and stewardship belong together. UMCA believes the Bible's teaching in this area to be practical, and encourages its people to give through tithes and offerings.¹³

It was on the premise of the above that the committee for the plan made specific recommendations among which the Stewardship and Finance Committee should within two years educate members of the church on tithing and support of headquarters and denominational ministries. The reliability and validity of the quotation above from the document in question is established by the wider and thorough consultations done by the committee in putting the contents of the plan together. This is succinctly captured by Kolawole in his autobiography:

In planning, we kept several important principles in mind. Firstly we have tried to ask widely within UMCA for advice and ideas concerning the church's

¹³Plan '86: A 5-year plan for the United Missionary Church of Africa, (Presented to the UMCA General Board 26-27 February, 1987.), 13.

ministry. Secondly, we have used a small group of UMCA people to try to evaluate and integrate all the inputs obtained from interested contributors. Thirdly, it seemed important, and biblically-correct, to work together so as to achieve consensus in every recommendation. We praise God that he gave a splendid spirit of unity to the committee. Fourthly, we hope our people will agree that we are recommending actions which are both realistic and in keeping with UMCA's tradition, as a member of the Missionary Church Fellowship.¹⁴

Nevertheless, from the scanty records available, interview data as well as personal observations it can be inferred that tithing in UMCA is classified into two; personal and congregational tithes.¹⁵

Personal Tithe

In UMCA, every member that earns legitimate income is required to remit ten per cent of his or her income to the local assembly where he or she worships. This demand is made as a matter of necessary Christian stewardship on the basis of the contents of Malachi 3:7-12. However, sermons on tithing in UMCA reflect reference to other Old Testament passages on the subject, especially from the Pentateuch starting with the Abraham exemplar in Genesis 14. At this point, it is considered appropriate to present what was discovered as the model teaching of the UMCA on tithing. A number of things make this uniquely important. Firstly, it is the most comprehensive material available in UMCA archives at the time of this research. Secondly, it is a teaching presented by an expatriate Missionary to the congregation of UMCA indigenous and expatriate Pastors and leaders of the denomination. Thirdly, the teaching was done at a date that tallies with Harvey Fretz's submission about the handing over of UMS properties to Nigerians thereby warranting the need for the indigenes to assume the responsibility of financing the denomination. Fourthly, the teaching

¹⁴D. Kolawole, *Adventure with Christ: the story of my life* (Ilorin: Ad-Savour Concepts, 2014), 141-142.

¹⁵The terms "Personal and Congregational Tithe" are descriptive coinage of the researcher from his discovery of what is obtainable in UMCA. No document in UMCA, paper or electronic contains the terms.

was purposefully determined; it was one of the eight seminar topics scheduled for two days seminar that preceded the UMCA Joint Council of 24-26 March 1969. The seminar was tagged “Church Growth” with the purpose of having a united discussion and together find answers to the questions that were confronting the denomination. The section on tithing was titled “The meaning of tithe and how it can be improved in UMCA.”¹⁶ It was delivered by Art E. Reifel. Meanwhile, another set of study outline on Stewardship which formed part of the seminar for UMCA Pastors held on 15-19 June 1987 contained some emphasis on tithing, but the content is clearly a microcosm of Reifel’s teaching.¹⁷

Therefore, in view of the scanty extant materials available at the time of this research, the teaching of tithing at the 1969 meeting may be considered as UMCA’s primer on the subject of tithe. The following are the observations and deductions made from the document:

1. Holistic use of Bible references to tithing in UMCA: this traversed the Old and New Testaments starting from Abraham’s remittance to Melchizedek as found in Genesis through Mosaic stipulations and Malachi charge to Jesus and Paul’s teachings. Dabo, a Centenarian confirms this, by saying that teachings on tithing in UMCA is not limited to Malachi; “every mention of tithing in the Bible is believed by UMCA; Genesis 14:18-20, Genesis 28:20-28 all through to the New Testament references.”¹⁸
2. Tithing is a compulsory practice that must be taught and encouraged: pastors must be faithful in teaching and declaring unto the people the whole counsel of God. Alongside, teaching the congregants about holiness, baptism, communion and fellowship around the Lord’s Table, they must be taught to tithe.
3. Strong affinity to Malachi 3 and application of its content for the contemporary Christians and church.
4. The purpose of tithing in UMCA is to raise finance for evangelistic activities: This is made clear from Reifel’s

¹⁶Other subjects discussed at the Seminar were (1) The Challenge of the Unreached; (2) The Meaning of Church Membership; (3) The Meaning of Baptism; (4) The Meaning of Communion; (5) What Could be done to improve the Youth Programme in UMCA; (6) The Responsibilities of the Local Pastor; and (7) What Constitutes a Good Teaching Programme for a Local Church.

¹⁷Archives at UMCA Theological College Chapel.

¹⁸D. Dabo, retired UMCA Reverend, *Interview respondent*, December 9, 2014.

introduction where tithes and offerings are underscored as the second elements of the trio that make a strong church. The other two being prayer and witnessing.

5. Tithing and blessing are symbiotically related: "...tithing brings blessing according to God's word in Malachi 3:10. God promises to open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings, but those windows must be unlocked by payment of tithes. Failure to pay tithe leads to financial difficulty.
6. The promise of blessing as the enticing factor for tithing: the pastor may teach his people that the way of blessing is giving. The pastor should explore the desire inherent in every person including members of his congregation to be blessed of the Lord; this fact gives a real opportunity to teach that tithing brings blessing according to God's word in Malachi 3:10.
7. To exempt tithing from the church's teaching and practices amount to not teaching the whole counsel of God.
8. Harvest thanksgiving rather than weekly or monthly remittance of tithe were the practice at the earliest history of the church.
9. Giving and tithing are integral part of worship and devotion to God.
10. Strong emphasis on tithing evolved gradually in UMCA.
11. Direct pronouncement of curse on the defaulters of tithe is carefully avoided in the document: This is a true reflection of the Missionary heart that wants to promote the propagation of the gospel without involving any element that may constitute impediment to securing a favourable response. Nevertheless, a more theologically challenging and polemical position is advanced by equating non tithers with the covetous who incidentally will not have a part in the kingdom of God.

The enormity of the influence of this teaching to subsequent generation of pastors in UMCA is confirmed first from the 1987 Seminar and secondly from the opinions of various interviewees. In UMCA today, emphasis is given to teaching tithing from the passage in Malachi. Abraham is always advanced as the model of an ideal tither; worship of God, sourcing fund for financing church budgets are stressed as the reasons for tithing. Also, strong and passionate emphasis on blessing as reward for faithful tither is not left out. The placement of banner posters containing text

purposefully scripted to motivate congregants to pay tithe in conspicuous places in church buildings speak volume about UMCA's position on tithing in relation to blessings on the basis of the Malachi reference. In similar fashion, tithe recording cards and tithe collection envelopes are designed to achieve same purpose. Observable on these items is the emphasis on blessing, curses and robbery of God.

