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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 and the name of the journal is to reflect this also.

Author Guidelines

This journal adopts the footnoting style of citation, following the Kate Turabian style or Chicago Manual of 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 is 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 a consistency of spelling.

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

Editorial

This second issue of the fifth volume of the Journal treats a variety of topics in a total of six articles. Victor Serlomey Gedzi studies the role of religion, culture, and law in sustaining the infamous phenomenon of Trokosi, a traditional religious retributive system of justice, which focuses on paying the ransom of a virgin (usually a young female) from the offender's family to the *Nyigbla* god of justice. Apart from other damaging experiences that occur to the victim of ransom, she assumes a religious identity shrouded in and maintained through fear inducing religious beliefs and practices. She is, on the basis of this identity, locked up in a symbolic marriage to the god of justice, a marriage which, however, is concretely realized as a servile union to the priest of the shrine. This well reported research draws on contemporary knowledge about power negotiations in culture, the role of religion in the subordination of women, and the law's inadvertent support for the status-quo to explain how the institution of *trokosi* continues to thrive despite numerous governmental and non-governmental initiatives to bring it to an end.

Egbeolowo Dauda Ashir's study is concerned with the effects of Yoruba witchcraft beliefs on marriage and family life of the faithful of Islam. According to the study, there should be no illusion about Yoruba Muslims and the belief in witchcraft for they, like their non-Muslim counterparts, share strongly in witchcraft beliefs and, again, like them engage in intra-family witchcraft accusations and counteraccusations and seek protection against or resolution of witchcraft related issues in ways that the author finds contrary to the Islamic faith. After a lucid description of the phenomenon and arguments of disavowal of the attitudes of some Muslims, the author concludes by proposing Islamic alternatives in the search for solutions to the belief in witchcraft as a way of minimizing the effects of such beliefs on the marriages of Yoruba Muslims.

The next essay by Abdulwahab Danladi Shitu also focuses on marriage, specifically on the union between Prophet Mohammed (S. A. W....) and Zaynab. In this essay, Shitu argues contra-critique of the marriage. The author believes that much of the apology of the marriage can be premised on Qur'anic and biographical texts, which disallow the negative interpretation of the

Prophet's decision to marry and Zaynab's actions that are said to have led to the decision. Challenging the authenticity of the sources used by critics, Shitu dismisses the condemnation of the marriage as part of Western bias, closely related to Christianity and its negative perception of Islam in the middle ages. Shitu's essay will be of interest to scholars and students of Islam and Christianity alike, particularly regarding its claims to a more accurate historical method and to the arguments underlying its plea.

Dasaolu, Babajide Olugbenga and Emmanuel Kehinde Obasola's paper looks at the debate on freewill-determinism concepts in relation to *Ori* in Yoruba thought." To attain this objective, the paper reviews the various aspects of Yoruba conception of determinism, highlighting the seeming ambivalence of and contradictions in the explanations given to the concept in Yoruba philosophy. The author concludes that the way out of the aporia of Yoruba conception of destiny as something fixed and yet alterable under certain circumstances is to interpret it from the perspective of soft determinism.

Two submissions from the study of the Bible conclude this collection of essays. The first is by Alice Matilda Nsiah, who seeks to work out "apparent" similarities between tax officials and traders of the Kumasi Central Market (KCM) in Ghana, on one hand, and the Pharisees and Herodians of Mark 12:13-17, on the other. Nsiah contends that a metaphorical reading that allows the mapping of some characteristics of the text (source domain) to traders and tax officials at KCM (target domain) establishes the connection between the two domains and helps to understand the dispositions of the main actors concerning paying taxes to the state.

The second submission in the area of biblical studies is by Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor and focuses on the intricate connection between Bible translation and hermeneutics. On that basis the author challenges the accuracy of the existing translation of Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Bible. Premising his claims on the mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics method, the author argues that "indigenous Dangme Bible readers did not understand how the Holy Spirit could" push "Jesus into the wilderness." He, therefore, proposes a more nuanced translation that will convey a more appropriate meaning to the indigenous Dangme reader.

Kofi Appiah

**The Role of Culture and Law in
Sustaining *Trokosi*
Institution in Southern Ghana**

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Abstract

The study carefully examined *trokosi*—the keeping of virgins (henceforth referring always to girls and not boys) in traditional religious shrines in Ghana, using a shrine in Afife as a case study. The study tried to find out whether culture, including its primary constituent, religion, and law play any role in sustaining the *trokosi* institution in spite of efforts by the Ghana Government and human rights activists to eliminate it. The study used qualitative approach that involved in-depth interviews with key informants, local people, and observation. The primary data was supplemented by relevant secondary data. The research identified that *trokosi* as an institution persists because of its use of religio-cultural techniques such as social structuring and meaning. Other findings that sustain the institution include the overt endorsement of the religio-cultural institution by local and international human rights laws; government's inability to enforce criminal laws; government officials' and *trokosi* practitioners' fear of reprisals from the traditional god that is the basis of the institution; and indigenes' adamancy to preserve *trokosi* as a religio-cultural heritage even if it infringes on fundamental human rights of women and girls. The study is important because, among other things, it contributes to existing discourses on religious and cultural institutions and practices both locally and internationally.

Key words:

Trokosi, religion, culture, law, power

Introduction

One of the most difficult things in scholarship is how to provide a universal definition of concepts such as religion and culture. This difficulty arises in view of the fact that the concepts mean different things for different people¹. The best one can do in this instance, is define the concepts to meet the particular conceptual design one has in mind. Consequently, this study sees religion as part of culture. Culture in the context of this study is defined as inherited conceptions and practices of a specific group of people. This definition takes cognizance of the fact that religion is part and parcel of culture and located as a primary constituent at the ideational domain of culture. For example, *trokosi*², the focus of this study, is an inherited conception that involves belief associated with the god *Nyigbla*, a god of justice, that controls the social order of the people. This entails cultic and other customary practices in the divine and human relationship. In this sense, *trokosi* is a religio-cultural institution created and practiced over the years by the practitioners and passed on to subsequent generations. As a religio-cultural institution, it is belief-based and originated from the religious thought or ideas of the people.

Trokosi involves the sending of virgins to traditional religious shrines as atonement for supposed crimes committed by some members of the girls' families³. *Nyigbla*,⁴ a 'national' god or *tro* of the traditional Anlo satellite state or society, is the central point of power around which the *trokosi* institution and practice revolve. According to the field research, five districts namely

¹ Victor S. Gedzi, *Principles and Practices of Dispute Resolution in Ghana: Ewe and Akan Procedures on Females' Inheritance and Property Rights*. (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2009).

²*Trokosi* is a religio-cultural institution/practice in which a virgin girl is given out to serve at a deity's shrine to atone for a crime committed by a parent or a relative. This crime is deemed reprehensible by the local god. The virgin is known as *trokosi* (singular) or *trokosiwo* (plural) when they are more than one.

³ R. K. Ameh, "Child Bondage in Ghana: A Contextual Policy Analysis of Trokosi." PhD Thesis, (British Columbia: Simon Fraser University, 2001).

⁴ It is believed to be one of the powerful gods among the Southern people of Ghana. As such it is extremely feared by the population in the fieldwork location. It is traditionally considered a "state god" and believed to exist with the Southern Ewe before their migration to their present location in Ghana.

Akatsi, Ketu North, Keta, North Tongu and South Tongu in the Volta region of Ghana have 25 active shrines that are related to the *Nyigbla* god. The Afife trokosi shrine, which forms the unit of analysis of this study is located within the Ketu North district. The particular group that forms the study population is the Afife people in the Volta Region of Ghana. Previous studies⁵ have extensively dealt with *trokosi* as a religious and cultural institution or practice, but not so much has been done on the role religion and culture, and human rights laws could play in sustaining the *trokosi* institution as a field of power. Michel Foucault's revolutionary understanding of the concept of power has extended the hitherto restricted juridical and sovereign notion to include the fields of magic, culture and religion⁶. Power, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events"⁷. As such, as a religious and cultural institution, the trokosi institution may rely on power that emanates from religion and culture and also law to sustain its existence by using discourses that do not only define it but also justify what it does⁸. Thus, the main objective of the present study is to find out in which ways religion and culture together with law, act as sources of power in sustaining the trokosi institution and practice among the Afife people in the Ketu-North district of Sothern Ghana.

The study used the qualitative research method involving in-depth interviews with key informants such as traditional priests/ritual functionaries of the shrine, liberated trokosi women, locals, the local chief, and observation. The study involves strategic sampling, consciously guided by the conceptual design. Demographically, twenty (20) of the informants comprising 10 freed trokosi women; traditional priests/ritual functionaries and the local chief were interviewed. Ten (10) local people consisting of

⁵ See A. Gadzekpo. "Sexual Bondage". *Awo Magazine*, 5, (1993): 5-7); H. Ababio. *Trokosi, Woryokwe, Cultural and Individual Rights: A case Study of Women's Empowerment and Community Rights in Ghana*, St. Mary's University, Halifax, (2000); Sarah C. Aird. "Ghana's Slave to the gods". *Human Right's Brief*, (2002). Available at: www.wcl.american.edu/. Accessed on 30-11-2011; D. Alford. "Sex Slave's Slow Freedom." *Encyclopedia of Rape*; Suzanne Aho (1999) "The Trokosi I Fiashidi Ritual Servitude: Togo Experience". Accra, (2004).

⁶Michel Foucault. "Truth and Power." In Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (trans. by Colin Gordon et al.) (1980).

⁷Online Oxford Dictionary. Available at:

<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/power>

⁸ S. Phelan. "Foucault and Feminism." *American Journal of Political Science*, 34, 2(May 1990).

five (5) women and five (5) men were also strategically selected and interviewed. This method “facilitates close interactions with informants/respondents and their settings”⁹ and thus, suitable for analysing the issues that affect them. The choice of the study unit was motivated by the active role that its members play in the trokosi practice. The primary data was supplemented by related literature on the research object¹⁰. The present study is important because it highlights religion/culture and law as the sustaining power base of the trokosi institution and practice and suggests ways of eliminating it. It also contributes to existing discourses on religious and cultural institutions and practices.

For a clearer understanding of the study, it is important to explain the primary concept, *trokosi*, as well as the traditional metaphysics of the Anlo people also known as the Southern Ewe. Explanation of Anlo metaphysics is important because it provides clues to activities of *Nyigbla* god and the people’s reactions to these activities of the god. It is important also to note that Afife, which is the field location of the study, is a subset of the Anlo people and therefore shares the same metaphysics with them¹¹.

Trokosi

The term, *trokosi*, a combination of two Ewe syllabic words: *tro* (‘a god’) and *kosi* (‘a slave’) refers to a female child who has been born as a result of an intervention by a god before which a barren woman made a pledge that should the child be born she would give her out to serve or belong to the god. Thus, *trokosi*, according to this understanding, signifies “a god’s slave”. That is, the girl becomes a slave of the god that intervened at her birth. The concept in the context of this present study, refers to the donation of a virgin girl to *Nyigbla* god by a family in order to atone for a supposed crime that a member of the girl’s family might have

⁹V.S. Gedzi. “Property Relations and Women’s Access to Courts among the Anlo and the Asante in Ghana”. *European Scientific Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 29 (December, 2012b): 121 – 139.

¹⁰Special acknowledgement to the *Political Science Journal: Critical Thinking*, for providing the copy right to use “Field of Power: A Religio-Cultural Analysis of Trokosi in Ghana”, published 2016 by Victor Selorme Gedzi, Yunus Dumbe and Gabriel Eshien for other literary purposes. As the main contributor, Dr. Dumbe and Dr. Eshien have consented that I publish this work in a different way alone in my name. I am grateful for all of this.

¹¹ R. K. Ameh, “Child Bondage in Ghana: A Contextual Policy Analysis of Trokosi.” PhD Thesis, (British Columbia: Simon Fraser University, 2001).

committed against the god. The term therefore connotes a state of being a slave to the god¹² even though she (the slave girl) may euphemistically be referred to as the deity's wife¹³. The term does not only refer to the slave girl, but also to the practice and the institution of the *trokosi*.

In the *trokosi* practice, as indicated, virgins are given out to serve at a shrine of the god *Nyigbla* to atone for crimes of parents or relatives, which are "deemed reprehensible by gods". Crimes punishable by payment with a virgin vary and include murder, adultery, theft and sexual intercourse with a *trokosi*¹⁴. The offender's family may be unaware of the offence until a disaster such as a sudden death, an accident or some sort of misfortune strikes a member¹⁵. The source of the calamity is detected through oracular consultation by the offender's family. The virgin becomes a *trokosi* (singular, or *trokosiwo* plural). Thus, girls who become *trokosiwo* are not kidnapped or abducted, but freely surrendered by relatives or parents who believe that it is necessary to atone for a sin of a family member in order to avoid punishment from the *Nyigbla* god. The girl remains in the shrine serving the priests and other ritual functionaries of the deity for a period ranging from few years to entire life¹⁶. The girl who is a victim to the system becomes a sexual partner of the priest. This is why the *trokosi* is also referred to as the "deity's wife"¹⁷.

The *trokosi* system is one of the most ancient practices and its origin is shrouded in mystery, tradition and obscurity¹⁸. This makes it difficult to know the exact period when the system began. However, oral tradition corroborated by indigenous priests/ritual functionaries, elders and the chief of Afife, estimates the practice as starting in the 17th century. Some also link the origin of the *trokosi* practice to Togo and Benin in West Africa. For this school of thought, it originated as a war ritual in the 1960s by warriors who were offering women as sacrifices to war gods in shrines. This

¹²See K. D. Ekem, footnote 15.

¹³Mark Wisdom. *The Trokosi System*. (Accra: Mercury Press Ltd., 2001).

¹⁴A.B. Boateng. *African Women and Children: Crisis and Responses*. (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001).

¹⁵ An interview with a ritual functionary and some elders at Afife on 12th July 2015

¹⁶CHRAJ, (1998) "UN Human Rights Council Report of the Second National Workshop on Trokosi system in Ghana".

¹⁷G. K. Nukunya. *Tradition and Change in Ghana*. Legon: Ghana University Press, (2003): 34.

¹⁸ Refer to G. K. Nkunya, footnote 21.

practice is believed to have found its way into some parts of Ghana¹⁹. This narrative seems to concur with Nkunya's finding²⁰ that attributed the practice to the custom of paying gods for services rendered. According to the scholar, in the past, clients who consulted gods for one reason or other were made to pay for the services in cash or kind. Items that were presented included animals. As time went by, those who were particularly pleased with the work of the gods began to offer their own children, mostly girls. Nkunya further indicated that clients who were about to carry out very important endeavours or needed something important would also pledge to offer their daughters to the gods if they achieved success. Also, couples who experienced frequent deaths of children consulted deities for protection. This category of people also thanked the deities with their daughters for making the children live. But with time, the practice would seem to have shifted from a voluntary to an obligatory offering. Other versions of oral history maintain that the practice originated in Ghana and was initially an institution meant for cultivating girls into socially acceptable women²¹. The *trokosi* is therefore supposed to be a virtuous girl or woman, but not a symbol of a slave that she now is. Thus, it appears the practice has transformed over the years and lost its original purpose²².

Metaphysics of Anlo

The traditional metaphysics of the Anlo comprises *Mawu*, the Supreme Being, who is considered as the Creator of everything in the universe. *Mawu* is believed by the people to operate through vicegerents such as *trowo* (gods) and ancestral spirits, who are considered intermediaries between humans and *Mawu*²³. *Trowo* "are owned by individuals, families or the 'state'" and are said to "perform protective, welfare and truth searching functions for worshippers."²⁴ *Nyigbla* is one of such gods. It is around this god that the *trokosi* institution revolves. *Nyigbla*, according to the

¹⁹M. Gillard. *Trokosi Slave of the Gods*. (Florida: Xulon Press, 2010).

²⁰Refer to G. K. Nkunya, footnote 21.

²¹This oral tradition has been maintained by key informants in Afife.

²²Refer to CHRAJ, footnote 20.

²³ Chris Abotchie. *Social Control in Traditional Southern Eweland of Ghana: Relevance for Modern Crime Prevention*. (Accra: University of Ghana Press, (1997): 65.

²⁴M. Ohrt. "Conflicting Discourses on Trokosi Practice in Ghana: Exploring Tensions in the Global/Local Human Rights Translation." Graduate School of Development Studies, ISS, The Hague, (2011):14.

fieldwork, is revered as a “god of war” that has its adherents. It is worshiped as a ‘state’ god of the Anlo people. It has developed into a cult or a religion - a variant of African Traditional Religion in Anlo traditional state. Annually, the people honour this god in a migratory festival popularly known as *Hogbetsotso*.

This *Nyigbla* religion fosters a morality of collective responsibility, which affects the people’s way of life generally. Thus, socially, the Anlo society “operates on a system of collective responsibility, with the actions of an individual potentially having consequences for other clan members”²⁵. This means that clan member(s) can be held responsible for an individual’s wrongdoing. Clan or family members therefore try to be of each other’s keeper by way of disciplining a member who goes wayward.

The *Nyigbla* god is believed to use the same principle of collective responsibility in carrying out its justice. In view of this, families try hard to find the truth about crimes committed in order to avoid prospective punishment²⁶. To identify a perpetrator of a crime, the people consult oracles through hexing. Normally, the one who is offended reports the case to the *Nyigbla* priest who through a specified ritual, on behalf of the offended, asks the god to identify the offender. For the traditional Anlo, oracles serve as the medium for humans to communicate with supernatural forces. Hexing is used to deal with the offender. According to the fieldwork, whenever a hex is put on a family, the family experiences serial death before it gets to know the reason for the frequent death. The reason for the death is known through oracular consultation. Mostly, the innocent family members are those who die leaving the one who has committed the offense. The offender’s family having enquired about the reason for the death or the calamity, offers a virgin girl to pacify the *Nyigbla* god.

Results

Life in Afife *Trokosi* Shrine

Fieldwork in the study unit has revealed that there are five districts - namely, Akatsi, Ketu North, Keta, North Tongu and South Tongu districts in the Volta Region of Ghana that are involved in the *trokosi* practice. The Afife *trokosi* shrine, as indicated, is located in the Ketu North district. The districts have 25 active shrines that are

²⁵See M. Ohrt, footnote 8.

²⁶Refer to M. Ohrt, (2011): 15.

related to the *Nyigbla* god. Besides these five southern districts of the Volta region, *trokosi* is also practiced in the Dangme East and West Districts of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This finding concurs with the 2008 annual report on the subject by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). A national survey conducted by the Department for the Study of Religions in University of Ghana, Legon, for International Needs, estimated over 5,000 women and girls serving in 51 major shrines and over 200 minor shrines in Ghana. It has further reported that since the call for the liberation of *trokosiwo* by the Government of Ghana and human rights activists, 2,800 women and girls have been liberated²⁷. CHRAJ in its 2008 Annual Report, also described *trokosi* subjects as unfortunate persons who are abused in all forms—physically, spiritually and sexually for long periods.

There is no exact date for the origin of the Afife *trokosi* shrine. But at least, it is believed to have existed since the settlement of the first people in the town. The practice is said to have started with one shrine, but four other shrines grew out of it. This growth may be attributed to the large number of inmates and the fast spread of the practice. Presently, it is estimated that the *trokosi* population under the Afife shrine is over a thousand. The shrine had been headed successively by many priests. Its current head is Torgbui Nasa, a priest of the *Nyigbla* god. The chief priest who periodically does ritual visits to *trokosi* shrines lives at the main *Nyigbla* shrine at Alakple, one of the Anlo towns.

The fieldwork showed that there are two categories of *trokosiwo* at the Afife shrine. The first group comprises those who have not placated the *Nyigbla* god and are still in the shrine under the supervision of the shrine priest. While in the shrine, families of this category of *trokosiwo* are allowed to visit their girls. Key informants made it clear that at times, girls stay in the shrine because their parents or relatives have not got the necessary funds to perform pacification rites. When such girls get married, their husbands help them to perform the rites and are consequently allowed to leave the shrine. Informants also indicated that while in the shrine, the girls could visit their families with permission from the shrine priest. The second category of *trokosiwo* consists of those who are allowed to live in their own family homes, because their pacification rites have been performed. But this latter group is also

²⁷C. Okutu. "The Ghanaian Times - Newspaper." Accra, (2001): 6.

expected to observe taboos, including visiting the shrine as and when necessary.

The interviews revealed that before a new *trokosi* is admitted into the shrine, she goes through a series of rituals, beginning from her home. The ritual, which includes drinking of a special concoction, is said to induct her into the shrine, making her a faithful and dedicated devotee to the *Nyigbla* god²⁸. The fieldwork also indicated that as part of the rituals, there is the pouring out of a libation²⁹ to the *Nyigbla* god to halt potential curses that may befall the victim's family. The *trokosi* is then dressed in *bishi*, a traditional dark blue cloth, and she carries a chair and other personal effects from her home to the shrine. These personal effects include cooking utensils, buckets, cloths, comb, sleeping mat and others. Having arrived at the shrine, she is kept in a room for five days to continue her induction. After this, she is brought out and taught how to cook, wash, sweep and perform other household chores.

Various reports about life in the *trokosi* shrines indicate that the victims are subjected to treatments that are degrading. This was testified by a former *trokosi*:

I lived and worked in the priest's fields and kept the compound clean. While doing so, I was raped repeatedly by the priest on tom mats on the cold floor of windowless huts. The other female slaves and I received neither food nor medical care. We had to find time after working on the priest's farm to bum charcoal or to sell firewood in the nearest town in order to make money to buy food. There were times we lived on raw peppers or palm kernel nuts to stay alive³⁰.

Juli's (pseudonym) narrative is a sampled case that illustrates the manner in which the *trokosi* practice subjects its victims. Another aspect is that the *trokosi* does not put on any footwear and cloths

²⁸ Refer to G. K. Nkunya, (2003): 248

²⁹ This is a traditional way of praying. Things used include, water and alcoholic beverages. These are poured on the ground and are interspaced or preceded by ritual utterances.

³⁰Parade Magazine. 'One Voice', New York, New York Media, (2000): 7.

apart from those prescribed for her status. There are also a number of dietary taboos, including the avoidance of some common species of fish. The *trokosi* is required to work on the farm, run errands, and perform other house-hold chores. Even though she cultivates the crops, she is forbidden to eat the produce. Moreover, she cannot have sex outside the shrine without first performing the necessary rites³¹. In general, it can be said that the life of the *trokosi* involves obedience to a series of command. It means she is not autonomous and cannot on her own initiate any undertaking whether social or economic. Narratives on treatment of the *trokosi* in literature capturing life in different *trokosi* shrines appear to be uniform in terms of treatment. A *trokosi* from a different shrine in Adidome, for example, sums up her experience as follows:

You are not a slave per say, but you are enslaved. Enslavement comes in many forms. A slave is chained, but the girls are allowed to move around and go to the market. It's only the restrictions and even when not chained, it is the fear attached. It is a mental bondage, a mental enslavement. ... You cannot think of running away because you know what the result will be. It is a mental enslavement not physical³².

A major aspect of the practice which has drawn the attention of human rights activists is that once the girls arrive at the shrine, they are not sent to school. But interviews with some ritual functionaries and the paramount chief of Afife have indicated that life in the shrine looks comparatively relaxed. According to the informants, unlike other places, a *trokosi* in the Afife shrine is allowed to go to school provided she expresses the interest; and that those who show interest in any trade are also permitted to learn it. The interviews further indicated that "girls are brought to the shrine not necessarily for punishment since their families might have received the punishment already". Thus, their presence at the shrine is only symbolic. An individual interview with a key informant, however, revealed that the only form of schooling that the girls go through is "apprenticing in oil preparation and weaving of bags."

³¹Refer to G. K. Nkunya (2003): 248.

³² Refer to M. Ohrt (2011): 35.

The fieldwork has also revealed that at times, refusal to have sexual intercourse with a priest/ritual functionary in the shrine may lead to punishment. In some shrines, priests go to the extent of raping the *trokosi* who refuses sex³³. The priest thinks he has a sexual right over the girls since he represents the god, who “owns” the girls as “wives” or slaves. Rhonda Heitman also indicated how *trokosi* practitioners believe that the priest's genital organ has been dedicated to a god and so having sex with a priest is like copulating with the god. The sexual act is therefore seen as sacred³⁴. Furthermore, the priest thinks he has the right to marry any *trokosi* he wants. A *trokosi* who has married a priest cannot leave the shrine even if she has finished serving her punitive number of years. The belief is that she is religiously or culturally attached to the priest and the shrine. As a wife, she and her children belong to her priest “husband”. As one ritual functionary at the Afife shrine puts it, “once a *trokosi*, one remains a *trokosi* forever”. Thus, this sexual abuse has always been the major concern of human rights activists. The situation is even more critical since many of the victims are minors.

This comment is made in relation to some attempts made by the Government of Ghana and in collaboration with some Non-Governmental Organizations that led to the liberation of some *trokosiwo* in other shrines but not those in Afife. According to some key informants, the Afife shrine always resists any attempt made by Government and human rights agencies to liberate the *trokosiwo*. Key informants explained that the spirit (*Nyigbla* god) behind the shrine would not permit them to undertake such an exercise. They fear that any attempt to stop the practice may bring disaster on them. Besides they would not like to stop the tradition which has been handed down to them. Interviews with some natives of the town made it clear that the people still revere and value the *trokosi* practice despite the pressure from the human rights activists and the fact that the practice has been outlawed by the Government of Ghana. While women/girl victims of the *trokosi* system wished the practice was stopped, majority of the inhabitants of Afife maintained that they would not give up their tradition for the sake of human rights. They also failed to admit that the *trokosi* practice contravenes women’s/girls’ and child human rights.

Interviews have also uncovered that the shrine does not only engage in the *trokosi* practice, but also supposedly treats

³³ Refer to MarkWisdom footnote 17.

³⁴Rhonda Heitman. “Trokosi System.” (2000).

medical conditions such as miscarriage, convulsion, epilepsy, bareness, blindness, impotence, infertility, mental disorder, among others. The shrine, according to the interviews, also treats what the informants called “spiritual marriages”. The *trokosi* institution is also allegedly responsible for maintenance of culture and serves as the “court of appeal” among the Southern Ewe. People also engage the services of the shrine to seek explanations for occurrences they do not seem to understand while others contact the shrine for protection against evil forces or enemies.

Asked why an entire family instead of the culprit is punished; and subsequent taking away of an innocent girl to atone for a sin she has not committed, a priest of the shrine explained that “if the culprit was killed, he/she would not be there to confess the sin”. Thus, as indicated, a calamity is visited on some family members, and this compels the culprit to confess the wrong he has done. On the question why it appears that only girls are kept in the Afife shrine as *trokosiwo*, the priest indicated that “boys have the tendency to be stubborn and rebellious” and would at times beat up shrine priests and other ritual functionaries.

Discussion

Religion / Culture and Law as Sustaining Power of *Trokosi*

Recent studies have identified religion/culture as a major field of power that systematically constraints actions by controlling people’s minds and “definitions of the world”³⁵. Undergirding the *trokosi* institution and practice fundamentally is the issue of gender and culture/religion as fields of power. Gender, the state of being male or female that is essentially used to depict social and cultural rather than biological differences, is a universal power constructed by human cultures. Its main principle is stressing the weakness and inferiority of women over that of their men counterparts; and how this weakness is utilized to produce male hegemony. This “manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women in society” is carried out through religio-cultural ideology that considers women’s contributions in any form as inferior to those of their male counterparts³⁶. For the example, among the

³⁵Gila Stopler.) “A Rank Usurpation of Power” - The Role of Patriarchal Religion and Culture in the Subordination of Women. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*. Vol. 15: 365, (2008).

³⁶Refer to Gila Stopler (2008): 366.

Anlo of which Afife, the study unit is a subset, the proverb that “A palm tree in a woman’s farm does not bear fruits” is one of those religio-cultural ideologies. It means that women are not supposed to be economically viable. This ideology explains why parents or families prefer sending their girls to religious servitude in the shrine. In this sense, while men are socially protected to develop and carry out their potentials, women are seen as dispensable and are fulfilled only through association with men. In a patrilineal culture where men are meant to immortalize the lineage, it is not surprising that they are socially insured and protected to realize immortality. Thus, in addition, the analysis implicates religio-cultural connivance and machinations to satisfy male expectations. This, as indicated, appears to be one of the original reasons for the institution of *trokosi* where girls are supposedly kept to be “cultivated” into socially acceptable women in the *trokosi* practicing communities to fit men’s values and desires. This bias while it tends to add value to maleness, devalues femaleness.

In devaluing women in the study unit, social structuring is used as a tool to exclude girls or women from the contact with, and participation in the highest realm of power represented by the *Nyigbla* cult³⁷. For example, the *Nyigbla* priest at the Afife *trokosi* shrine who communes with the god, is invariably a male. So also, the chief priest of the god who resides in the main shrine at Alakple, a powerful traditional town among the Anlo. Secondly, cultural ideologies, as indicated, and symbolic devices such as impurity (believed to be caused by women’s natural monthly flow of blood) are also used. In the study unit, these three factors interact or overlap to complicate and perpetuate women’s devaluation in the traditional society³⁸. In the context of the *trokosi* practice, the devaluation bars women from being priestesses/ritual functionaries to the *trokosi* god, the power behind the *trokosi* system that keeps girls and for that matter, women as slaves. It is clear how over the passage of time, boys because of their allegedly “stubborn” and “rebellious” character and ability to beat up shrine priests and other ritual functionaries forced the all-male hierarchy to revise who the victim of a deity’s slave should be. Girls and women, on the other hand, ironically, keep the *trokosi* system alive through docility and toleration by servicing the enslaving institution through daily chores and other productive and

³⁷Sherry B. Ortner. *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*. (Beacon Press, 1996).