Congregational tithe

The principle of tithing principle has been adopted by the denomination to raise capital for running the activities of the National Headquarters. In this case, each local congregation is expected to retire 10% of its total income each month to the National Headquarters. Note that what to retire is not income from tithe collections alone but of all income the local assembly makes which include tithe, offerings, and proceeds from thanksgiving service etc. The term tithe occurs only twice in the reviewed constitution of UMCA (of 2009) where finance of the denomination and revenue sharing formula are described in chapter twenty-five. It is stated under Finance of the denomination as follows:

Funds for running the denomination shall be derived from the following sources; (1) Offering from church members and non-members who are Christians. (2) Tithes from members and non-members. (3) Grants, donations, gifts and other forms of monetary and or material assistance from all other churches, Christian organizations, governments, the Private sectors, NGOs, individuals, members of the denomination and others. (4) Income from sales of books, souvenirs, calendar, diaries and others. (5) Income from launching, thanksgiving and other forms of ceremonies organized by the church. (6) Supports from clinics, dispensaries, schools and colleges, shops, shares, companies and other business owned by the denomination. The General Conference or the General Board in conjunction with the Finance Committee shall have power to create any other forms of revenue generation for the denomination.¹⁹

¹⁹Constitution of the United Missionary Church of Africa, 2009. 100.

In the same vein, the constitution describes the revenue sharing formula as follows: “The revenue sharing formula shall be in accordance with the following formula:

(1) 10% of all revenue generated by the local churches from offering and tithes shall go to the National Headquarters.

(2) Profit of all schools and colleges, shops and other businesses recognized by this constitution and owned by any local church are under obligation to fund the Headquarters annually with their profits. Details of the extent and formula for sharing profits shall be agreed by the Finance Committee and the respective institution.

(3) No local church or district shall have the right to withhold any revenue belonging to any tier of the denomination for more than 14 days. Any fund withheld for more than 14 days shall attract 10% interest for each month it is withheld, other disciplinary measures shall be taken against the officers and Pastors involved.”²⁰ According to Adetoro, some districts of the denomination also use 10% arrangement to raise finances to run their district projects.²¹

These two entries in the constitution do not only show that the denomination teaches and practices tithing, it equally shows the various usage of the principle of ten per cent by the denomination. Firstly, it is used to define the mandatory percentage of fund every local assembly should remit to the centre of administration of the denomination. Secondly, it is used to describe the percentage of fund punitively required in the case of illegal withholding of fund by any local assembly.

The relationship of tithing to blessing and curse in UMCA

UMCA believes that tithing is a biblical injunction which is obligatory for Christians to dutifully practice is premised on the denomination’s high view of the Bible as indicated in the first sentence of the second article of faith of the denomination. The sentence reads as follows: “We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books both the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, is inerrant in its original manuscripts and is the final authority in matters pertaining to faith and conduct.”²² This

²⁰Constitution of the United Missionary Church of Africa, 2009. 100-101.

²¹M. A. Adetoro, Superintendent, UMCA Share District 2005-2011, Interview *respondent*, December 20, 2014.

²²*United Missionary Church of Africa Ministers’ Manual*, 2011 edition (Ilorin: Christian Education Department UMCA Headquarters, 2011), 5.

doctrinal position reflects the position of Simon Menno who though believed that Christ enables Christians to go far beyond it, held the Old Testament in great regard. He fervently advocated in favour of Christian use of the Old Testament as scripture and reflected its relevance in his devotional and spiritual exhortations.²³ Kolawole confirms this by saying that UMCA accepts the Bible in totality and that no difference exists between the Old and the New Testaments on the matter of tithing and the blessings attached to it as well as the curses on failure to tithe. Jesus has not come to the world to destroy the law; he did not abrogate tithing while on earth, so the law still stands. He explains further that a faithful tither gets blessed just as the Bible says. Therefore, tithing in UMCA is not something farfetched it is what God established in the Old Testament through Moses, carried on to the New Testament, carried on to UMCA through the Missionaries and now the new pastors. Blessing will come according to who tithes and curse for those who do not tithe as clearly stated in Malachi.²⁴ However, Ogunkunle thinks that attributing certain predicaments of life like, sickness to curses as a result of defaulting in tithe is a modern-day approach of Pastors to get members psyched to remit tithes. After all it is obvious that such downsides of human experiences in life are not selective of persons. There are those who tithe and still fall sick.²⁵ This corroborates the view of R. Renee and C. Harper that “many Christians who go to church and pay so-called tithe on a regular basis never obtained wealth or prosperity.”²⁶ Similarly, Akangbe did not mince word to describe such statements like “when you fail to tithe things becomes tight for you,” as modern-day Pentecostal pastors’ assertions. He explains that the spiritual blessings might be established but concretely it may be difficult to describe what the blessings are. This view agrees well with R. S. Briggs’ description of blessing; “...blessing remains one of those words more easily understood than defined. To bless is to convey some kind of benefit, but the focus is perhaps less on the benefit and more on the life or relationship thus benefitted. Indeed,

²³C. J. H. Wright, *Walking in the ways of the Lord*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 82-83.

²⁴D. Kolawole, *Interview respondent*, Ilorin.

²⁵C. O. Ogunkunle, *Interview respondent*, Ilorin.

²⁶ R. Renee and C. Harper, *The tithing Hoax: Exposing the lies, misinterpretations and false teachings about Tithing*, (Ross-Michel Publishing, 2012), 19-20.

blessing can sometimes be the enriching of a life by the very act of stating or emphasizing a relationship."²⁷

The following table is a compendium of the blessings and curses attached to tithing and tithe-defaulting in UMCA's interpretation of Malachi 3:10-12:

Table 1: Blessing and Curse in relation to tithing in UMCA

Blessing of tithing	Curse of non-tithing
<p>Economic Emancipation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great and enduring prosperity. - Accomplishing much through meagre salary or income. - Favour of unsolicited financial supports that come as gift from people. - Expansion in business and high yield of farm produce. - High yield of farm produce. - Wisdom to rightly and appropriately use money and other resources. - Prosperous Posterity. 	<p>Financial Difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial poverty - Material poverty - Stagnation of business - Stagnation of career - Living in persistent debt situation
<p>Good Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divine protection against sickness - Stable health condition even at old age - Peace of mind that comes from obedience to God's command. 	<p>Sickness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience of pain and sickness - Exposure to diseases and pestilences - Weak Immunity
<p>Security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection against vehicular accident - Protection against theft and armed robbery - Divine blockage of outlet of waste such as breakdown/malfunctioning of vehicle, electronics etc. - Protection against loss of money - Preservation of life - longevity of age. 	<p>Loss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calamity of all kinds and magnitude - Loss of money - Destruction of property - Experience of evil and disaster - Failure of all kinds, e.g. relationship, business etc. - Disappointments and setbacks.

Source: Field work

Interview respondents from whom the data above were generated indicated that in UMCA tithe-connected blessing is largely construed as economic emancipation, health and security. It should be noted that most of the respondents mentioned spiritual blessing as an addendum. The table below gives the detail spread per district:

²⁷ R. S. Briggs, "The book of Genesis," in *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch*, eds. R. S. Briggs and J. N. Lohr (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 32.