³⁸ Refer to Footnote 43.

reproductive activities in the shrine. Some may attribute women's tendency to provide more support for enslaving traditional institutions like the *trokosi* to women's low educational and economic status compared with those of their men counterparts³⁹. But while this correlation of educational and economic status, to some extent, appears plausible, it does not justify why more men in the Afife locality who apparently are more educated and financially capable, seem to provide more support to the religio-cultural institution that discriminates against girls and women. The lack of women representation in the hierarchical structure of the *trokosi* institution, which serves as a mechanism for social control, is an indication of imbalance in the power relations between the sexes.

Gerda Lerner⁴⁰ has analysed how throughout history patriarchy manifests in various forms and modes and how its structure and function shift and change as it adapts to pressure and demands of women. Relating Lerner's analysis to the *trokosi* system in Afife, the fieldwork has shown that the system is comparatively relaxed when viewed against other *trokosi* shrines. It means, contextually, the Afife *trokosi* system appears to have adapted to pressure. Ironically, it was not the pressure of women but that of men (boys who beat up shrine priests and other ritual functionaries) that brought about a redefinition of the sex accepted as the *trokosi* victim. Effecting of change seems easy for men, because as indicated, they form the hierarchy of the *trokosi* institution.

The fieldwork identified also that the Government of Ghana in collaboration with some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) put pressure on the stakeholders of all *trokosi* shrines to release all *trokosi* girls. The pressure led to the release of 672 out of 4,740 *trokosi* girls in 1997 by other shrines. A smaller number was released in 2003. But shrine authorities in Afife resisted the pressure. Since 2003 no *trokosi* has been released. The anti-*trokosi* campaign also led to an amendment of Ghana's criminal code in 1998. The amended law has criminalized the *trokosi* practice. But, since the law came into force, no one has been arrested for prosecution⁴¹. In any case, shrines secretly continue to admit more virgins. Field informants indicated that even though the pressure

³⁹ Refer to V. S. Gedzi, footnote 5.

⁴⁰Lerner Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy*. (Women and History, Number 2). (New York: Oxford University, 1993).

⁴¹ Refer to M. Ohrt, footnote 8.

from Government and NGOs has not impacted much, authorities in Afife shrine, at least, relaxed the way girls and women are treated. Some other informants, however, see this relaxation in the treatment of girls and women as a façade to preserve the religio-cultural regime.

Women informants indicated that the *trokosi* institution is maintained through fear inspiring narratives about what the *Nyigbla* god has done and is capable of doing to those who disobey its orders. Stories are told about how some *trokosi* girls managed to run away from shrines to their parents' homes only to be sent back, because of the fear that the *Nyigbla* god may strike at the parents. In her historical studies, Reva Siegel⁴² shows how "status regimes" like *trokosi* evolve over time in order to preserve social stratification. Social stratification is founded "through the social structure – namely, institutions and practices, and through social meaning" – such as stories or narratives, proverbs, myths, metaphors, songs and reasons. According to Siegel, what is perhaps most visible in a historical perspective is the heterogeneity of institutions, practices, stories, and reasons that sustain the unequal social position of different groups over time. The elements of social structure and social meaning that sustain stratification, according to Siegel, vary by group and within groups, and that they evolve over time as their legitimacy is contested. Siegel's analysis of social stratification and how it is produced, reproduced, contested, and transformed is very similar to the traditional concept of hegemony that condones the process of social and cultural domination and subordination as illustrated in the *trokosi* practice among the Afife people. The social meaning that has become part of the social conscience and which sustains the *trokosi* institution is the social insistence that death and tragedy await those who refuse compliance with the religious edict that demands surrender of girls to the *trokosi* god. This is why, in the context of this study, one may argue that religion appears to be the most effective tool for the subordination of women⁴³. According to Ellen Carol Dubois, a woman or a girl would not have accepted readily her challenging condition like that of *trokosi* if religion had not taught her to comply, because it is God's or god's will that she should suffer⁴⁴. Thus, in the context of this study, it would appear

⁴²Reva Siegel. "The Rule of Love: Wife Beating as Prerogative and Privacy". 105 Yale L.J., (1996).

⁴³Ellen Carol Dubois (ed.). *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Reader: Correspondence, Writings and Speeches*. Northeastern, (1992).

⁴⁴ Refer to Footnote 42.

that women and girls accept and internalize their situation as *trokosiwo* since it is conceived as god-given.

Linked to the reasons why the *trokosi* institution and practice continue to be sustained, is its apparent overt endorsement by local and international human rights laws on the freedom to practice any religion; and cultural and associational rights. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, for example, provides rights to citizens to belong to any religion, culture or association⁴⁵. Legally, one may argue that both women and men, by the constitutional provision *de jure* have rights to freely choose any religion or belong to any association. Moreover, both women and men, in principle, have equal rights to culture. However, how these rights are understood and applied, especially in traditional societies like Afife, turns *de facto* to perpetuate gender hierarchy and deprives girls/women of equality and freedom rather than ensure their freedom of religion and culture or guarantee them equal respect⁴⁶. For example, virgins are forcefully uprooted from their homes and families through threat and intimidation to enter and serve in the *trokosi* religion. Thus, at the base of the threat and intimidation and eventual uprooting of the girl from her home and security, is the politics of power between the *trokosi* institution, comprising the man-made culture with its subset, religion, on one hand and the vulnerable family, which has to relinquish its girl (in some situations the only child) on the other. What seems to complicate the issue at stake is the fact that the global world, including the Ghanaian society, in which this atrocity of girls' enslavement is perpetuated view culture and religion with a liberal lens that disregards "institutions, practices, discourses, and norms of a religion or culture as a socio-political "epicentre of power."

The philosophy that inspires the contents of both local and international laws is liberalism. As a political or social philosophy, liberalism has a "skewed understanding of the desired scope and content of toleration, religious liberty, and cultural and associational rights" ⁴⁷. As a result, it lacks an adequate theory of power. This influence, on one hand, and the skewed understanding of "the desired scope and content of toleration, religious liberty,

⁴⁵Ghana's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 1996. In its chapter 5, the Constitution espouses the Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms of persons. Refer to articles 21, 26, 27 and 28 that deal with cultural and religious rights; and women and children Rights. Available at: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/gha129754.pdf>

⁴⁶Refer to Gila Stopler (2008): 368 ff.

⁴⁷ Refer to Gila Soplér (2008): 366.

and cultural and associational rights” on the part of liberalism, on the other, appear to incapacitate the ability of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana to ensure that the exercise of power and authority by religious and cultural institutions such as the *trokosi* over individuals like the girls or women are justified and that the latter’s rights are also safeguarded. According to Gila Stopler,

... the inadequacy of the liberal theory of power stems from its individualistic structure and inability to consider groups as a crucial mediator between the individual and the state. An analysis that recognizes groups both as a crucial site of power and a crucial reservoir of power that can be utilized by members both within and outside the group entails a different understanding of existing power relations and their effects on individuals. The focus on the state as the major or even sole threat to individual rights is particularly evident in the theories of political liberalism, wherein the commitment to maintaining freedom from the state in the private sphere of community far exceeds the commitment to protect the individual from private oppression⁴⁸.

Thus, issues such as religious freedom, freedom of association and the right to a culture have made the efforts of Governments of Ghana and human rights activists ineffective to eradicate the institution of *trokosi* that sustains women’s and girls’ subordination in Afife and other parts of the country. Proper analysis of the power of culture and its primary constituent, religion, may result in a very different understanding of the desired scope and content of toleration, religious liberty, and cultural and associational rights than what the liberal and social philosophy has imposed on the legal thought of Ghana.

The analysis has demonstrated how law can covertly be a “status-enforcing mechanism” even though it may not necessarily appear to be so, superficially. It is plausible to argue that precisely because hegemony constitutes the self, it is likely hard to identify

⁴⁸ Refer to Gila Stopler (2008): 368.

and resist the law when it is used to perpetuate it. At the same time, it is important to question the assertion that the law is neutral. It means continuous vigilance over several possible ways in which allegedly neutral laws can serve as a tool or support for religious or cultural institutions or practices that perpetuate domination and subordination of girls and women.

Michel Foucault⁴⁹ revolutionized the understanding of the concept of power from its restricted juridical and sovereign notions. The language of power, which used to be solely restricted to the law, is now expanded to cover the entire social universe, including, as indicated, areas such as magic, culture and religion as power fields. Power such as culture, together with its major constituent, religion uses discourses to define itself and also to justify what it does⁵⁰. Among the Afife people in Ghana, cultural discourses in the form of proverbs and metaphors stipulate a whole way of life between the sexes. Again, the discourse that “the palm tree in a woman’s farm does not bear fruits” or that “even though the female sheep gives birth to the ram, it is the latter that protects the former,” invokes economic and political power relations between men and women. It means women are not supposed to be economically productive or politically outstanding since males must provide, defend and protect them. Many women interviewed within the fieldwork location see nothing wrong with this cultural arrangement since they think their husbands look after them well. Only a minority questioned the social structure. It therefore sounds plausible to argue that an enslaving power of culture or religion may be very difficult to detect since it may operate on the guise of freedom⁵¹. More so, it latently guides human conduct and suggests possible outcomes because the person upon whom it is exercised sees herself as a free person and therefore her actions are also seen as free acts. “In this respect, religion and culture are quintessential sites of power because they are highly determinative of individual actions and are regarded as positively informing rather than obstructing free choice”⁵².

Furthermore, contemporary anthropology has identified culture as “grounded in unequal relations and is differently related

⁴⁹Michel Foucault. “Truth and Power.” In Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (trans. by Colin Gordon et al.) (1980).

⁵⁰S. Phelan. “Foucault and Feminism.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 34, 2(May 1990).

⁵¹ Refer to Phelan (1990): 425.

⁵²Refer to Ohrt (2011): 34.

to people and groups in different social positions”⁵³. This may explain why girls and women, instead of boys and men, are kept in the Afife *trokosi* shrine. Even though the *trokosi* practice is believed to be divinely inspired, it finds it difficult to keep *boys* and therefore men who are said to be characteristically “rebellious”. This field finding does not, however, obliterate the fact that males generally speaking in the field location are adherents of the *Nyigbla* religion in Afife and therefore believe in the supposedly divine origin of the *trokosi* institution. This realization of the radicalism on the part of boys on one hand, and docility of girls on the other, led, as indicated, to the modification of the tradition, a redefinition of the demand and seizure of victims for the Afife *trokosi* shrine. This is why the notion that culture is “shared” by members of a particular society should have been prequalified by the question: “by whom?” and “in what ways?” and “under what conditions?” Additionally, even though there is full acknowledgement of “material and political constraints such as force” on people on a given society, many anthropologists have consented that “culture and religion systematically constrain action by controlling people’s “definitions of the world,” limiting or restricting “their conceptual tools,” and “emotional repertoires”⁵⁴. In the Afife *trokosi* shrine as other places, this constraint and control is ritually enforced through the use of social meaning. It is equally true (as in the case of redefinition of what kind of sex is suitable as a *trokosi* victim) that the powerful could also influence a reshaping of culture and religion as well as how the world should be defined. From the study, it has become clear that the *Nyigbla* religion together with its affiliate culture is a major tool in the oppression of girls and therefore women not only in the fieldwork location but also other areas where the *trokosi* is practiced in Ghana.

According to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony⁵⁵, as indicated, religion is the most effective tool for the subordination of women, because it has succeeded in its conviction that women’s position as well as condition in life has been preordained by God or gods. Unlike Biblical religions that store these religious ideas in literature, traditional religions, including variants like *Nyigbla* religion store such ideas in rituals, proverbs, stories, narratives, metaphors, myths or social meaning. Stanton

⁵³ Refer to Gila Stopler (2008): 369.

⁵⁴Sherry B. Ortner (1996) as cited in Stopler (2008): 369.

⁵⁵Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. *Correspondence, Writings, Speeches* (1981): 136.

and Anthony lamented women's internalization of these religious ideas and argue that so long as girls and women accept this position there is no prospect that they would ever be emancipated. Thus, it becomes clear that religion uses its main tool of drawing up "terrains of meaning and feeling that are central to the securing of consent and/or the incitement to rebellion" when and where it is necessary for it to achieve its goal⁵⁶. In the case of the *trokosi* institution, the strategy of using force or coercion is unnecessary for compliance since fear makes parents or relatives themselves bring their girls to serve at the shrines. It means that in the context of this analysis, the situation cannot be changed without women and girls themselves arousing religious opposition. This idea is important if women/girls want to achieve a "far-reaching and momentous" reform that can transform their lives. The idea of reform does not warrant bargaining or toleration since this has serious implications that may not lead to their desired goal.

Conclusion

The study examined *trokosi*, the keeping of virgins in traditional religious shrines in Ghana, using a shrine in Afife as a case study. The study tried to find out whether religion/culture and law play any role in sustaining the religious institution in spite of efforts by Government and human rights activists to eliminate it. The study used qualitative approach that involved in-depth interviews with key informants, ordinary locals, and observation. The primary data was supplemented by relevant secondary data. The research identified that *trokosi* as an institution persists because of its use of religio-cultural techniques such as social structuring and meaning. Other findings include the overt endorsement of the religious institution by local and international human rights laws; government's inability to enforce criminal laws; government officials' and *trokosi* practitioners' fear of reprisal from the traditional god behind the institution; and indigenes' adamancy to preserve *trokosi* as a religious and cultural heritage even if it infringes on fundamental human rights of women/girls. In the final analysis, the study is significant because it highlights the religio-cultural institution and practice and the power that sustains it and suggests ways of eliminating it. It is also important because it

⁵⁶Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner (eds.). *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1994).

contributes to existing discourses on religious and cultural institutions and practices both locally and internationally.

**Yorùbá Witchcraft Beliefs and their Impact on the
Stability of Muslim Marriages in Yorubaland**

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Abstract

The history of Yorùbá belief in witchcraft is as old as the existence of the Yorùbá race itself. By naming the witch *Ìyáàmi-Àjé* (my mother witch), the Yoruba betray their biased attribution of witchcraft to the feminine personality. Only women are witches. They are responsible for misfortunes, illness, poverty, untimely death, and inability to gain promotion at work, childlessness in women, impotence in men and many other evils in human societies. However, some witches are said to be *Àjé-Funfun* (white witches) who use their power for the betterment of their families. This belief is held not only by non-adherents of Islam in Yorùbá. Many Muslims also share this belief, which seems to impact negatively on their lives, most importantly on the stability of their marriages. Little wonder then that there are incessant cases of marital disputes caused by accusations and counter accusations by members of Muslim families of one bewitching the other. Often, these accusations occur between mothers and daughters-in-law or stepmothers and step daughters. The study, therefore, examines the impact of the belief in witchcraft on the stability of Muslim marriages in Yorubaland with the aim of proffering solutions from the Islamic point of view.

Keywords:

Witchcraft, Muslim Marriages, Yorubaland.

Introduction

The fear of witchcraft which many African societies have been baffling with from time immemorial has been a serious threat to the family system and to societal peace. Various scholars define witchcraft according to their perceptions of it. Jayeola-Omoyemi¹ cites Mbiti as defining witchcraft to be “a manifestation of mystical forces which were inborn in a person, inherited or acquired in various ways”. Jayeola-Omoyemi, in his view describes witchcraft as “the supernatural interference in the natural community lifestyle and behaviour”² Adedeji describes a witch as “someone who possesses a strange power with which he or she ostensibly deserves, whose aspirations and desires are judged excessive and illegitimate.”³ The common thing in all these definitions or perceptions of a witch or witchcraft is that they all attest to the fact that the power possessed by a witch is mystical, metaphysical and mysterious.

Belief in the existence and powers of witches has a long and diverse history that cuts across cultures and traditions. Yoruba people from the outset are emotionally attached to traditional phenomena; every life experience of a Yoruba person is attached to one mystical power or another and this has a serious impact on their sense of religiosity⁴. The Yoruba believe that man’s sojourn on earth is characterised by all sorts of mystical powers which are purposely meant to trouble man by delaying, remaking, and possibly destroying man’s destiny for certain reasons. While the Yoruba people believe in the existence of *Olodumare* (The Supreme Being) and other divinities in heaven, they also believe in the

¹ Jayeola-Omoyemi, M.S, Oyetade, E.M, Omoyemi, J.O Witchcraft in the 20th and 21st Centuries in Nigeria: An Analysis in *European Scientific Journal* 11, (28) 361-373, 2015, p. 364 Retrieved from pdf file 6396-1807-1

² Jayeola-Omoyemi, . Witchcraft in the 20th and 21st Centuries in Nigeria, 2015...p. 364

³ Adedeji, O.I “A Philosophical Analysis of the Attitude of Selected Pentecostal Churches to Witchcraft in Contemporary Yoruba Society” A PhD Thesis submitted in the Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria, 2017, p.20

⁴ Adedeji, “A Philosophical Analysis of the Attitude of Selected Pentecostal Churches to Witchcraft...”

existence of evil forces on earth among whom are the witches who are capable of truncating human fortunes and, as a result, are referred to as re-creators (*Atúnidá*) in Yoruba lexicography⁵. Such beliefs often result in persecution, social rejection, discrimination and violence towards those who are accused of being witches or those who confess to engaging in witchcraft practices⁶.

Majority of the victims of witchcraft accusation usually belong to vulnerable groups. They are mostly women, children and the elderly. Yoruba belief in existence of witchcraft practices manifests in cases in which spouses accuse each other of involving in acts of witchcraft. Couples and in-laws accuse one another of witchcraft. When there is delay in child bearing, the wife suspects her mother-in-law or her stepmother instantly. Such cases usually result in marital instability among Muslims in Yorubaland. Wives are unjustifiably divorced on the basis of such accusations and mothers-in-law are forced out of their sons' homes, because of the belief that they are instrumental to the problems of childlessness, infant mortality, joblessness, misfortune, poverty, and family alienation experienced by the couples. It is on this premise that this study examines the impact of Yoruba belief in witchcraft on the stability of Muslim marriages with the aim of establishing the Islamic point of view regarding this phenomenon and proffering ways by which its negative effects on Muslim families in Yorubaland can be reduced.

Witchcraft Practices among Yoruba People

Yoruba people occupy the South Western part of Nigeria which comprises Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Lagos State.⁷ It also includes south-eastern part of the Republic of Benin.⁸ In times past, it was a tradition of most communities to use "supernatural" groups like witches to inquire about or atone phenomena that surpassed the communities' explanations. Such phenomena related

⁵ Adedeji, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Attitude of Selected Pentecostal Churches to Witchcraft..."

⁶ Secker, E *Witchcraft Stigmatization in Nigeria: Challenges and success in the Implementation Social Work (isw)* UK: Sage Publication, 2012, accessed via pdf file pp.

⁷ Atanda, J.A. "The Yoruba People: their Origin, Culture and Civilization" in O.O. Olatunde (ed) *The Yoruba: history, culture and language* pp.1-17, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1996.

⁸ Imoagene, O. *The Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria Know Your County Series Handbooks of Nigeria's Major Culture Areas* vol 2, Ibadan: New Era Publishers, 1993

to health, economy, war, and politics.⁹ The word for witchcraft in Yoruba is *àjé*. The Yoruba believe that witches and witchcraft exist as ordained by the Supreme Being (*Olódùmarè*) and that they possess their power to protect or inflict punishment on their victims.¹⁰

The purpose for which witches were created is to make the Yoruba have their unreserved loyalty to the Supreme Being, to make them trust in Him and worship Him. In other words, the Yoruba people would not have any reason to worship the Supreme Deity but for the existence of witches, and the challenges they pose to human race.¹¹ This is based on the Yoruba belief that witches are the architects of misfortunes, illness, poverty and death that happen to humankind. Awolalu describes the nefarious attitudes of witches when he submits:

In the mental and social attitudes of the Yoruba, and of the Africans in general, there is no belief more profoundly ingrained than that of the existence of witches (*àje*). All strange diseases, accidents, untimely death, inability to gain promotion in office, failure in examinations and barrenness in women, impotence in men, failure of crops and a thousand other evils are attributed to witchcraft.¹²

It is important to note that although the Yoruba believe that witches are responsible for man's misfortunes in the world, not all witches are involved in evil machinations. There are some witches who use their witchcraft practices for the protection of their children and husbands and for the betterment of other relations. Adedeji's categorisation of witches into three types is apposite here. He, in accordance with Yoruba beliefs, identifies three types of witches. These are "black witches" (*Àjé dúdú*), "red witches" (*Àjé Pupa*) and "white witches" (*Àjé funfun*). He explains that (*Àjé dúdú*) are the general, common and deadliest type in Yorubaland. They further divide into two sub-groups: the first being internal witch (*Àjé Ilé*),

⁹ Jayeola-Omoyemi, *Witchcraft in the 20th and 21st Centuries in Nigeria...*

¹⁰ Ogungbemi, S. "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" in *Journal of Humanities*, vol 6, 1992, pdf file accessed via 152993-400742-1

¹¹ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...

¹² Awolalu, J.O *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial rites* London: Longman, 1979 p.81

which depicts intra-nucleus or extended family occurrence of witchcraft, and the second is the witch external to one's family or even village (*Àjé'Òde*). "External" witches are believed to collaborate with witches inside family enclaves.¹³ At this juncture, it is noteworthy to explain that it is the internal witch that will first initiate her nefarious act on the victim who is her family member and then hand him or her over to the external forces to complete the assignment. This is what informed the Yoruba axiom that says: *bí ikú ilé kò bá pani, ti òde kò lè pani* (external evil cannot overcome one without the influence of the internal).

Red witches (*Àjépupa*) impoverish their family relations (parents, husbands, children, uncles, siblings, etc.) and keep them in that state for life if they are not divinely equipped to fight back. Hence, this category of witchcraft is referred to as witchcraft of rags (*emèrè alákiṣà*). Apparently, the merit of this type of witchcraft lies in the fact that it can be used to protect family members from calamity, no matter its magnitude.¹⁴ The third category is white witches (*Àjéfunfun*), who bring joy, success and prosperity to family members.¹⁵ They are devoid of any evil act and are always ready to protect their loved ones from the evils of their counterparts, that is, the black and white witches (*Àjé Dúdú* and *Pupa*).¹⁶

In Yorubaland, old women are generally regarded as witches. However, courtesy demands that they are not addressed publicly as witches but euphemistically as our mothers (*àwọn Ìyá*), or the elders (*àgbàlagbà*) or people of the metaphysical world (*àwọn Ayé*), or re-creators (*Atúnidá*). Discussing the mode of admitting people into witch-guilds, Awolalu and Dopamu submit:

Witches are mostly women but men can also be found, especially at the head of the guilds. Witches usually inherit nefarious art from their mothers. Some are born witches while others acquire witchcraft. But witchcraft can also be bought for a small amount. It can be passed on through food.¹⁷

¹³ Adedeji, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Attitude of Selected Pentecostal Churches to Witchcraft..."

¹⁴ Adedeji, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Attitude of Selected Pentecostal Churches to Witchcraft..." p.22

¹⁵ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...

¹⁶ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...

¹⁷ Awolalu, J.O and Dopamu. *West African Traditional Religion*, London: Sheldon Press, 1974,p.124

However, scholars have been confronting with difficulty, the distinction between witches (*Àjé*) and wizard, sorcerer and magician (*Oṣó*) and their mode of operation. While some opine that they are different, some scholars do not deem it necessary to differentiate between them. Among those who create dichotomy between witches (*Àjé*) and wizards, sorcerers and magicians (*Oṣó*) include Adedeji who opines that witches (*Àjé*) in Yorùbá concept, do not operate with rituals, spells, medicines, magical objects or palpable apparatuses but are controlled by the spirit in them, operating through their will with automatic obeisance.¹⁸ Ogungbemi also corroborates this view as he submits that:

Men who have power of witchcraft are different from those who belong to sorcery. The name given to sorcery in Yoruba is *Oso* and not *Aje*. In Yoruba thought, men who are sorcerers use charms, medicines and magic to harm or kill their victims. Witches do not use any of those things to harm their victims. Witchcraft is the activity of the soul and its preys are inflicted in a spiritual manner.¹⁹

Contrary to the above submission, Mbiti is of the view that there is no distinction between the two words (*Àjé* and *Oṣó*) since the term 'witchcraft' is employed to connote the harmful employment of metaphysical power in all its different manifestations as the term 'pastor' is used to tag all forms of gospel ministers.²⁰ It is important to state here that the submission of Mbiti on 'witchcraft' being an umbrella term for *Oso* and *Aje* is in agreement with Islam's position on the matter. Details of the Islamic view on witchcraft form part of the focus of this study and will be given attention in subsequent sections.

As earlier stated, membership of witchcraft guilds is mostly drawn from vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly as is the case in other countries around the world including

¹⁸ Adedeji, "A Philosophical Analysis of the Attitude of Selected Pentecostal Churches to Witchcraft... p.22

¹⁹ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...p.2

²⁰ Mbiti, J.S *African Religion and Philosophy*, Bedford Square, London: Heinemann Educational Books,1969

India, Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania.²¹ But in recent times, children have also become prominent victims of witchcraft accusation in Nigeria, becoming a widespread phenomenon in the mid-1990s. Witches operate in different modes. Jayeola-Omoyemi, while describing witches' mode of operation, states that:

Witches were believed to engage in a cultic meeting at nights. The meeting could be regarded as metaphysical for it is mainly the activities of the souls because only the souls attended meetings. Witches were assumed to fly on the backs of birds, animals, or actually turn into birds and animals. Witches sucked the blood or ate the souls of their victims. Witches' food could be referred to as spiritual cannibalism. Close relatives were said to be donated as victims while new members initiated must bring a victim usually a child of her own family.²²

According to Ray as cited in Ogungbemi, "witches...act only at night, fly or walk on their hands or heads, dance naked, feast on corpses, exhibit insatiable and incestuous lust (despite sexual impotence), murder their relatives, live in the bush with wild, even predatory, animals or excrete and vomit in peoples' homestead".²³ In the opinion of Ogungbemi, witches operate in secrecy and have nocturnal meetings (i.e. Assembly) called *ajo*.²⁴ They have the power to transform into other creatures such as birds, animals like goats, dogs, cats etc. It is at these spiritual meetings they share the meat of their victims.²⁵ Witches have different ways of punishing their victims. They could turn their victims to animals and eat them in spiritual ways. This act is otherwise known as 'spiritual cannibalism'. In Yoruba thought, once a victim has been sacrificed, it is impossible to save his or her life. But If however, he or she has not been sacrificed by the witches, there is a possibility of saving

²¹ Secker, *Witchcraft Stigmatization in Nigeria...*

²² Jayeola-Omoyemi, *Witchcraft in the 20th and 21st Centuries in Nigeria...*p.365

²³ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...p.150

²⁴ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...

²⁵ Adegbite, J.O *Major Foundations in Yoruba Religion (Yorel), Culture and Cosmology*, Canada: Association of Yoruba Students in collaboration with Canada University Press, 2005

his or her life, as an appeal could be made to the guilds to spare him while a sacrifice with an animal would be required as a substitute and once that is done, no matter how ill the victim is, he would recover from the sickness.²⁶

In the Yoruba culture, witches only act on their relations and not on strangers.²⁷ Contrary to this, some Yoruba believe that strangers could also become their victim if such strangers offend them (the witches) in one way or another as there are incidences of neighbours, co-tenants, and even colleagues at work accusing one another of witchcraft. The Yoruba believe there is hierarchy in witchcraft. Among the criterion for witches' elevation or promotion is their ability to bring the most successful among their relations (husband, daughters, sons or in-laws etc.) as sacrifices for their guilds. Physical appearance is not enough to assess or determine a witch because a witch may appear physically wretched and dejected in the society but among her peers at nocturnal meetings, she is the most respected personality to be reckoned with. Adedayo and Sandra cite Hallen and Sodipo who observe that witches in Yorubaland come from the lower strata of the society in general, and from economically poor background in particular. Both scholars have also found out that people become witches for socio-economic reasons.²⁸ Other reasons that could be responsible for people becoming witches are domestic tension, jealousy, egotism etc.

Awolalu and Dopamu, while discussing the hierarchy in witchcraft, submit that only one woman has always been in the headship position among the witches while the second in hierarchy could be made up from senior witches in the group who must have mastered the art and mode of operation of the guild and are competent as to hold the leadership position. The third category is made up of witches drawn from the newly recruited members while those in the fourth order are those who are unconsciously initiated into the guild.²⁹

Jayeola-Omoyemi cites Bastian who observes that witches cannot be fought with openly unless they confess their possession of powers that kill or maim people. It is after their personal

²⁶ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...

²⁷ Ogungbemi, "A Philosophical View on Witchcraft in Africa" ...

²⁸ Adedayo, A.K and Sanda, A. Y. L (2011). *Mystical Powers of Witchcraft among the Gbagyisin Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies (IJOURELS)* 1, 2011, 77-92 accessed via pdf file 209-152-1-PB.