District	Economic Emancipation			Health			Security		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
ESD	6	2	8	4	4	8	5	3	8
	75%	25.0%	100%	50.0%	50.0%	100%	62.5%	37.5%	100%
	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	15.6%	9.3%	25.0%
NSD	7	1	8	6	2	8	6	2	8
	87.5%	12.5%	100%	75%	25.0%	100%	75%	25.0%	100%
	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%
YSD	6	2	8	7	1	8	7	1	8
	75%	25.0%	100%	87.5%	12.5%	100%	87.5%	12.5%	100%
	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%
HSD	7	1	8	6	2	8	6	2	8
	87.5%	12.5%	100%	75%	25.0%	100%	75%	25.0%	100%
	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%
Total	26	6	32	23	9	32	24	8	32
	81.2%	18.8%	100%	71.9%	28.1%	100%	75%	25.0%	100%

Table 2: Tithe-related blessings

Also, tithe-related curses are identified as financial difficulty, sickness and loss. The spread is captured in the table below:

District	Financial Difficulty			Sickness			Loss		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
ESD	5	3	8	4	4	8	5	3	8
	62.5%	37.5%	100%	50.0%	50.0%	100%	62.5%	37.5%	100%
	15.6%	9.3%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	15.6%	9.3%	25.0%
NSD	7	1	8	7	1	8	5	3	8
	87.5%	12.5%	100%	87.5%	12.5%	100%	62.5%	37.5%	100%
	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%	15.6%	9.3%	25.0%
YSD	6	2	8	6	2	8	7	1	8
	75%	25.0%	100%	75%	25.0%	100%	87.5%	12.5%	100%
	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	21.9%	3.13%	25.0%
HSD	6	2	8	5	3	8	5	3	8
	75%	25.0%	100%	62.5%	37.5%	100%	62.5%	37.5%	100%
	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%	15.6%	9.3%	25.0%	15.6%	9.3%	25.0%
Total	24	8	32	22	10	32	22	10	32
	75.2%	25.0%	100%	68.8%	31.2%	100%	68.8%	31.2%	100%

Table 3: Tithe-related curses

Effects of tithing: the lived experiences of respondents

In this section, an analysis on consistency of tithing and the effects it generates is done.

Meanwhile, it is good to note that the data set revealed that 512 (approximately 68%) of the 757 respondents pay tithe regularly, 206 (27%) confirmed that they pay tithe occasionally while 39 (5%) said they do not pay tithe. The responses of the regular and occasional tithe payers to the following constructs are captured in tables 4 and 5 respectively:

1. I do experience sickness despite tithing.

2. I have experienced financial difficulty before despite tithing.
3. I have lost properties to thieves/robbers before despite tithing.
4. I have experienced delay in business or promotion or academics before despite tithing.
5. I have experienced success/protection/healing etc. because I paid tithe.

Regular tithers' experiences

The test reveals that 52% of regular tithers do experience sickness despite engaging in tithing faithfully while 48% submit that they do not experience sickness because they pay tithe. 67% of the population indicate that they do experience financial difficulty despite tithing while 33% claim otherwise. 27% had experienced robbery attack or loss of valuables to thieves despite tithing, while 73% have not. 51% have experienced one form of failure, delay in academics or denial of promotion despite tithing while 49% have not experienced such. 80% of the regular tithers attribute various successes they have recorded in life to faithful tithing while 20% of the population do not connect such success to tithing.

It is observable from the data above that despite tithing the tithers have not been absolutely immune against predicaments of life like, sickness, financial difficulty, loss of properties, set back and robbery attack etc. However, it is worthy to note that the disparity in the experience of these tithers on sickness and failure is marginal in favour of "yes" to sickness and failure respectively. Meanwhile, the disparity in the tithers' experience of financial difficulty and robbery attack is significant in favour of "yes" to financial difficulty and "no" to robbery attack. In the same vein, a very strong disparity is noted in the attribution of success in life to tithing in favour of "yes" compared to "no" responses. This huge disparity in the later may be linked to the people's personal belief and interpretation of the Bible passage related to tithing, especially Malachi 3:6-12.

These results corroborate the perspective of some of the interviewees who claim that despite the fact that God blesses a faithful tither; challenges of life abound and could be experienced by anyone at any time. Bamidele for instance, says paying tithe does not exclude a person from facing challenges of life; it is wrong

idea to pay purposely to avert evil. It should be paid because God commanded it.²⁸

District	Sickness			Financial Problem			Robbery			Failure			Success		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
ESD	60 43.2% 11.7%	79 56.8% 15.4%	139 100% 27.1%	76 54.7% 14.8%	63 45.3% 12.3%	139 100% 27.1%	45 32.4% 8.8%	94 67.6% 18.3%	139 100% 27.1%	70 50.4% 13.6%	69 49.6% 13.5%	139 100% 27.1%	100 72.0% 19.5%	39 28% 7.6%	139 100% 27.1%
NSD	74 77.1% 14.5%	22 22.9% 4.3%	96 100% 18.8%	92 95.8% 18.0%	4 4.2% 0.8%	96 100% 18.8%	27 28.1% 5.3%	69 71.9% 13.5%	96 100% 18.8%	55 57.3% 10.7%	41 42.7% 8.0%	96 100% 18.7%	86 90.0% 16.8%	10 10.0% 2.0%	96 100% 18.8%
YSD	54 41.9% 10.5%	75 58.1% 14.6%	129 100% 25.1%	86 66.7% 16.8%	43 33.3% 8.3%	129 100% 25.1%	38 29.5% 7.4%	91 70.5% 17.7%	129 100% 25.1%	65 50.4% 12.7%	64 49.6% 12.4%	129 100% 25.1%	102 79.1% 19.9%	27 20.9% 5.2%	129 100% 25.1%
HSD	78 52.7% 15.2%	70 47.3% 13.7%	148 100% 28.9%	91 61.5% 17.8%	57 38.5% 11.1%	148 100% 28.9%	28 18.9% 5.5%	120 81.1% 23.4%	148 100% 28.9%	70 47.3% 13.7%	78 52.7% 15.2%	148 100% 28.9%	120 81.0% 23.4%	28 19.0% 5.5%	148 100% 28.9%
Total	266 52.0%	246 48.0%	512 100%	345 67.4%	167 32.6%	512 100%	138 27.0%	374 73.0%	512 100%	260 50.8%	252 49.2%	512 100%	408 80.0%	104 20.0%	512 100%

Table 4: Regular tithing and effects

Experiences of occasional tithers

42% of the respondents who tithe occasionally indicated that they do experience sickness despite tithing, while 58% of them say they do not experience sickness. 55% of the same population do experience financial problem while 45% do not. Only 18% of this population have experienced robbery attack while 82% did not have such experience. 51.5% have experienced one form of failure or the other while 48.5% have not. As in the case of regular tithers, the occasional tithers strongly connect their successes in life to tithing with 81.6% responses to “yes” and 18.4% responses to “no”. Once again, it is observable that tithing in this case does not guarantee absolute protection against challenges of life.

Also, it is revealing that majority of the occasional tithers claimed not to have experienced sicknesses and robbery attacks. Similarly, the difference between those that answered “yes” and those that answered “no” to the question on experiences of failure are a marginal three percent (3%). Therefore, the foregoing challenges the usual claim in certain quarters of preachers that inconsistent tithing is robbery of God that attracts grave consequences. Meanwhile, this set of tithers makes strong support for the connection of their successes in life to tithing as did the

²⁸D. M. Bamidele, UMCA Director of Christian Education, *Interview respondent* January 6, 2015.

regular tithers. This finding corroborates the earlier assessment that connection of tithing to blessing can always be traced to individual’s personal belief and interpretation of the Malachi 3:6-12 in particular.

Meanwhile, this set of tithers makes strong support for the connection of their successes in life to tithing as did the regular tithers. This finding corroborates the earlier assessment that connection of tithing to blessing can always be traced to individual’s personal belief and interpretation of the Malachi 3:6-12 in particular.