²⁹ Awolalu, and Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion* ...

confession of witchcraft practices that the community can react, and such reactions could come in the form of beating, banishment, tying up or stoning the witch to death by irate people whose family must have been bewitched.³⁰

Islam's Viewpoint on Witchcraft

The words 'magic', 'witchcraft', 'sorcery' etc. are represented by one comprehensive word in the Holy Quran-*Sahar*. As used in the Qur'an, *Sahar* is a tool in the hands of the unbelievers to oppose the prophets by alleging that they (the prophets) were magicians.³¹ The Quran narrative of magic, witchcraft or sorcery practices handed over by devils during the reign of Prophet Sulayman is contained in the Holy Quran as Almighty Allah emphatically condemns this act and assures the believers of His protections from the evils of witchcraft, magical spells and sorcery. Allah says: "...And from those (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's leave..."³²

For better understanding of the message in the above Quranic verse, there is a need to cite some of its *Asbāb-n Nuzūl* (reasons for its revelation) as presented in the works of some *Mufasssirūn* (Quranic Exegetes). Among them is Mawdūdī who links the reason for its revelation to the slavery and captivity of the Israelite nation in Babylon. Then, God sent two angels (*Al-Malakaen*), Harut and Marut, in human form with different magical practices in order to test if the Jews would rely on God or believe in magic, talismans and sorcery. However, despite the warnings from the angels to them not to learn magic, they continued to devote most of their time to the talismans and sorcery they were taught.³³ Al-Wahidi in his *Asbāb n- Nuzūl* gives different reasons for the revelation of the Quranic verse (Q2 :102), one of which is that during the time of Prophet Sulayman (A.S), people learnt magic and devoted their time to teaching it to others. However, Prophet Sulayman not only warned them against the practices, but also collected all written documents on it from them and buried them underneath his

³⁰ Jayeola-Omoyemi, *Witchcraft in the 20th and 21st Centuries in Nigeria...*

³¹ Ahmed, H. *A New Approach to the Study of the Quran*, New- Delhi: Goodword Books, 2008.

³² See Qur'an 2: 102

³³ Mawdūdī, S. A *Towards Understanding the Quran*, Nairobi Kenya: The Islamic Foundation, 2006

throne. Unfortunately, after his demise, a devil incarnate gathered a group of children of the Israelites and promised to show them an inestimable treasure and they all agreed. He then took them to the throne of prophet Sulayman (A.S) and asked them to dig underneath the throne where they found the documents on magic. He convinced them that it was by those magical practices that prophet Sulayman controlled the Jinns, human beings, devils and birds. This is the reason for the widespread practice of magic, sorcery and the use of talismans among the Jews.³⁴

Another Quranic word or terminology for witchcraft is *Ṭayr*. This word was used by the Almighty Allah in Holy Quran 7: 131 when the followers of Prophet Musa (peace be unto him) accepted that all fortunes come from the Almighty Allah while their misfortunes were assumed to have happened as an indication of an evil omen from their Prophet, Musa (peace be unto him) and his cabinet (*Yaṭṭayyarũ bĩ Mũsã wa mon mãau*).³⁵ Then, the Almighty Allah clarified this assumption as He said their fortunes and misfortunes lie with Him (Allah) but most of them lacked the understanding.

Another word or terminology for witchcraft in Islam is *ʿaynu* (evil omen). A perusal of prophetic traditions reveals that witchcraft practices are real. The Holy Prophet (peace be unto him) used the word *ʿaynu* meaning 'eye' to describe witches. At times he qualifies it with negative qualifiers such as *ʿaynu Ḥāsīdīn* (eye of jealousy) or *ʿaynu Sūīn* (evil eye).

A direct citation from Prophetic traditions would be necessary at this juncture to drive home the discussion. Aisha (wife of Allah's Apostle) said:

When Allah's Messenger (peace be unto him) fell ill, Gabriel used to recite these verses In the name of Allah. He will cure you from all kind of illness and safeguard you from the evil of a jealous one when he feels jealous and from the influence of evil eye.³⁶

³⁴ Al-Wahidi, A.A. *Asbāb al- Nuzūl* , Amman Jordan: Royal Ahl al -Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2008

³⁵ See Qur'an 7: 131

³⁶ Siddiqi A.H. *Sahih Muslim (Arabic-English)* vol 7, Beirut-Lebanon: Dar-al Arabia, 2007,p.29

Similarly, Abu Saï'd reported that Gabriel came to Allah's Messenger (peace be unto him) and said:

Muhammad! Have you fallen ill? Thereupon he said: Yes. He (Gabriel) said In the name of Allah I excuse you from everything and safeguard you from every evil that may harm you and from the eye of a jealous one. Allah would cure you and I invoke the name of Allah for you.³⁷

In another Apostolic tradition, the Holy Prophet (peace be unto him) categorically confirmed the existence of witchcraft. Ibn Abbās reported Allah's Messenger saying:

The influence of an evil eye is a fact (real); if anything would precede the destiny, it would be the influence of an evil eye, and when you are asked to take bath (as a cure) from the influence of an evil eye, you should take bath.³⁸

Also, from the Islamic perspectives, the existence of witches and wizards and the evils associated with them is confirmed in the Glorious Qur'an, Chapters 113 and 114. These chapters are called *mu'awwidhatāni* meaning chapters for seeking divine protection. The Holy Prophet (peace be unto him) was reportedly bewitched as a result of which he fell sick and felt pains all over his body. The Almighty Allah then revealed the two chapters to him as cure for the sickness and prevention from all forms of evils. Quadri attests to the existence of witchcraft when he comments:

The eternal sources of man's problem could be anybody, Jinn, darkness, witches and wizards who recite incantations or prepare other devilish things against one or simply the envier who could go to any extent to harm one.³⁹

³⁷ Siddiqi, *Sahih Muslim (Arabic-English)*...pp.29-30

³⁸ Siddiqi, *Sahih Muslim (Arabic-English)*...p. 30

³⁹ Quadri, Y.A. *The Sayings of the Prophet (SAW) Annotated Translation from Arabic into English*, Ijebu - Ode, Nigeria:Shebiotimo Publications, 1995, p.29

It is important to discuss further what occasioned the revelation (*Sabab -n- Nuzūl*) of the two Quranic chapters for proper understanding of the messages and lessons there in. Al-Wāhidi narrates the causes of the revelation of *Sūratul-Falaq* and *Sūratu-n-Nās* when he submits that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) was bewitched by a Jew called Labid Ibn al-A'sam who cast a spell of black magic on him using some fallen hair of the Holy Prophet (SAW) as well as some few teeth from his comb which he got from his servant boy who was also a Jew. The effect of this magic rendered Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) ill for a period of six months during which the hair of his head fell off and he was withering away. Then the Almighty Allah sent two angels to Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) in his dream during which the source of his illness, the place where the black magic spell was kept, and the person behind his predicament were all revealed to him. When Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) woke from his sleep, he sent Ali Ibn Abī Tālib, al-Zubayr Ibn al-Awwām and Ammār IbnYāsir to go and drain the water of the well of *Dharwa* in which the magic was kept. Therein, they found some of the hair as well as a few teeth from the comb of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W). They also found a string with eleven knots knitted with needles. Then Allah revealed the two Quranic chapters and each verse he read, one knot was untied until all were untied and he regained his health. With this incident, some companions (*Ashābah*) of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) sought his approval to kill the culprit but he refused saying the Almighty Allah had cured him and he did not need to take any revenge as he handed everything to Him. This shows the spirit of forbearance of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W).⁴⁰ However, in Shariah, according to Ibn Abī Zayd in his *Risālah*, a sorcerer should be killed if he is caught before he repents. But if he had repented before he was exposed, then his repentance would be accepted.⁴¹

Furthermore, it is important to state that despite the confirmation of the existence of witchcraft by the Quran, Islam enjoins Muslims not to be scared or feel threatened about the evils of witchcraft. Muslims are enjoined to have firm faith in their Creator, Allah Whose power surpasses all forms of evils. Allah says in Qur'an:

⁴⁰ Al-Wahidi, A.A. *Asbāb al- Nuzūl* , Amman Jordan: Royal Ahl al -Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2008

⁴¹ IbnAbīZayd, Q. *.Ar-Risālah* (n.d) accessed via pdf on 5th January, 2019.

Nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. For we are under His control and decree He is our Master and Protector and in Allah, let the believers put their trust".⁴²

In another chapter, Allah makes reference to the victory recorded by the early Muslims as a result of their unshakable faith in Him. He says:

Those to whom people said, verily, the people have gathered against you, therefore, fear them. But it (only) increases them in faith, and they said: Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs). So they return with grace and bounty from Allah. No harm touched them; and they followed the pleasure of Allah, And Allah is the Owner of great bounty.⁴³

Impact of Yoruba Beliefs in the Existence of Witches on the Stability of Yoruba Muslim Marriages

It is an axiomatic truth that many Yoruba Muslims strongly believe in the existence of witchcraft and the evils involved in its practices. This belief has been causing serious instability in so many Muslim Marriages in the region. Marriage, which in Islamic term is called *An-Nikāh* or *Az-Zawāj* is one of the signs of Allah which aims at providing peace, tranquillity, love and mercy not only between the couple but also in individual families and in the society at large.⁴⁴ This is so because marriage is the process to family formation while the latter is the stratum of every society. Doi while discussing marriage, cites Abda'Ati who observed, marriage in Islam stands to serve the following purposes; "a means of emotional and sexual gratification, a mechanism of tension reduction, social placement, an approach to inter-family alliance

⁴² See Qur'an 9: 51

⁴³ See Qur'an 3:173-174

⁴⁴ See Qur'an 30: 21

and group solidarity, an act of piety (*taqwa*), a form of *Ibādah*, i.e., worship of Allah and a mark of obedience of His Messenger".⁴⁵

However, a critical examination of the marital lives of many Muslims in Yorubaland reveals that peace, love, tranquillity and mercy are totally absent in many unions and in the families involved as a result of their beliefs in and fear of witchcraft. The impact of witchcraft on the stability of Muslim marriages manifests in various ways. There are cases of daughters-in-law accusing their mothers-in-law of witchcraft practices and vice versa. Victims of witchcraft accusation are at times asked to undergo some Yoruba traditional ritual practices which are totally against the teachings of Islam. Such traditions include asking victims to drink concoctions such as sasswood peelings (*èpo òbò*) just in an attempt to make them confess their witchcraft practices.

Witchcraft accusation and counter accusation is even bitter and tougher in polygynous marriages. On several occasions co-wives accuse each another of belonging to witchcraft guilds while acts of misfortunes such as childlessness of daughter or daughter-in-law, failure of a child to pass examination or get a job, death of a promising child in the family and other misfortunes are often attributed to nefarious acts of women, wives and girls they believe to be witches in the family. The consequential effects of these beliefs on Yoruba Muslim marriages include but are not limited to the following: divorce, inter-family disputes (i.e dispute between groom's and bride's families), domestic violence (wife battering for witchcraft suspicions), fear of and hatred towards the victim in the family, abandoning close family members or parents, most especially the mother because of witchcraft accusation, subjecting suspected witches to oath swearing in an un-Islamic way, or even murdering of the victim (one who is believed to be witch) etc.

In fact, many Yoruba Muslim couples fear witches more than they believe in and fear the Almighty Allah. Instead of them seeking help from the Almighty Allah over evils of witches and wizards, they resort to un-Islamic solutions such as putting on amulets, drinking concoctions from herbalists and involving in traditional sacrifices to appeal to witches and wizards. This practice of putting on amulets and getting involved in the practices of sorcery, using talisman, and magic is categorised in Islam among the crimes punishable by death. According to Ibn Abī Zayd, (n.d) in his *Ar-Risālah*, a sorcerer "is killed without being asked to repent once he has been exposed. If he comes in repentance before he is

⁴⁵ Doi, I.A. *Shari'ah the Islamic Law* London: Taha Publishers, 1994, p.117

exposed, his repentance is acceptable”⁴⁶. This un-Islamic practice makes many Yoruba Muslims become heretics. In fact, many Muslim clerics also get involved in the act. They mislead many Muslim adherents as they problematise evils associated with witchcraft. Many Muslim clerics also extort money from their clients on the promise that they possess supernatural power to combat witches and wizards. Some Muslim clerics even go to the extent of calling themselves *Ọkọ Oṣó* and *Ọkọ Àjé* (husbands of witches and wives of wizards). Unfortunately, many gullible Yoruba Muslims fall into the hands of this category of Muslim clerics whose system of spirituality is not in any way different from those of the *Ifa* priests. For instance, how could one differentiate between *Ifa* priests and a so-called Muslim cleric who freely chants Yoruba traditional incantation (*ofo*) and also asks another person’s wife or daughter to come for spiritual bath in his house or at the bank of a river either in the day or at night all in the name of helping her to overcome the power of witches and wizards that is disturbing her fortunes. Many Muslim couples are breaking up as a result of the nefarious acts of these categories of fake Muslim clerics. Some of these so-called Muslim clerics do engage in extra marital affairs with their clients.

In addition to that is the attitude of many Yoruba Muslims attributing medical challenges such as barrenness, increase in infant and maternal mortality, chronic fever, heart failure, hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell anaemia, and genetic incompatibility among couples to evils of witchcraft. Whereas these are ailments which could be subjected to a thorough medical diagnosis and cured by means of orthodox or herbal medicines but because they have so much ingrained in their minds, the evils of witchcraft, they do not believe in the efficacy of orthodox or herbal medicine.

Many Muslim parents are lazy spiritually. Many of them find it difficult to observe the five daily prayers, not to talk of observing vigil (*tahajjud*). Since it is natural that one cannot give what one does not have, children born or nurtured in such homes also grow lazy spiritually, except for the few who have the opportunity of mingling with enlightened Muslims either individually or as an Islamic society, organisation or group that have better understanding of Islam and good methodology of imparting Islamic morals to others.

⁴⁶IbnAbiZayd, Q. (n.d). *Ar-Risalah* ... p.955

Conclusion

Although Islam acknowledges the existence of witches and wizards with the evils associated with them, it does not problematise their evils as the Yoruba culture wants us to believe. Rather, Islam emphasises superiority of Allah's power and His Majesty over all powers and evils. Instead of Yoruba Muslims seeking help from the Almighty Allah over evils of witches and wizards, many resorts to un-Islamic solutions such as putting on amulets, drinking concoctions from herbalists, and involving in traditional sacrifices to appeal to witches and wizards. As a result, many Yoruba Muslims have become syncretic in their Islamic practices. In fact, many Muslim clerics are in this category.

In the light of the above, the study recommends that Muslims should put their trust in Allah and remain steadfast in Him as enjoined in Quran 3:173-174. Also, Yoruba Muslims should take prayer as their weapon against all evils, be it of witches, wizards, magic, or sorcery rather than seeking solution to their problems in un-Islamic ways. Similarly, they should take proper care of their health because reports of many medical investigations in this contemporary time have shown that it is not all cases of illness, death, barrenness, infant mortality, maternal mortality that are associated with evils of witches. Rather, most of them are due to improper medical attention by the victims or their guardians. Furthermore, Muslim clerics should stop problematising the evils associated with witchcraft as this scares many Yoruba Muslims such that many of them end up as heretics. They (Muslim clerics) should intensify efforts in educating Muslims on sound *Imān* (faith), *Ruqyah* (Islamic incantation) and *Al-Ma'thurāt* (prayers for Allah's protection against evils). They are also to employ Quranic chapters 113 and 114 and similar ones to deal with all forms of manifestations of witchcraft and sorcery.

Finally, Muslim parents should be acquainted with Qur'anic and prophetic prayers and make their recitations a daily ritual with their families.

A Review of the Criticisms against Prophet Muhammad's Marriage with Zaynab Bint Jahsh

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Abstract

Since the 7th century, we have had criticisms of Prophet Mohammed for his preaching of monotheism by his non-Muslim Arab contemporaries and his discussions on Jewish Faith by Jewish Arabs. During the middle ages, various western and Byzantine Christian thinkers described the Middle East as a hotbed of sexuality and Prophet Muhammad's marriage came to be a focal point of criticism in biographical writings. Western critics such as William Montgomery Watt, Dermenghem, Washington Irving, Lammens, William Muir and Karen Armstrong considered Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to be lustful in his marriage to his wives. His marriage with Zaynab bint Jahsh, more than others, attracted bitterer criticism. Unfortunately, the early Arabic sources relied upon by critics lack scientific. It is against this assertion that this paper re-examined existing literature on the issue and identified the relevance of the marriage to the contemporary time using a combination of historical and exegetical research methods. Historical method is necessary in this work because the author researched into works on biography to study the view of biographers on the personalities discussed. Exegetical works on the Qur'an are also consulted to navigate the views of exegetes on the verses that relate to the subject matter. The aim of this work is to probe the authenticity of sources relied upon by critics and to relate

the lessons in the marriage to the contemporary time. Findings show that the criticism of Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Zainab lacks objectivity and so requires a review for the sake of moral justice.

Keywords:

Prophet Muhammad; Zayd ibn Hāritha; Zaynab bint Jahsh; Orientalism William Muir; Marriage

Introduction

The life of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was full of remarkable events and activities. More eventful was the fifth year of the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madīnah which saw many historic happenings among which are the conquest of the battle of Trench, the Siege of Banu Qurayzah and the promulgation of new laws to regulate the activities of Muslims. Most of these events were the crux of the chapter of the Confederates, which was revealed to discuss them.¹

A wide range of injunctions contained in the chapter with regards to child adoption, the use of a veil and the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab have attracted the attention of many critics. More hotly debated, is the subject of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab and the circumstances of it; on which many articles, research papers, books, and theses have been written. Just like the fate of a coin which has two sides, the issue of Muhammad's (S.A.W) marriage with Zaynab has enjoyed a wide range of diverse views and opinions. While some people see it as a response to a divine call which could not but be answered, others see it as a basal human response to lust. Some critics adopted, with a biased mind, the latter view without a scrutiny of sources and hence, submitted that Muhammad (S.A.W.) married Zaynab to satisfy his lust: an accusation that may not survive the test of reasoning. A study of the relationship of the Prophet with Zaynab before the event is pertinent. Equally worthy of cognizance is the position of the Prophet as a statesman and a spiritual leader who enjoins divine guidance in his activities.

¹Muhammad Jarir, At-Tabari. *Tārīkhutṭabari-Tārīkhur Rusuliwal Mulūk* (Beirut: Dārut Turath, 1387A.H.), Vol. 2, pp. 562-282.

Zaynab's Marriage to Zayd

Like in every race and culture, nobility is a status to be revered. It is a general norm that a noble woman is married to a noble man from another family. Few are the exceptions to this norm in the history of man, especially in the Arabian Peninsula where the discriminatory norm was highly pronounced. Zaynab bint Jahsh, born about thirty years before the Hijrah, was a daughter of Jahsh ibn Riyab. Her mother was Ummaimah bint AbdulMutallib, a member of the noble Hashim clan of the Quraysh and a sister of Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) father. Zaynab lost her first husband before 622 A.D. and she accompanied her brother, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, on his Hijrah to Madinah after the death of her husband. Zaynab was therefore, known to the Prophet when she was a young girl and the relationship and closeness remained intact even after she lost her husband, giving the opportunity for the Prophet to woo her for himself during these periods if she had wished to have her for passion.

An examination of the nuptial solemnization that took place between Zayd and Zaynab reveal an unusual situation. Muhammad (S.A.W.) asked for the hand of his own cousin, Zaynab, for his adopted son, Zayd, in marriage². Her (Zaynab's) brother, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, refused to let his sister—the Hashimi and Quraysh noble girl that she was, and the first cousin of the Prophet (S.A.W.) also—become the wife of a slave whom Khadijah had bought and whom Muhammad (S.A.W.) had set free and adopted as a son. ³ Such a union was regarded by Abdullah bin Jahsh and by the Arabs in general as a thing of great shame for a woman that is of high calibre and nobility to marry an emancipated slave. It was in objection to the position of Abdullah, and the need for total submission to the will of Allah as might be expressed by His Messenger, according to some commentators of the Qur'an⁴ that Allah revealed:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ
يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ
ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا

² M. H.Haykal, *The life of Muhammad* Translated by Isma'il Razi A. Al Faruqi. (America: North American Trust Publication, 1976), p. 295.

³Ibid., p. 295.

⁴ These commentators include Ibn Kathir in *Tafsirul Qur'anil Azim* and Sayyid Qutb in *FiZilalil Qur'an*.

Whenever God and His Messenger have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter. Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger strays far into error (Q33:36)

In the spirit of total equality of man before Allah which Islam preaches, the Prophet wanted to achieve, through this marriage, the removal of class distinctions. He wanted to give this new Islamic value a practical endorsement and hence, arranged for the marriage between Zayd, a freed slave, and Zaynab, a woman from the noble tribe of the Quraysh⁵.

There is no doubt as to the firm faith of the duo of Zayd and Zaynab, but their faith could not avail them to avert the imminent dissolution that would later greet their marriage. The blue blood of nobility flows through Zaynab's veins and by human nature, she became egoistic, seeing herself as superior to Zayd, while Zayd on the other hand, would not tolerate the spiteful and rude dispositions of his noble wife. She continued to deride Zayd, to boast of her lineage in his presence and to look down on him because of his former status: a slave. ⁶Unable to continue bearing this uncomplimentary experience from his wife, Zayd reported her to Muhammad (S.A.W.) who said to him "Hold fast to your wife and fear God" ⁷ But there was no hope left for the marriage; Zaynab's nagging attitude made Zayd so miserable that he divorced her and she was eventually married to the Prophet(S.A.W). Q 33:37-40 of the Chapter of Confederates give a brief account of the event. Allah says:

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ
وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ
أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ
أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (37) مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ
لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا
(38) الَّذِينَ يُبْلَغُونَ رَسُولَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا

⁵Sayyid Qutb, *FiZilalil Qur'an* (Beirut: DārusShurūq, 1412 A.H), Vol.14, p.73.

⁶Haykal. *The Life of Muhammad*. Translated...p. 296.

⁷ Muhammad Jarir, At Tabari. *Jāmi'u l-BayānfiTa'wilil Qur'an* (Beirut: Mu'assasatur Risālah, 2000), Vol. 22, p. 273.

اللَّهُ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا (39) مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ
رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (40)

Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the Grace of Allah and Thy favour: "keep Thou (in wedlock) Thy wife, and fear Allah." but Thou didst hide in Thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: Thou Didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that Thou shouldst fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), we joined her In marriage to thee: In order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers In (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (Their marriage) with them, and Allah's command must be fulfilled.

There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to Him As a duty. It was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away, and the command of Allah is a Decree determined.(it is the practice of those) who preach the messages of Allah, and fear him, and fear none but Allah. and Enough is Allah to call (men) to account. Muhammad (S.A.W.) is not the father of your men, but (He is) the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (Q33:37-40)

Orientalists' Account of the Prophet's Marriage with Zaynab

It is astonishing that Muir⁸, like Hughes⁹, Tisdall¹⁰, and many other orientalist accused the Prophet of exhibiting voluptuous and

⁸W Muir, Mahomet and Islam; A sketch of the Prophet's Life from Original Sources and A Brief Outline of His Religion. 1986, pp. 120-130.

⁹Hughes T. P. "Dictionary of Islam: Being A Cyclopeda of the Doctrines, Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs Together With The Technical and Theological Terms of the Muhammadan Religion".(London: Munshiram, 1885), p. 698.

rapacious sexual instincts. Like many of his colleagues, Muir viewed this issue and the revelations that surround it as calculated measures for Muhammad (S.A.W.) to increase the number of his Harem or to prove that Islam allows having concubines after marrying four wives. He wrote:

Mohammad was now near threescore years of age; but a weakness for the sex seemed but to grow with age; and the attractions of his increasing harem instead of satisfying appear rather to have stimulated desire after new and varied charms. Happening one day to visit his adopted son Zeid, he found him absent. As he knocked, Zeinab his wife, now over thirty years of age, but fair to look upon, invited him to enter; and, starting up in her loose and scanty dress, made haste to array herself for his reception. But the beauties of her figure through the half-opened door had already unveiled themselves too freely before the admiring gaze of Mohammad. He was smitten by the sight: 'Gracious Lord!' he exclaimed 'Good Heavens! How Thou dost turn the hearts of men!' The rapturous words, repeated in a low voice as he turned to go, were overheard by Zeinab, who perceived the flame she had kindled, and, proud of her conquest, was nothing loth to tell her husband of it. Zeid went straightway to Mohammad and declared his readiness to divorce Zeinab for him. This Mohammad declined: 'Keep thy wife to thyself,' he said, 'and fear God.' But Zeid saw probably that the admonition proceeded from unwilling lips, and that the Prophet had still a longing eye for Zeinab. Perhaps he did not care to keep her, when he found that she desired to leave him, and

¹⁰ W.S.C Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Qur'an; Its Origin in Pagan Legends and Mythology*. (London: London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905),p.84.

was ambitious of the new and distinguished alliance. And so he formally divorced her. Mohammad still hesitated. There might be little scandal according to Arab morals in seeking the hand of a married woman whose husband had no wish to keep her; but the husband in the present case was Mohammad's adopted son, and even in Arabia such a union was unlawful...¹¹

In the submission made above by Muir, four fundamental issues are raised: The first issue is that of Zaynab inviting the Prophet to enter the house in the absence of her husband. Even when some biographers added that the Prophet refused to enter on invitation as will later be seen, Muir remains silent on the disposition of the Prophet. The person of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as a spiritual leader would not have honoured the invitation of a woman in the absence of her husband. The second issue is that of preparing for the Prophet's reception. As the Prophet's cousin, the person of Zaynab could not be said to have been ignorant of Islamic ethics on reception of a visitor. More blasphemous is the third issue which is the statement that the beauty of Zaynab was unveiled through a half-opened door for the Prophet to see as if the Prophet was unaware of her beauty earlier. hastily, Muir simply submitted that the Prophet was hypocritical in his admonition for Zaynab and that is the fourth issue. Muir acknowledged in his work that the biographic work of At-Tabari was his source. It is on this basis that we shall study the sources relied upon by critics of the relationship.

Arabic Sources on Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W.) Marriage to Zaynab

Among the Muslim biographers from whose account some orientalist got their information are Ibn Sa'd in his *Kitābut Tabaqātil Kubra*, At-Ṭabarī in his *Jāmi'u l Bayān* which is held by scholars as one of the most reliable early works on the Qur'an and Ibn Hisham

¹¹W. Muir, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1923), pp. 290-291.

in his *As Siratiwal Maghāzī*.¹²The first biographical work to discuss the event in some details is *Kitābut Tabaqātil Kubrah* (The Book of Classes) written by the traditionalist, Ibn Sa'd. In his own submission, he related that one day, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) went looking for Zayd and when he came to Zayd's house, he met Zayd's wife, Zaynab, who was dressed in clothes that were admired by Muhammad. Ibn Sa'd alluded that Zaynab greeted Muhammad (S.A.W) and invited him into the house while Zayd was away but Muhammad(S.A.W) refused to enter the house and left. As he left, according to Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad (S.A.W) murmured something inaudible except the phrase "Glory be to God the Almighty! Glory be to God who causes hearts to turn". When Zayd returned home, Zaynab told him what happened. Zayd then went to Muhammad (S.A.W) and told Muhammad(S.A.W) that:

O messenger of Allah, I heard that you came to my house, and you did not enter, perhaps Zaynab has excited your admiration, and so I will separate myself from her. The messenger of Allah said: keep your wife... but Zayd went on and divorced her anyway.¹³

After a period had passed, Muhammad (S.A.W.) got the revelation that God had married Zaynab to him.¹⁴ At-Ṭabarī, a Muslim historian who lived in the 10th century and wrote a lengthy chronicle of the history of the Muslim community up till his time in his book titled, *Tārīkhul Rusuli Wal Mulūk* (the history of the Prophets and the Kings) equally submitted that the Prophet saw Zaynab, admired her and wished he could marry her. He wrote:

I was told that Muhammad ibn 'Umar said: 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr Al-Aslami told me that Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Habban said: the Prophet (S.A.W.) came to Zayd ibn Harithah's house asking for him—at a time, Zayd was called Muhammad's son. Probably the Prophet

¹² Muhammad Muhammad Abu Shuhbah, *Al-Isra'iliyyatwal Mawdu'atfi Kitābit Tafsīr* (Beirut: Maktabatus Sunnah, nd), p. 115.

¹³Muhammad bn Sa'd, *At Tabaqatul Kubrah* (Beirut: DāruṢādir 1968), Vol. 8, p.101.

¹⁴Ibid.,

(S.A.W.) could not see him over a period and he asked: where is Zayd? Then he went seeking him at his house. But he didn't find him. Accordingly, Zaynab came out to receive him and the Prophet (S.A.W.) (S.A.W.) turned his face from her, and she said: He isn't here O Prophet of Allah, but I beg of you to come in. But the Prophet (S.A.W.) refused to. She came out in her nightgown for she hurried when she was told that the Prophet (S.A.W.) was at the door. She fell into the Prophet's heart, then he left murmuring incomprehensible words, except for: Grace be to Him Who directs the heart. When Zayd came home, Zaynab told him that the Prophet (S.A.W.) had been at their house. Zayd asked her: Did you not tell him to come in?! Zaynab said: I have but he refused. Zayd asked: did he not say anything? Zaynab said: he left murmuring something I couldn't understand, but I heard him say "Grace be to Him Who directs the heart? Afterwards, Zayd went to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said: O Prophet of Allah, I have been told that you have been to my house, and that you have refused to come in. If it had been that you like Zaynab, I shall leave her for your sake. But the Prophet (saw) said: Hold on to your wife. But Zayd couldn't live on with Zaynab from that day. He would come to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and ask him again, but the Prophet (S.A.W.) would say: Hold on to your wife. And Zayd asked him again, and the Prophet (S.A.W.) would still say: Hold on to your wife. But Zayd divorced Zaynab and her period was over.¹⁵

In spite of his personality and erudition, there are other narrations contrary to that of At-Tabari. One of such narrations is contained in the work of Ibn Hishām who, like Muhammad ibn Ishaq,¹⁶ narrated that:

¹⁵ Muhammad Jarir, At-Tabari. *Tarikh At Tabari*...pp. 263-264.