District	Sickness			Financial Problem			Robbery			Failure			Success		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
ESD	28	35	63	30	33	63	15	48	63	30	33	63	48	15	63
	44.4%	55.6%	100%	47.6%	52.4%	100%	23.8%	76.2%	100%	47.6%	52.4%	100%	76.2%	23.8%	100%
	13.6%	16.9%	30.5%	14.5%	16.0%	30.5%	7.2%	23.3%	30.5%	14.5%	16.0%	30.5%	23.3%	7.2%	30.5%
NSD	19	16	35	27	8	35	5	30	35	22	13	35	30	5	35
	54.3%	45.7%	100%	77.1%	22.9%	100%	14.3%	85.7%	100%	62.9%	37.1%	100%	85.7%	14.3%	100%
	9.2%	7.8%	17.0%	13.1%	3.9%	17.0%	2.4%	14.6%	17.0%	10.7%	6.3%	17.0%	14.6%	2.4%	17.0%
YSD	18	40	58	28	30	58	10	48	58	26	32	58	45	13	58
	31.0%	69.0%	100%	48.3%	51.7%	100%	17.2%	82.8%	100%	44.8%	55.2%	100%	77.6%	22.4%	100%
	8.7%	19.4%	28.1%	13.6%	14.5%	28.1%	4.8%	23.3%	28.1%	12.6%	15.5%	28.1%	21.8%	6.3%	28.1%
HSD	21	29	50	29	21	50	7	43	50	28	22	50	45	5	50
	42.0%	58.0%	100%	58.0%	42.0%	100%	14.0%	86.0%	100%	56.0%	44.0%	100%	90.0%	10.0%	100%
	10.2%	14.1%	24.3%	14.1%	10.2%	24.3%	3.4%	20.9%	24.3%	13.6%	10.7%	24.3%	21.8%	2.4%	24.2%
Total	86	120	206	114	92	206	37	169	206	106	100	206	168	38	206
	42.0%	58.0%	100%	55.0%	45.0%	100%	18.0%	82.0%	100%	51.5%	48.5%	100%	81.6%	18.4%	100%

Table 5: Occasional tithing and effects

Experiences of non-tithers

At this point, it is appropriate to examine the effect of defaulting in tithing on the respondents who answered “yes” to the construct, “I do not pay tithe.” As earlier noted, 39 of the respondents do not pay tithe. Table 6 shows that 12 (30.8%) of this group agree that they have suffered various shades of pains and difficulty because they do not pay tithe. The largest number of them, 27 (69.2%) claimed that they do not have such experiences in connection to defaulting in tithing.

District	Suffered Sickness, Pain, Lack etc		
	Yes	No	Total
ESD	4 44.4% 10.3%	5 55.6% 12.8%	9 100% 23.1%
NSD	2 33.3% 5.1%	4 66.7% 10.3%	6 100% 15.4%
YSD	3 30.0% 7.7%	7 70.0% 17.9%	10 100% 25.6%
HSD	3 21.4% 7.7%	11 78.6% 28.2%	14 100% 35.9%
Total	12 30.8%	27 69.2%	39 100%

Table 6: Non-tithing and effect

Conclusion

It is vivid from the data available that despite tithing, the majority of the respondents were not absolutely free from the common challenges of life like sickness, financial difficulty, robbery attack, and delay in promotion at work and setback in academics or business. This could be an indication that other factors beyond attachment to tithing are responsible for freedom from such predicaments. Therefore, an adequate blend of proper spiritual guidance and corresponding professional counselling on respective aspects of human endeavour could be very much invaluable to avert such predicaments. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of the tithers still relate whatever success they had experienced in life to their loyalty to the tithing injunction. This is understandable given their religious disposition as established in the church's article of faith where God is described as the author of life and the one who cares for his creatures and blesses them as they obey his injunction. In the same vein, such people might have in addition to tithing adhered to certain relevant standard principle required to achieve those level of success. A further enquiry to ascertain this is desirable.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that faithful tithers who are experiencing similar problems of life as those who do not pay tithe could become disgruntled worshippers in the Church because they

have been told that tithing will avert such problems for them. Closely connected to this is the hypocritical tendencies embedded in tithing for the purpose of using God as a means of making wealth rather than engaging in a true life-long communion of worship because of the person of God. Therefore, tithers should be encouraged to do tithing with unconditional expectations of divine reward based on the holistic biblical theology of the balance between material possession and spirituality of the righteous that runs through the entire Bible; in spite of the piety of the righteous, most often, they are confronted with daunting vicissitude of life. This approach also conjectures that apart from material blessing, there is the spiritual blessing which is beyond the detectable capability of empirical tool.

Finally, a balanced teaching of material prosperity should be re-emphasised among Christians generally and in UMCA specifically. A lacuna between what is taught and practical experiences of the people would amount to a false representation of God and his word. The fact that such could lead to internal grumblings against God and impair true worship experience is sufficient to provoke teaching the Bible correctly and stress obedience to God ahead of personal gains.

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**Sustainable Fishing in Ghana: Lessons from
Indigenous Akan Fishing Ethics**

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Abstract

For many individuals in the Ghanaian culture, fishing is one of the activities that provide a source of income and nutrition. A lot has been written about fishing and its economic worth. Recently, there have been multiple complaints made by both the industry insiders and outsiders about various abuses and issues affecting the business. This has made many to wonder whether the fishing industry in Ghana is sustainable. Sustainable fishing has been a big issue of concern in Ghana. But what is sustainable fishing? Sustainable fishing, in this sense, is leaving enough fish in the ocean and other water bodies while simultaneously protecting ecosystems and endangered species. If the oceans and rivers are preserved, those who rely on fishing will be able to maintain their employment. This study investigates the phenomenon of Akan fishing ethics as well as some of the lessons that may be learned from it in order to improve Ghana's fishing industry. Because some of the abuses and issues identified in the fishing sector are caused by domestic factors, this study believes that indigenous knowledge and practices on fishing can be used together with the modern means of fishing to address the apparent challenges in the fishing industry in Ghana.

Keywords

Sustainable Fishing, Akan, Fishing Ethics, Indigenous Knowledge.

Introduction

In Ghana, certain studies on the fishing business have been carried out. Irvine¹, Lawson², Wyllie³; Hill⁴, Christensen⁵, Vercrujisse⁶, Jorion⁷, Nukunya⁸; Overa⁹, Akyeampong¹⁰, Odotei¹¹, Overa¹², Akyeampong¹³, Odotei¹⁴, and Botchway & Sarpong¹⁵. These listed scholars offer viewpoints on Ghanaian fishing. These works, however, do not consider the indigenous ways of fishing in promoting sustainable fishing in Ghana.

Even though some scholars, such as Edgerton¹⁶ and Alvard¹⁷ believe that indigenous knowledge and practices are unscientific

¹Irvine, F. R. (1947). *The Fishes and Fisheries of the Gold Coast*. London: The Crown Agents for the Colonies.

² Lawson, R. (1958). "The structure, migration and resettlement of Ewe fishing units." *African Studies*, 17 (1): 21-27

³ Wyllie, R. (1969). "Migrant Anlo fishing companies and socio-political change: A comparative study." *Africa*, 39(4): 396-410.

⁴ Hill, P. (1986). *Talking with Ewe Seine fishermen and shallot farmers*. Cambridge: African Studies Center.

⁵Christensen, J. B. (1977). "Motor power and woman power: Technological and economic change among Fanti fishermen in Ghana" in M. E. Smith (ed.), *Those who live from the sea: A study in maritime anthropology*. St. Paul, NY: West Publishing. pp. 71-89.

⁶Vercrujisse, E. (1984). *The penetration of capitalism: A West African study*. London: Zed Books.

⁷Jorion, P. (1988). "Going out or staying home: Migration strategies among Xwla and Anlo-Ewe fishermen." *Maritime Anthropological Studies*, 1(2): 129-155.