¹⁶ Muhammad Ishaq, *As-Siyariwa-l Maghāzī* (Beirut: DārulFikr, 1978), p. 262.

Zayd bin Harithah was ill, so the Prophet (S.A.W.) went to visit him. Zaynab Zayd's wife – was at his head nursing him. Just as she left to do something, the Prophet (S.A.W.) looked at her, lowered his head and said: Glory be to him who directs hearts and eyes. Then Zayd said: shall I divorce her for you O Allah's Messenger? But the Prophet (S.A.W.) said: NO. Then the verse "Behold! Thou did say to one who had received the grades of Allah and thy favour: Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah" was revealed¹⁷

The narration above established that Zayd was at home when the Prophet came in for the visit and that Zaynab was with her husband at the time of the visit. Empirically, Zayd needed not to be informed by anybody if actually the Prophet murmured anything out. Not even by his wife because the wife was with him and no report that the sickness of Zayd could not make him hear.

As for the exegetic sources, classical exegetes such as Al-Baghawi, while discussing circumstances of the revelation of Qur'an 33:37-40, reported that the Prophet (S.A.W.) visited Zayd's house in his absence and saw Zaynab from a distance in her veil. He appreciated her beauty and her light complexion and murmured 'Gracious Lord! Thou turn the hearts'. He then went back and when Zayd came back home, Zaynab reported the incidence to him and from then, Zayd developed a hatred for her.¹⁸ Proponents of this view include Abu Su'ud,¹⁹ At-Tha'labi,²⁰ Az-Zamakhshari²¹ and An-Nasafi.²² In the like of these exegetes are some scholars who are even of the view that the Prophet wished

¹⁷ Muhammad Ishaq, *As-Siyariwa-l Maghāzi...* p.262.

¹⁸ Hassan Mas'ud Al Baghawi, *Ma'ālimut Tanzīlfi Tafsīril Qur'an* (Beirut: Dārut Taybah, 1997), Vol.6, p.354.

¹⁹ Abu su'ud Muhammad Muhammad Mustapha, *Irshādul Aqlis Salīmila Mazāyal Kitābil Karīm* (Beirut: Dāruihyā'it Turāthil Arabi, nd), Vol.7, p. 105.

²⁰ Ahmad Muhammad, *At-tha'labi. Al Kashfu Wal Bayan anTafsiril Qur'an* (Beirut: Dārulhya'itturāthil Arabi, 2002), Vol.8, p. 47.

²¹ Mahmud Amru Az Zamakhshari, *Al-Kash-Shāfu an Haqa'iqi Gawamidit Tanzil* (Beirut: Darul Kitabil Arabi 1407A.H), Vol. 3, p. 540.

²² Abdullahi Ahmad An Nasafi, *Madarikut Tanzilwahaqa'iqut Ta'wil* (Beirut: Dārul Kalimit Tayyib, 1998), Vol. 3, p.32.

that Zayd divorced Zaynab so that he could marry her.²³ At-Ṭabari in his exegetical work wrote:

Yūnus told me that Ibn Wahb said: Ibn Zayd said: The Prophet (S.A.W.) wedded Zayd ibn Harithah to his cousin Zaynab bint Jahsh. The Prophet (S.A.W.) went out in search of him (Zayd) one day. The door of his house was but a piece of fabric, therefore the wind blew it open and revealed Zaynab with her sleeves up in her room. And she fell into the Prophet's (S.A.W.) heart, and since then she hated the other (Zayd). Then Zayd came to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said: O Prophet of Allah, I want to leave my wife. He (the prophet) said: Why? Do you have any suspicion about her? He answered: No! By Allah I have no suspicion about her and I have seen but goodness from her. Then the Prophet (saw) said: Hold on to your wife, and fear Allah in her. That is what Allah said: "Behold! Thou did say to one who had received the graces of Allah and thy favour: 'Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah.' But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest" i.e., hide in thy heart that if you leave her, I will marry her.²⁴

It is worthy of note that most of the early exegetes rely on the information they got either from the biographical works of some early biographers such as At-Ṭabari or from the exegetical works of some early exegetes such as Muqātil, the oldest surviving complete Tafsir.²⁵ Muqātil narrated the story without details of his source of information as if he was an eye witness. He went to the extent of making an allegation that the Prophet went to Zaynab to

²³Niṣmatullahi Mahmud, *Al Fawatihullillahiyah Wal Mafatihul Ghaibiyah* (Egypt: DāruRikābī, 1999), Vol. 2, p. 157.

²⁴ Muhammad Jarir At Tabari. *Jami'u l-Bayan* ... Vol. 20, p. 274.

²⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muqatil_ibn_Sulayman. accessed on 20th september, 2016

advise her against being shrewd to her husband and in the process, he got fascinated by the beauty of Zaynab and plotted for her being divorced by Zayd.²⁶ An indictment that presented the Prophet who was the facilitator of Zaynab's marriage to Zayd as the master minder of the marriage dissolution.

Zaynab's Marriage in the Hadith

Orthodox Muslim scholars do not reckon with stories about Muhammad(S.A.W.) unless they are narrated in an "authentic" collection of ḥadīth, such as Bukhārī or Muslim, or with an "authentic" chain of narrators in other sources, be it ḥadīth or from another genre such as biographic or exegetic literature.²⁷It is worth mentioning that controversial details of the story that can be found in the biographical and the exegetic literature with respect to the marriage of Zaynab bint Jahsh to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) are absent in the ḥadīth literatures. In the book of Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, the most popular collection of ḥadīth compiled at the end of the 9th century, it is stated that Qur'an 33:37-40 was revealed in respect of Zayd ibn Hārithah and Zaynab bint Jahsh²⁸and no other information was provided. Commenting on this hadith, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalānī, the most prominent interpreter of SaḥīḥAl-Bukhārī, commented that this story was reported in a clear manner by Ibn Abi Hātim who said that the verse was revealed in respect of Zaynab bint Jahsh who was given out in marriage by the Prophet to Zayd ibn Hārithah, his adopted child and Allah made it known to the Prophet that Zaynab shall later be one of his wives. Knowing surely that his society will ignorantly condemn him for marrying the divorcee of his adopted child, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) concealed Allah's wish from Zayd and told him to hold on to his wife each time the latter brought the complaint of his nagging wife to him.²⁹

In the book of Saḥīḥ Al-Muslim, the second most popular book of ḥadīth, nothing is documented of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab except that when Zaynab's waiting period [*'idda*] was

²⁶MaqātilSulayman, *Tafsiru Muqātil bn sulayman*(Beirut: Dārulhyā'itTurāth, 1423A.H), Vol.3, p. 493.

²⁷Sundland...p. 18.

²⁸ Al Bukhari. Isma'il Muhammad, *Al-Jāmi'ul Musnadus Saḥīḥul Mukhtasar* (Cairo: DāruTawqun Najat,1422 A.H), Vol. 6, p.117, Hadith 4787.

²⁹ Ahmad Ali bn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Fat-hul Bārī SharhuSaḥīḥul Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dārul Maā'rifah, 1379 A.H), Vol. 8, p.524.

over, Muhammad (S.A.W.) told Zayd to propose his marriage to her which he did and for which Zaynab delayed her acceptance until revelation confirmed the legitimacy of the proposal.³⁰ Likewise, the fancy story of the Prophet visiting Zayd and appreciating the beauty of his wife is equally not contained in all the interpretations given to the verse in question by At-Tirmidhi.³¹ Confirming the fact that the controversy owed its origin to the time of the Prophet, At Tirmithi reported this tradition:

Aliy ibn Hujr said that Dawud bn Az Zabarqani informed us about Dawud ibn Abi Hind who reported As Shabiyy who said that A'Isha said: were the messenger of Allah to have concealed anything of the revelation, he would have concealed this verse (Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the Grace of Allah and Thy favour) by emancipation from you: ("Retain thou thy wife, and fear Allah." but Thou Didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: Thou Didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that Thou shouldst fear Allah) up to (and Allah's command must be fulfilled).when the Prophet of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him, married her, they said: he married his son's beloved one. Allah then revealed: Muhammad is not the father of your children but rather, a messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets. The Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him, adopted him (Zayd) from childhood and he remained with him until he grew up and he was called Zayd the son of Muhammad. Allah then revealed the verse: Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not their father's (names, call them) your brothers, or your *maulas*³²

³⁰ Muslim Al Hajjaj, *Musnadus Sahihul Mukhtasar* (Beirūt: Dāruihyā'it Turāthil Arabi. nd), Vol. 2, p. 1048. Hadith.1428.

³¹ At Tirmithi, Muhammad Isa, *Al-Jami'ul Kabir; Sunanu Tirmidhi* (Beirūt: DāruArabil Islami, 1998), Vol.5, p. 207 Hadith 3207-3210.

³²At Tirmithi ...p. 205 Hadith 3607.

Those who argued that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was lustful, found their sources in some books of biography and *tafsir*, especially the account of At-Ṭabari even though At-Ṭabari reported another version of the story narrated by Ali Ibn Zayd with a contrary position.³³The first claim of At-Ṭabari and those who adopted his version of the story may not be considered authentic because it is established that At Tabari, in some of his narrations, relied on *Isra'iliyyāt*³⁴ stories³⁵ which may be corrupted. Sources of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab may therefore, be refuted on the following grounds:

1. There are many contradictions in the report, while Ibn Sa'd and At-Tabari maintained that Zayd was not at home when the Prophet came in and that Zaynab invited him to enter even when Zayd was out, Ibn Is-haq said Zayd was lying on his sick bed when the Prophet came in and the mission of the Prophet was visit him over his sickness.
2. At-Ṭabari mentioned that the wind played with Zaynab's nightgown to expose her for the Prophet while she was in the room, Ibn Is-haq said they were initially together and when she turned away, the Prophet watched her and murmured the words of glorification and admiration.
3. The *Ahadith* relied on by early biographers are *mursal* (with two reporters missing) because Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Habban who is in the chain of narration was born about forty-seven years after the migration of the Prophet, some thirty-seven years after the death of the Prophet. As such, he was neither a Companion nor a Successor and so, he couldn't have been an eyewitness to the event.
4. Abdur-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam who reported the reliance of At-Ṭabari in his book of *tafsir* as early mentioned in this work was equally neither a Companion of the Prophet nor a Successor and as such, he equally could not have been an eye witness to the event and the *Ahadith* that could not be traced to

³³ Muhammad Jarir At Tabari. ...p. 274.

³⁴*Isra'iliyyat* refers to stories with Christians and/or Jews source.

³⁵ Muhammadu As-Sayyid Hussain Az-Zahabi, *At-Tafsir Wal Mufasssirūna*. (Egypt: *Wuhbah*, 1398A.H), Vol. 1, p. 154.

the Prophet are considered weak to be relied upon.³⁶ This is the more reason why the Consensus of scholars is that a tradition that is *mursal* cannot be used as a proof.³⁷ Scholars, in faulting the narrations on the text, observed that At-Ṭabari took his story from Al-Wāqidi who is referred to as Muhammad ibn Umar Al-Wāqidi, a personality known for fabrication of hadith to give some sort of sanction for the licentiousness of the 'Abbasid caliphs.³⁸

5. If the Prophet actually murmured the words of glorification of Allah as emphasized by critics, there is nothing to show that the words signify his admiration for Zaynab, and no one can be sure of perfectly reading the mind of others. Even if the Prophet turned his face down as documented by some biographers, such an action could fairly be interpreted as not wanting to commit himself to lustful gazing.
6. Zaynab was the Prophet's cousin and has been known to the Prophet from childhood. She was known to the Prophet when she was a girl and the Prophet was not struck by her beauty then. She was always seen by the Prophet even after her marriage with Zayd because the veil was not then known. What then would make her suddenly appear gorgeous to the Prophet when she was already in another man's house and at an older age of between thirty-five and forty?
7. It was the Prophet that arranged for her marriage to Zayd and insisted on it against the wish of Zaynab and her brother, Abdullah.³⁹ If the Prophet had been fascinated by her beauty and intended to marry her, that time would have been the best time for him to sell his desire and justify his action by the reluctance of Zaynab and her guardian.

³⁶ Muhammad Ahmad, *Al-Mawqizatu fi ilmi Mustalihul Hadith* (Halb: Maktabatul Matbu'atil Islamiyyah, 1421A.H), p. 39.

³⁷ Nuruddin Muhammad, *Minhajun Naqdi Fi Ulūmil Hadith* (Suriyah/Damashq: Dārul Fikri, 1997), p. 371.

³⁸ Shibli Nu'mani, *Sirat-Un-Nabi (The Life Of The Prophet)* [Rendered into English by M. Tayyib Bakhsh Budayuni, (New Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat, 2009), Vol. 2, pp. 128 – 129.

³⁹ Al-Hijazi Muhammad Muhammad Mahmud, *At-Tafsirul Wadih* (Beirūt: Dārul Jaylil Jadid. 1413A.H), Vol. 3, p. 98.

A dispassionate assessment of critics' narrations as contained in the sources relied upon, reveals some incoherence in the account. It disturbs a critical mind how Zaynab, knowing she was disarranged, could invite Muhammad(S.A.W) into her abode. It sounds more logical that the Prophet entered unexpectedly—which his noble soul would never do, owing to his sheer decency and modesty. Moreover, it contradicts the spirit of Islamic sociological ethics that a man should peep through the other person's window. The instruction guiding visitation is boldly stated in Suratun Nur (Chapter of the Light).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا
عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُذَكَّرُونَ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا
تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّىٰ يُؤَدِّنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ

O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those In them: that is best for you, In order that ye may heed (what is seemly). If ye find no one In the house, enter not until permission is given to you: if ye are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and Allah knows well all that ye do. (Q24:27-28)

Laying the claim that “Zaynab overheard Muhammad’s (S.A.W.) rapturous words through which she perceived ‘the flame she had kindled, and proud of her conquest was nothing to tell her husband of it” is unfair to Zaynab’s personality. In his historical work, Ibn Kathīr maintained that it was the wish of Allah for Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to marry Zaynab, and even at the time Zayd was patronizing his house to report his wife, the Prophet (S.A.W.) had been inspired that Zaynab is coming back to him. But he refused to inform Zayd of Allah’s decision for the fear of misconception by people of a fickle mind.⁴⁰

Medieval exegetes of the Qur’an such as Qutb,⁴¹ As Shanqīti,⁴² and Mujīruddīn⁴³ are of the opinion that the

⁴⁰ Ibn Kathir, Ismail Umar, *Al Bidayah Wan Nihayah* (Beirut: Dārut Turāthil Arabi, 1988), Vol.4, p. 166.

⁴¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilālil Qur’an* (Beirut: DārusShurūq, 1412 A.H), Vol. 5, p. 2869.

⁴² Muhammadul Amin Muhammad as Shanqiti, *Adwa’ l Bayān fi idā’l Qur’anil Kareem* (Beirut: DarulFikr, 1995), Vol. 5, p. 239.