⁸Nukunya, G. K. (1989). "The Anlo-Ewe and full-time maritime fishing: Another view." *Maritime Anthropological Studies*, 2(2): 154-173

⁹Overa, R. (1998). *Partners and competitors: Gendered entrepreneurship in Ghanaian canoe fisheries*. Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Bergen.

¹⁰Akyeampong, E. (2001). *Between the sea and the lagoon: An eco-social history of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c.1850 to recent times*. Oxford: James Currey.

¹¹Odotei, I. (2002). *The artisanal marine fishing industry in Ghana: A historical overview*. Accra: Institute of African Studies.

¹²Overa, R. (1998). *Partners and competitors: Gendered entrepreneurship in Ghanaian canoe fisheries*. Ph.D. Thesis (unpublished), University of Bergen

¹³Akyeampong, E. (2001). *Between the sea and the lagoon: An eco-social history of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c.1850 to recent times*. Oxford: James Currey

¹⁴Odotei, I. (2002).

¹⁵Botchway, D. N.Y.M. & Sarpong, A. A. A. (2015). "Indigenous Work Ethics among Akan of Ghana." *Religions*, (2015)1. <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2015.work.14>

¹⁶ Edgerton, R. B. (1992). *Sick societies: Challenging the myth of primitive harmony*. New York: The Free Press.

¹⁷Alvard, M. S. (1993). "Testing the 'ecologically noble savage' hypothesis: Interspecific prey choice by Piro hunters of Amazonian Peru." *Human Ecology*, 21: 355-87. See also

and irrelevant today, I dare to postulate that indigenous knowledge can be used to contribute to environmental conservation (Colding & Folke,¹⁸; Berkes et al.¹⁹; Gadgil et al.²⁰; Ntiamoah-Baidu²¹ and Awuah-Nyamekye²². I define sustainable fishing as ensuring that fisheries thrive in both marine and freshwater ecosystems. As a result, I have set out to examine and discover how indigenous Akan fishing expertise may be applied to today's Ghanaian fishing industry.

Methodology

The research was carried out over nine (9) months in three regions of Ghana, where the Akan live, namely the Ashanti Region, the Bono Region, and the Bono-East Region, from February to November 2019. For this study, a total of 30 people were interviewed. There were 22 females and 8 males among the 30 participants. I was informed by my interviewees that fishing was more of a female dominated pastime in the Akan society than it was for men. Participants ranged in age from 55 to 80 years old. The age of the interviewees was very important since those within this age bracket would have had the knowledge and experience and also might have been involved directly in traditional Akan fishing. Those who were actively involved in indigenous fishing and those who provided assistance to those who were directly involved in indigenous fishing took part in the study. Farmers, hunters, palm wine tappers, petty traders, chiefs and queen mothers were among those who took part in the survey.

Alvard, M. S. (1994). "Conservation by native peoples: Prey choice in a depleted habitat." *Human nature* 5:127-54.

¹⁸Colding, J. & Folke, C. (1997). 'The relations among threatened species, their protection, and taboos.' *Conservation Ecology*, 1(1):6 -17

¹⁹Berkes, F. Folke, C., Gadgil, M. (1995). 'Traditional ecological knowledge, biodiversity, resilience, and sustainability', In Perrings, C. A., Maler, K.-G., Folke, C. Holling, C. S. & Johnsson, B.O. (Eds.). *Biodiversity Conservation: Problems and policies*. Kluwer Academic Publishes, Dordrecht, the Netherlands.

²⁰Gadgil, M., Berkes, F & Folke, C. (1993). 'Indigenous knowledge for biodiversity conservation', *Ambio*, 22:151-56

²¹Ntiamoah-Baidu, Y. (2008). 'Indigenous beliefs and biodiversity conservation: The effects of sacred grooves, taboos and totems in Ghana for habitat and species conservation', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, 2(3):309-26.

²²Awuah-Nyamekye, S. (2009). 'Salvaging nature: The Akan religio-cultural perspectives.' *Worldviews: Global religions, culture and ecology*, 13(3):251-82. See also Awuah-Nyamekye, S., (2014) 'Managing the Environmental Crisis in Ghana: the role of African Traditional Religion and Culture with specific Reference to the Berekum Traditional Area.' *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*.

The researcher had group interviews consisting of three to four people. I asked permission to tape-record all the interviews. The Akan language (Twi) was the main medium for the interviews. Some of the sample questions that guided the study are listed below: What are some of the traditional methods of fishing in your area? What were some of the implements used in indigenous fishing? Was fishing done in groups or by individuals? Was there any day set aside for no fishing? Were there any particular traditional means employed to enable the fish stock to replenish? Did religion play a role in fishing in indigenous societies?

Based on the responses of my participants, I asked follow-up questions. The following themes emerged from the transcription and coding of the interviews: Traditional methods of fishing; implements of fishing; Traditional means of replenishing fish stocks; Traditional taboos regarding fishing; off-season for fishing; religion and indigenous fishing.

The Akan

The Akan form the largest ethnic group in Ghana. The Ghana Statistical Service on 22nd September 2021, released a preliminary result of the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC). According to the results, Ghanaians are 30.8million. Among the total population, Akan are 47.5% of Ghana's population²³. Traditional Akan jobs include farming for those who live in the interior areas, fishing for those who live by the coast, and trade, especially for women (Rattray²⁴; Omanyo²⁵). They may be found in two distinct parts of Ghana's landscape: the tropical rain forest and the south-bound coastal shrub²⁶. The Ashanti, Akyem, and Akuapim are Akan tribes that live in the woodland zone, whereas the Fantis live in the coastal region. "The Akan people are divided into linguistic sub-groups. Each group's language is described as a dialect of the Akan language; however, most dialects are mutually intelligible"²⁷.

²³ Source: www.census2021.statsghana.gov.gh.

²⁴Rattray, R. S. (1923). Ashanti. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

²⁵Omanyo, C. N. (2001). Akan religion, in Glazier Stephen D. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of African and Africa American religions*. New York/London: Routledge.

²⁶Botchway, D. N.Y.M. & Sarpong, A. A. A. (2015). "Indigenous Work Ethics among Akan of Ghana." *Religions*, (2015)1. <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2015.work.14>

²⁷Awuah-Nyamekye, S. & Oppong, J. (2018). 'The myths surrounding the tramo (the Bongo antelope- *Tragelaphus Eurycerus*) and fauna conservation among the Akan of Ghana: A critical analysis.' *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(16): 85-92

Akan Ethics

Many scholars including Ackah,²⁸ Danquah²⁹ and Sarpong³⁰ have written on Akan ethics. Anderson (2013) defines, traditional-Akan ethics as the unadulterated practical normative science of the moral values, ideas and behaviour of the traditional Akan people of Ghana³¹. By Akan ethics in this paper, I mean the indigenous set of laws, norms, and values that the Akan people have established in their society. These are found in the people's rituals, traditions, wise sayings, myths, and taboos. This brings me to the Akan's religious-cultural lives or worldviews. According to Kraft, "the collection of culturally organized beliefs, values, and commitment or allegiance underpinning a people's perception of reality and their response to those perceptions" is the worldview³². Worldview, in Kraft's viewpoint, is not dissimilar to culture. To support this claim, Guba (1990, p. 17), as referenced by Creswell (2014), defines worldview as "a fundamental set of ideas that influence action"³³.

The Akan's worldview has greatly aided them in comprehending the world and informing how they react to it. This understanding is known as 'cosmovision.' "Cosmovision" is defined as "assumed interconnections between the human, natural, and spiritual realms," according to Botchway and Sarpong³⁴. As a result, the Akan people thought that religion had a part in their daily lives. Hence, their religious views governed their agricultural and fishing operations. They honoured the land as a gift from the highest god because they felt *Onyame* was the rightful owner. They avoided any actions on the property that may cause disaster or have a detrimental effect on their farming operations. As an agricultural and maritime people, the Akan's ethics are primarily conservation-oriented. As a result, they have taboos and punishments that

²⁸Ackah, C. A. (1988). *Akan Ethics. A study of the moral ideas and the moral behaviour of the Akan tribes of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.

²⁹Danquah, J. B. (1944). *The Akan doctrine of God: A fragment of Gold Coast ethics and religion*. London, UK: Lutterworth Press

³⁰Sarpong, P. K. (1972). Aspects of Akan ethics. *Ghana bulletin of Theology*, 4(3): 40-54.

³¹ Anderson, G. (2013). Traditional Akan Ethics: Relevant or Trash to Ghanaians Today? *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp.59

³²Kraft, C. H. (1999). Culture, Worldview and Contextualization. In R. D. Winter and S.C. Hawthorne (eds.) *perspectives on the world Christian movement*. 3d. ed. Pasadena: William Carey Library, p. 20

³³ Creswell, J. W. (3rd edn.) (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative and mixed method approaches*. Nebraska-Lincoln: University of Nebraska-Lincoln

³⁴Botchway, D. N.Y.M. & Sarpong, A. A. A. (2015). "Indigenous Work Ethics among Akan of Ghana." *Religions*, (2015)1. <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2015.work.14>

govern their agricultural and fishing operations, which may be relevant to today's Ghanaian culture.

Results

Traditional methods of fishing

I enquired from my informants the nature of fishing in traditional Akan society. An informant had this to say: “we used to go fishing during the dry season, when streams and rivers were dry (i.e., water bodies had nearly dried out)”³⁵. I was informed that fishing was sometimes carried out in groups with a leader or as an individual venture.

During the data collection stage, two principal traditional methods came up. These are, *Ahwee* and the use of *Nsoa* (fishing basket). The implements involved as mentioned by my informants included: cutlass and hoes which were used to create a hole and then erect a temporary embankment across the river. I was told that the cutlass was also employed in circumstances where larger fishes needed to be cut into smaller pieces. They also scooped the water trapped in the earmarked area with a calabash (*apakyie*). A drainer constructed of palm fronds was another instrument that was utilised in traditional Akan fishing.

I devote the following paragraphs to the description to the two principal indigenous fishing methods--*Ahwee* and the use of the *Nsoa* – mentioned to me by my key informants.

Ahwee

One explained that with this particular method, an expert who is able to locate where the fishes can be harvested is needed. This is because to be able to do this requires a lot of experience. When the spot is identified we do the following:

When we arrive at the stream or river, with about six (6) people or more, our leader determines a place where the fishes are likely to be trapped and harvested. We earmark an area for the embankment in the river. We put up two embankments facing each other. The embankments are erected so as to prevent the

³⁵Personal conversation with a farmer/fisherman on August 28, 2019.

fishes from moving out of the earmarked area. Thus, without the embankment, it becomes absolutely difficult to restrict the movement of the fishes and this would obviously militate against our efforts of making a catch. One embankment is raised higher than the other one. This prevents the overflow of the river into the earmarked area. We put some plantain suckers in there to form an embankment with mud to support it from collapsing. We did a similar embankment on the opposite side of the river to also stop the flow of the river into our earmarked area. After an embankment is erected, each member carried his or her tools for the fishing activity (such as a basket, a basin, a cutlass, hoes, shovels, mattocks, drainers (*demirekuo*), and so on). With the embankment in place, we began the scooping (*ahwee*) from the earmarked area.

We did this to the point where the river level is lowered to expose the fishes within the earmarked area. The drainer was then used to scoop out the mud in which the fish were stacked. After that, we would pick up the fishes that had been gathered in the basket with our hands.”³⁶

The narration above was also corroborated by other respondents.

During the research, I discovered that in the past, males in the community were responsible for constructing the embankment, while women were responsible for collecting water from the earmarked area. Where males were absent, however, the women took it upon themselves to build the fishing embankment.

When I inquired how they were able to detect the location of the fish, one respondent said that one of the signals that a site would contain a stock of fish would be an area where there was a broken or dead log in the river³⁷. Another participant said that deep places (*ebunum*) where one observes the ripple effect of the fish movement in the river were considered as areas where one can find

³⁶Personal communication with respondent #3 on March 17, 2019.

³⁷Personal communication with respondent #10 on September 23, 2019.

a stock of fishes³⁸. When I enquired to know what happened to the embankment after the fishing had been done, one respondent said that the embankment is destroyed to allow the free flow of the river³⁹.

Nsoa (Fishing basket)

Apart from *ahwee*, as I have indicated above, is the use of a special fishing basket known in the traditional Akan society as *nsoa*. I was informed that the *nsoa*, is specifically designed for fishing purposes.

The preparation of the *Nsoa*

It is made up of about 6-8 long palm fronds or canes of the same length woven or tied together at one end. A hoop is fitted in the tied end to give it a conical shape. A twig is woven around each stick from the base to the top thereby giving it only one opening. A relatively small funnel-like basket is made in the same fashion. A bait is placed at the base of the *nsoa* and the funnel-like basket is fitted in the *nsoa*. This funnel-basket is used to enclose the opening of the fishing basket, *nsoa*. The narrow bottom opening of the funnel-like basket is to prevent the escape of the entrapped fish.

A photo of *Nsoa*



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Picture-of-a-traditional-fishing-basket-called-xisseka-taken-during-in-depth-interview-in_fig4_291690992.

³⁸Personal communication with respondent #14 on February 7, 2019.

³⁹Personal conversation with #7 on February 13, 2019.

How *Nsoa* is used in fishing

According to my informants, when the *nsoa* is ready for use, the hunter (s) or fisherman takes it to the riverside and puts a bait in it and sets it vertically in the middle of the river. It is kept stable by setting it in-between two strong sticks purposely planted in the course of the river to keep it stable at one place. The hunter (s) will go to the site to inspect the trap by removing it from the water and take (s) away the fishes that have been entrapped in the *nsoa*. This inspection is done every three days. This method I was told, does not require many people due to its nature and it could be used by only one person.

Traditional means of replenishing fish stocks

An interesting component of the study was when I posed the question to respondents regarding the traditional methods that were used to replenish the fish stock. One respondent had this to say

“Our people were very witty in the sense that the drainers had holes that could not hold the fingerlings so they could drop through. In that way, we got only the older or matured fishes to be harvested for consumption. Through this means, the fingerlings had a chance to live on longer and reproduce before they could be harvested for consumption⁴⁰”.

One informant also intimated that “there were occasions when the group leaders would advise those on fishing expedition that in an event the fingerlings are accidentally harvested or trapped, they were to be thrown back into the river so as to give them a second chance to live on and improve the fish stock for the subsequent years⁴¹”.

Still on this issue of fish stock replenishment, an informant noted that “in some cases when they caught a crab or a fish having eggs, a sign of fertility, they would throw it back so as to give it a chance to populate the fish stock⁴²”. Furthermore, a respondent

⁴⁰Personal communication with #27 on June 28, 2019.

⁴¹Personal communication with #12 on August 16, 2019.

⁴²Personal communication with #14 on October 11, 2019.

also said that - “*pitire*, a type of catfish, which was very rare, was also thrown back into the river whenever it is harvested to give it a chance to multiply so that it would not go into extinction⁴³”.

Corroborating the above views, a respondent observed that the seasonal calendar (i.e., rainy and dry seasons) offered a means for the fish stock to replenish itself. This was because, it was not possible to undertake fishing expedition in the raining season. Moreover, in the dry season, the river level was low and the movement of the fishes easily rippled the river which became an indication of the season for fishing⁴⁴.

Another important element in the conservation or replenishing of fish stock was the roles of the gods and the myths surrounding Akan fishing practice. In a respondent’s submission, she underscored the fact that “traditional myths and stories about the consequences suffered by those who flouted the orders of the river gods also served as a mechanism of safeguarding the fish stock⁴⁵”. In some cases when they caught a crab or a fish having eggs within itself, a sign of fertility, they may throw it back so as to give it a chance to populate the fish stock. Again, a type of catfish called *pitire*, which was very rare was not supposed to be harvested. Thus, to keep up the fish stock, they will throw it back into the river whenever it was harvested to give it a chance to multiply so that it would not go into extinction⁴⁶.

Traditional taboos regarding fishing

From my interaction with the respondents, it came to the fore that taboos regarding indigenous Akan fishing vary from place to place. It was a taboo for menstruating women to participate in fishing expedition because they saw it as unhygienic and could contaminate the fish stock. Also, at *Fawoade* in the Ashanti region, it was reported that if a menstruating woman went to the *Ankani* river on a Tuesday, she would not be able to trace her way back home⁴⁷. Defecating along river bodies was also considered a taboo. However, according to one respondent, in his area, there were no specific taboos regarding fishing but as a sign of goodwill or respect to the river god, they would present mashed yam or

⁴³Personal communication with #24 on April 3, 2019.

⁴⁴Personal communication with #21 on November 10, 2019.

⁴⁵Personal communication with #19 on June 15, 2019

⁴⁶Personal communication with a chief on March 23, 2019.

⁴⁷Personal communication with queen mother on September 8, 2019

plantain and eggs with the following words, 'Nana we are here to get something to feed on, and we offer this as a token to you'⁴⁸.

Another respondent added that menstruating women who went on a fishing expedition were seen as an embarrassment and something frowned upon by the Akan community. In fact, this respondent said the presence of a menstruating woman at a fishing site was a taboo that could spell doom for the entire community. This could bring about strange sicknesses among the people and also drastically reduce the catch made by those who attempted fishing in the river⁴⁹.

In addition to these specific taboos, I also noticed that the Akan in general do not undertake fishing expedition on sacred days such as *Fofie*, *Akwasidee* and *Krudapaakuo*. Respondents expressed the notion that the river gods took a rest on these days and hence needed silence and a peaceful atmosphere for resting. Another rule that could be seen as a taboo was that one cannot defecate around the river body because "it is believed that the river served as a source of food and so it was considered a taboo for one to contaminate the river body. Also, the river is revered as a goddess hence, it must be accorded all respect and not messing up around it"⁵⁰.

Off-season for fishing

In trying to find out if the indigenous fishing activity was an all-year-round affair, I was made to understand that there was an off-season for fishing from March till September. The off-season for fishing in the opinion of my informants was within a period of four (4) to five (5) months (October, November, December, January, February). During the off-season (i.e., the raining season), it became very difficult to control the current of rivers and so one could not engage in fishing expedition around that time of the year⁵¹. It came to the fore through my discussion with the participants that around December, was the opportune time for fishing, since by then the fishes had given birth and so it could not disrupt the natural cause of replenishing the fish stock in the system. One respondent stated and it was corroborated by other interviewees that "the off-season was a time we took a break from fishing and allowed the fish to

⁴⁸Personal communication with #8 on July 20, 2019.

⁴⁹Personal communication with #6 on May 6, 2019.

⁵⁰Personal communication with # 22 on August 11, 2019.

⁵¹Personal communication with a hunter on September 29, 2019.

replenish itself and it gave us a respite from fishing and it gave us enough time to attend to other jobs like farming, hunting and setting of traps for game⁵².

Religion and indigenous fishing

In my desire to know whether there is a linkage between religion and indigenous fishing, I solicited the views of my respondents. I found out that religion had a role to play in indigenous Akan fishing. To buttress this point, one respondent said “we believed that the gods had control and authority over the river bodies and so whenever we offered a token of mashed yam or plantain and eggs, we had a bumper catch”⁵³. This token of mashed yam or plantain and eggs is either placed by the riverside or sprinkled on the surface of the river.

Another informant corroborated this point when she said that “there were occasions where we could not have a catch because we failed to provide the river god with a token before our fishing expedition”⁵⁴. One participant submitted that “whenever there was a communication from the gods through the traditional priests regarding our actions, we were ready to go through with the message or the command,”⁵⁵. This submission by my informant reinforces the idea that people's worldviews have an impact on their behaviour. This also demonstrates the relevance of expressing the Akan worldview in this research.

Discussion

My interlocutors appeared to have prior knowledge and expertise in indigenous fishing based on my conversation with them. They were very knowledgeable about indigenous Akan fishing and its ethics. Their presentation was intriguing, and they were very eloquent in describing the methods of fishing. It is very clear from the presentation that the traditional Akan had their own methods of fishing namely the *ahwee* and the *nsoa*. Several of my interviewees agreed with each other on these two main methods of traditional Akan fishing. The *ahwee* method brought into focus, the practice of erecting an embankment at an earmarked area. This

⁵²Personal conversation with #18 on July 4, 2019.

⁵³Personal communication with #27 on May 14, 2019.

⁵⁴Personal communication with #28 on November 26, 2019.

⁵⁵Personal communication with #22, a farmer on August 19, 2019.

demonstrates how skillful the traditional Akanwere in undertaking fishing expedition. Since they lived close with nature, they were able to observe the patterns and seasonal occurrences--high tides and low tides, dry and rainy season. It is very fascinating to know how in traditional Akan fishing, they were able to locate, the fishes in the fishing expedition. It takes an experienced person to locate the area where there could be a swamp of fishes to be harvested. This leader must have a sense of judgment and be able to read the signs to locate where the fishes are in the river. *Nsoa*, unlike the *ahwee*, does not require many hands to be employed. Hence, in a situation where they lacked many hands, they would resort to the use of *nsoa*. From the narration it is clear that, when they wanted fish for immediate consumption, they opted for the *ahwee* and not the *nsoa* that would take about three days to be inspected. One thing that has been clear from the discussions so far is that, traditional Akan fishing defeats the proposition that traditional knowledge is unscientific as suggested by Edgerton⁵⁶ and Alvard⁵⁷. In view of this, one can submit that indigenous knowledge can complement scientific knowledge to develop and sustain our fishing practice.

Another equally important area of this research concerns traditional taboos regarding fishing in the traditional Akan community. As has been pointed out earlier on, it was a taboo for menstruating women to participate in fishing expedition because they saw it as unhygienic and could contaminate the fish stock. Defecating along river bodies was also considered a taboo. There were fines imposed on persons who went on fishing on sacred or forbidden days. In some areas also, persons who flouted laws or regulations regarding fishing may be asked to slaughter a sheep to pacify the gods. The chiefs were the custodians of the laws in the traditional society and they punished culprits⁵⁸. It impacted positively on the traditional Akan fishing practice. In modern Ghanaian communities, we find a lot of abuses including defecating around river bodies, contamination of our water bodies with plastic waste and other contaminants. Policies and legislations

⁵⁶ Edgerton, R. B. (1992). *Sick societies: Challenging the myth of primitive harmony*. New York: The Free Press.

⁵⁷ Alvard, M. S. (1993). "Testing the 'ecologically noble savage' hypothesis: Interspecific prey choice by Piro hunters of Amazonian Peru." *Human Ecology*, 21: 355-87. See also Alvard, M. S. (1994). "Conservation by native peoples: Prey choice in a depleted habitat." *Human nature* 5:127-54.

⁵⁸ Appiah-Opoku S., (2007). 'Indigenous Beliefs and Environmental Stewardship: A Rural Ghana Experience.' *Journal of Cultural Geography*.

alone might not bring about the needed change and sanity that we wish to have in our fishing space that could lead to sustainable fishing in Ghana.

Another area worthy of comment is that of the practice of the off-season in traditional Akan fishing. According to my informants, the off-season gave them a resting period and also enough time to attend to other jobs like farming, hunting and setting of traps. The off-season also supported environmental conservation and allowed fingerlings to develop and breed. This practice is commendable, and corresponds to the One Month Off-Season policy that the present government has implemented in the Ghanaian fishing industry. However, there is a need for more extensive interaction with individuals involved in the fishing value chain in order to iron out the disagreements in the policy and ensure that a larger number of people benefit from it, leading to sustainable fishing in Ghana.

Furthermore, the information provided by my respondents on the methods used to allow the fish stock to replenish itself are quite useful. The fingerlings were safeguarded from being captured and collected by using drainers with narrower pores to provide an escape for the fingerlings should they be trapped in the drainers. In so doing, the fingerlings were therefore safeguarded and given the opportunity to live longer and reproduce before being harvested again. This supports Botchway and Sarpong's results, which state that among indigenous fishing groups, "the use of nets and methods that would catch fingerlings is thereby discontinued"⁵⁹. In my research, I found out that on occasions where the fingerlings were accidentally harvested or trapped, the group leaders would advise those on the fishing expedition to throw the fingerlings back into the river to give them a second chance to live on and improve the fish stock for the subsequent years. The implication is that they had a "sustainable" mind. They thought about the future generation. This affirms the Akan proverb "*adidi daa na eye na enye adidi preko*" to wit, having something to bite every day is much better than having one's fill in a day and going hungry thereafter.

The responses that I gathered from my study in respect of replenishing the fish stock clearly demonstrates the fact that the indigenous Akan people in the past paid close attention to replenishing the fish stock. The mechanisms were very laudable and it clearly point to the fact that they did not think solely about

⁵⁹Botchway, D. N.Y.M. & Sarpong, A. A. A. (2015). "Indigenous Work Ethics among Akan of Ghana." *Religions*, (2015)1. <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2015.work.14>.

their own sustenance but thought of the future generations who could also benefit from the fish stock. A significant point worthy of note is the role of the gods and myths in Akan fishing practice. The traditional Akan believed that the gods could punish them if they flouted their instructions about their fishing practice. Furthermore, the chiefs and the opinion leaders could punish the fisher-folks if they flouted the directions of the gods. This approach guided their fishing practice and inured to their benefit.

People in the forest areas where my research was conducted regarded the rivers in their territories as sacred, much as those in the southern zone of the nation saw the sea as a deity. "The river is considered as a goddess," one respondent added, "therefore it must be granted utmost respect and no messing up around it."⁶⁰ Furthermore, I was told that individuals who went on fishing expeditions performed sacrifices and offered gifts in exchange for a good or bumper harvest, which supports A.P. Brown's (1936) argument about "the predominance of rites and beliefs related with fishing of sea deities"⁶¹.

Some people are of the view that the indigenous system is unscientific (Edgerton⁶² and Alvard⁶³), but from the foregoing discussion it is clear that this view is not wholly true. For instance, the people know when the fishes lay their eggs as well as the harm the chemical substances such as DDT can cause on marine or water life and human beings as well. It has also been pointed out how they safeguarded and protected the fingerlings for sustainable fishing. Chemicals like DDT and mercury are forbidden, according to my responders, since they are harmful to human health and the fish stock's long-term viability. According to one respondent, "the usage of chemicals, as well as defecating near the river, is frowned upon." This safeguarded the livestock while also ensuring adequate supplies for future years⁶⁴. This ban might possibly be due to "the respect of the sea causes the fishers to stop using hazardous

⁶⁰Personal communication with #22 on April 14, 2019.

⁶¹Akyeampong, E. (2001). *Between the sea and the lagoon: An eco-social history of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c.1850 to recent times*. Oxford: James Currey, p. 121.

⁶² Edgerton, R. B. (1992). *Sick societies: Challenging the myth of primitive harmony*. New York: The Free Press.

⁶³Alvard, M. S. (1993). "Testing the 'ecologically noble savage' hypothesis: Interspecific prey choice by Piro hunters of Amazonian Peru." *Human Ecology*, 21: 355-87. See also Alvard, M. S. (1994). "Conservation by native peoples: Prey choice in a depleted habitat." *Human nature* 5:127-54.

⁶⁴Personal communication with #20 on November 2, 2019.

chemicals to fish, lest they contaminate it"⁶⁵. This restriction, I feel, may still be imposed today since some fishermen still use DDT, mercury, other chemicals, and light in their fishing, which do not contribute to the development, growth, and sustainability of fishing in Ghana.

All said and done, traditional Akan fishing methods had its advantages of ensuring that the fingerlings were protected and also kept the fish stock from extinction. Traditional Akan fishing ethics ensured that every fish collected is healthy and good for human consumption while very rare fishes were also protected from extinction throughout the fishing expedition.

Conclusion

The current study adds to the literature on fishing in Ghana by incorporating lessons learned from indigenous Akan fishing ethics. As a result, it is critical for us to recognise that indigenous wisdom may assist us in resolving certain current socio-economic and political challenges. The study's findings revealed people's understanding of indigenous Akan fishing ethics and the ethical standards that governed fishing expeditions in the past. The importance of the knowledge on indigenous Akan fishing ethics is that it can help to resolve some pertinent issues that stifle our attempt as a nation in fashioning out a sustainable fishing industry in the modern fishing environment.

I am therefore advocating that there should be a collaboration and dialogue between the central government with our chiefs to know how to bring back sanity in the fishing industry that will lead to sustainable fishing. Furthermore, to achieve sustainable fishing, I believe the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture should involve fishermen and other stakeholders in discussions on the need to protect, conserve, and employ best practices in order to ensure sustainable fishing in Ghana.

I propose that we can draw a lesson from the practice of the Akan people having posterity in mind in their fishing activities so that our fishing practices are not solely directed by the gains of today but also the preservation of marine life for sustainable fishing in Ghana.

I submit that the practice of the off-season in traditional Akan fishing is an ethical practice that can aid in the development

⁶⁵Botchway, D. N.Y.M. & Sarpong, A. A. A. (2015). "Indigenous Work Ethics among Akan of Ghana." *Religions*, (2015)1. <https://doi.org/10.5339/rels.2015.work.14>, p 47.

of sustainable fishing practices in Ghana. Even though, the Ghana government has done and is still doing a lot (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fisheries Commission: Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana a National Policy for the Management of the Marine Fisheries Sector 2015-2019) in terms of mitigating some of the bad fishing practices such as bad nets and light fishing, a lot more has to be done and we can learn from the above traditional Akan fishing practice.

In response to the tendency of certain fishermen using unauthorised nets and practices in fishing, it would be detrimental to the fingerlings and would not position the country to have sustainable fishing. I dare recommend that sanctions against those who flout laws and policies regarding fishing can go a long way to bring about sustainable fishing in Ghana today.