Prophet(S.A.W.) did not have the desire to marry Zaynab rather, it was the wish of Allah to abolish adoption of a child in a way that the adopted child will claim the position of a biological child in all respect. To this group of exegetes, the Prophet (S.A.W.) had received an inspiration from Allah that Zayd will later divorce Zaynab and that the Prophet will subsequently marry Zaynab. Ibn Kathir reports thus:

... Ali ibn Zaid ibn Judaan reported that Ali, the son of Hussain asked me of the opinion of Alhassan regarding the word of Allah: But Thou Didst hide In Thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: Thou Didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that Thou shouldst fear Allah. I reported this to him but he said no, Allah had made it known to His Prophet that she is going to be one of his wives ever before he gave her out in marriage. When Zaid brought her report to him he said: Fear Allah and hold fast to your wife. He (Allah) said: I have informed you that I will marry her to you. You hide in you that which Allah will soon disclose... ⁴⁴

Some other exegetes such as Az Zuhayli,⁴⁵ Al-Hijāzī,⁴⁶ and authors of *At-Tafsīrul-Muyassar* are in support of the position of the aforementioned medieval exegetes. Authors of *At-Tafsīrul-Muyassar* comment thus:

O Muhammad, you conceived in you, that which Allah has inspired in you regarding Zayd's divorce of his wife and your marriage to her, and Allah will disclose what you conceived. And you feared that the hypocrites would say Muhammad

⁴³Mujiruddeen Muhammad, *Fat-hurRahmānifi Tafsīril Qur'an* (Al-Madinah: Daru Nawadir, nd) Vol. 5, p. 365.

⁴⁴Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīrul Qur'anil Azim* ...p. 425.

⁴⁵Wuhbah Mustapha Az Zuhaily, *At Tafsīrul Munir fi l Aqidah was Shari'ahwal Minhaj* (Damashq: Darul Fikr, 1418A.H.), Vol. 20, p. 24.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Mahmud Al Hijazi, *At Tafsīrul Wādih* (Beirut: Darul Jailil Jadid, 1413A.H) Vol.3, p. 96.

married the divorcee of his adopted child while Allah is He that much deserves to be feared.⁴⁷

Al-Hijaz, like many other orthodox scholars, gave a better interpretation of the phrase of the Qur'an 'and you conceal in you what Allah will soon disclose' to mean that the Prophet was inspired of Zayd's divorce of Zaynab and his marriage of her but for the fear that the hypocrites would condemn him of marrying the divorcee of his adopted child, he concealed Allah's decision from Zayd and advised him to keep his wife and fear Allah. Allah thereby, rebuked him for concealing a lawful act which Allah had ordained.⁴⁸

The significance of Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W.) marriage with Zaynab

A culture that had been in practice in Arabia before Islam and at the early period of Islam is that of a child being adopted and given the entitlement of a biological child. This custom was commonly practised with the captives whose fathers were not known. Al-Qurtubi reported that in some instances, even when the father is known, a man may just like a child and will start calling that child of another man his son and subsequently, such a boy may inherit him, and he may inherit the boy too⁴⁹. The Shari'ah is not against adopting a child and taking care of such a child. The Prophet enjoins the care of an orphan and considers it a commendable act of *Ibādah*. However, the identity of the child's biological family should not be hidden.

The need for giving a clear-cut ruling on the right of the adopted child under his adoptive father is necessary because Islam provides a unique formula for estate distribution and marriage. When an adopted child acquires wealth under the adopting family, his wealth belongs to his own family and not of the adopting family at death. The adopted child is equally not entitled to share in the estate of his adoptive father. When the adopted child is

⁴⁷Dignitaries among Scholars of Tafsir, *At-Tafsīrul Muyassar*. (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Publishing Company, 2009), p. 423.

⁴⁸Muhammad Mahmud Al Hijazi. *At TafsīrulW ādih...*p. 96.

⁴⁹Shamsudin Al Qurtubi, *Al Jamī'u li Ahkāmīl Qur'an* (Cairo: Dārul Kutubil Misriyyah, 1964), Vol. 14, p. 119.

grown up, he or she is not legally prohibited from marrying from the adoptive family on the ground of adoption.

Zayd ibn Harithah of the Arab tribe of Kalb was taken captive when young during the Jahiliyyah period and was sold to Hakim ibn Hizam who presented him as a gift to his aunt, Khadijah. When Khadijah got married to the Prophet, she released Zayd to the Prophet and on the request of Zayd's father. Zayd was then freed by the Prophet and he chose to stay with the Prophet who had also adopted him as his son.

Allah says;

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمْ اللَّائِي
تُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُكُمْ
بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ادْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ
أَفْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ
وَأَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Allah has not made for any man two hearts
In His (one) body: nor has He made your
wives whom ye divorce by *Zihar* your
mothers: nor has He made your adopted
sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner
of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells
(you) the truth, and He shows the (right)
way. Call them by (the names of) their
fathers: that is more just in the sight of
Allah. But if ye know not their father's
(names, call them) your brothers in Faith, or
your *maulas*. but there is no blame on you if
ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is)
the intention of your hearts: and Allah is
Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.(Q33:45)

The purpose of messengers on earth is to bring to mankind, messages from Allah which are necessary to mould their life and such a task will definitely come with new legislations. It is the wish of Allah to abolish a practice that was already considered a norm in the society using His own Prophet as an example. This is exactly what happened in the issue of the marriage of the Prophet with Zaynab. Allah says in Q33: 38 -39

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ
خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to Him As a duty. it was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away. And the command of Allah is a Decree determined. (it is the practice of those) who preach the messages of Allah, and fear him, and fear none but Allah. and enough is Allah to call (humankind) to account.

And to make a final clarification on this matter which was hotly debated even during the time of the Prophet, Allah says in the subsequent verse:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (He is) the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (Q33:40)

On a final note, the fact that the Prophet was attacked from both within and outside the Muslim community is a clear sign that a leader needs to prepare himself for challenges which are capable of swaying him back to his step of moving the community forward. A slightest compromise is capable of jeopardising the mission of his leadership and so, rendering such a leader to be incompetent.

Conclusion

The assessment of various sources of Zaynab's marriage to Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W.) shows that the orientalist, and of course, some early exegetes of the Qur'an either adopted narrations they got from some biographers without proper scrutiny or chose to adopt the narrations with a biased mind even when there are other narrations that sound more logical and authentic. Verses Qur'an 33:37-39 confirm that it was God who ordained that the Prophet should marry Zaynab to abolish the Arabian tradition that prohibited marriage to a former wife of an adopted son. Why then should be Prophet be blamed for adhering to a Divine information from his creator. He was not the first prophet to find himself in such a position. This, then, comes to pass by God's consistent law which is not subject to people's baseless ideas.

This rule also applies to earlier messengers. When God commanded them to do something, they were not swayed in some other direction by other people; indeed the latter are of no importance. They feared no one other than God who charged them with the task of delivering His message and putting it into action. It is He only who holds them accountable and no one else. Neither was Zaynab Muhammad son's wife nor was Zayd Muhammad's son; Zayd was Hārithah's son. Hence, when the matter is looked at from the angle of reality, it carries no blame whatsoever. Muhammad (S.A.W.) was in the same relation to all Muslims, including Zayd ibn Hārithah; it was a relationship between a prophet and his community of believers. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) thus puts in the place God's law to be applied by all mankind till the end of time. Allah knows what suits humanity and sets its life on the best course. He has ordained that the Prophet (S.A.W.) act by His wisdom and knowledge. Furthermore, He has set in motion the laws and regulations that best serves humankind's interests and bring them happiness.

Consequent upon the findings of this work, the personality of At-Ṭabari is not in any way at a stake. He was a scholar of high repute but even then, his narration about the biography of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) cannot be considered in isolation especially on an issue that has to do with the personality of a statesman. It is on this basis that the author of this work submits that a holistic study of the Qur'anic verses on Zaynab's marriage to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and authentic traditions of the Prophet is necessary for a better understanding of the situation.

**A Religio-Philosophical Analysis of Freewill and
Determinism in Relation to the Yoruba Perception
of *Ori***

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Abstract

There is much debate regarding the seeming contradictions and ambivalence in the metaphysical concepts of freewill and determinism. Several interpretations have been given by various African philosophers on what freewill or determinism connote. In this regard, the traditional Yoruba conception of freewill and determinism is replete with contradictions by virtue of their perception of human destiny which is variously chosen by the people. This paper argues that the Yoruba have a two-sided conception of destiny, as something given and unalterable and yet alterable under certain circumstances and conditions. The conception of destiny appears problematic. On the other hand, the Yoruba are regarded as determinist but not fatalist. Thus, it could be argued that the Yoruba could be seen as both freewillers and determinists. It is in this perspective that this paper does a critique

of freewill and determinism in relation to Yoruba perception of Ori using a philosophical methodology. Therefore, the paper offers and defends soft determinism as a better alternative to the causal explanatory paradigm among the Yoruba.

Keywords:

Ori, Religio-philosophical Thought, Freewill, Determinism.

Introduction

The subject of free will and determinism has been one of the most intensely fought battles in theology and philosophy from time immemorial. There is little doubt that humans have a perception of choice in our daily lives. It is believed that humans make choices and that they are not mere puppets of either the gods or the blind forces of the universe. However, it has often been argued that freewill does not exist in the strict sense of the term while determinism is also believed not to be practicable in the real sense of the word. In this regard, the issue of freewill and determinism is examined from the perspective of the Yoruba culture with the view to bringing out their understanding of the concept. In addition, the Yoruba concept of *Ori* is examined so as to determine whether they believe in freewill or in determinism.

The concept of *Ori* in Yoruba metaphysical thought has always captivated the interest of many scholars¹, but its true meaning and nature has always been controversial. *Ori*, an immaterial or spiritual head, can simply be described as the bearer, the ruler and controller of human destiny. While it is true that traditional Yoruba thought fits into hard determinism, it does not deny "freewill" or binary choice.

However, the problem the paper seeks to address is centred on the debate on freewill - determinism concepts in relation to *Ori*

¹O. A. Balogun (2007). "The Concepts of *Ori* and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation", in *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16(1): 116-130. See also W. Abimbola, (1971). "The Yoruba Concept of Human personality", in *La notion de Personne en Afrique Noire Colloques Internationale de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (544): 69-85. O. Oladipo, (1992). "Predestination in Yoruba Thought: A Philosopher's Interpretation" *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* vol. XXIV (1 & 2):37. Gbadegesin, S. (1988) "Eniyan: The Yoruba Concept of a Person" in P.H. Coetzee and A.P. J. Roux (eds). *The African Philosophy: A Reader*. New York: Routledge. p. 158.

in Yoruba thought. In addition to this, scholars are of divided opinion on the operational understanding of freewill and determinism. Some even argued that they are meaningless and non-existent. As such, the following questions become expedient: Is man free to take decisions? Are there no factors propelling certain behaviours or decisions man makes? How free is man? Are there actions that can be carried out under complete freewill? How free is human and how compelling are determined actions in the life or activities or humankind? It is in this perspective that this paper attempts to examine the concept of freewill and determinism with the view to exploring the Yoruba understanding of *Ori* as a metaphysical entity responsible for making choices among the Yoruba.

The Concept of Freewill

This is described as the power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion. Also, it refers to the freedom of humans to make choices that are not determined by prior causes. Freewill has been variously described as the orientation that humans are to be held responsible for their moral choices. It also presupposes the belief that man determines his own behaviour freely and that no causal antecedents can sufficiently account for his action. A person is free to the extent that he or she is free from domination by others and free to make his or own decisions without forcible interference from others².

According to Frankfurt, freewill and moral responsibility is further defined as follows:

The existence of moral judgment is said to imply that man is free to act and is also responsible for his action. Freewill means that there are no constraints that prevent the agent from acting in a manner suitable to him. The notion of responsibility comes in because it is believed that Man is imbued with rationality. So, man is expected to make rational decisions³.

²A. Flew (1971). *An Introduction to Western Philosophy: Ideas and Argument from Plato to Satre*. London: Thames and Hudson.

³H. Frankfurt, (1971). "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person" in *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1): 5–20.

He opines that "...if man is free, it means that he has alternative courses of actions from which he can choose. This means that man is morally responsible for any choice he makes"⁴.

The Concept of Determinism

This is the philosophical idea that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will. Some philosophers have taken determinism to imply that individual human beings have no free will and cannot be held morally responsible for their actions.

Oftentimes determinism is equated with fatalism and this has caused a lot of misunderstanding among the people. Consequently, Best asserts that:

Determinism is often erroneously equated with fatalism which is the true opposite of free will. Under fatalism the will is ineffectual, no matter how much it struggles, under determinism there is no limit to how effectual the will can be, causality determines the nature of will but does not prevent any action, which is not in violation of physical law. A will is not unfree by virtue of the causal roots of its origin and existence (heredity and environment). Causality creates a will, but does not subject the will to ongoing compulsion. To justify a causeless will on the grounds that a person can choose what he or she does and really wish to choose (wills what is not really willed) is self-contradictory⁵.

However, from both the naturalistic and theistic perspectives, determinism is perceived as "the belief that man's actions are the result of antecedent causes which have been formulated naturalistically and theistically"⁶. He further opines that, "the naturalistic view sees human beings as part of the

⁴ Ibid

⁵B. Best (2002) *A Cast for Freewill and Determinism*. London: Oxford University Press. p. 111

⁶ W. Elwell, (1984). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker. p. 428

machinery of the universe. In such a world, every event, that is, what is happening now is caused by preceding event, which in turn was caused by preceding events, *ad infinitum*"⁷. On the other hand, determinism is further described as "that position that every event has a cause (including human thoughts and decisions) and is fully governed by the laws of nature"⁸. Humans are therefore, neither free nor responsible for their actions. Thus, determinism is the view that although human beings do possess a will, a faculty used to make decisions and choices, this faculty is under severe influence from outside factors such as one's background and environment. However, theological determinism is defined as "the idea that, there is a God who determines all that humans will do; either by knowing their actions in advance, via some form of omniscience or by decreeing their actions in advance"⁹.

Yoruba Notion of Freewill

Labeodan opines that freewill/freedom in Yoruba thought pattern in relation to the concept of *Ori* or *Ayanmo* could rather be contradictory¹⁰. This is borne out of the fact that one whose destiny is affixed to him or one who received his destiny while kneeling (*Akunleyan*)¹¹ is not free. So, how do we relate this with those we believe, chose freely? We cannot even say that those who belong to this group did chose freely since they were given no alternatives in the sense that they were not told whether certain heads are good or bad. If this condition had been satisfied by *Orunmila*, if he had given the people alternatives, then one could be said to have had a freewill or free choice. But where nobody knows what he is choosing, the rule of preferential choice has not been satisfied, and to this effect one cannot, properly speaking, be said to be making a choice. From this analysis, it turns out that a choice of *Ori* in heaven is purely a matter of luck. The conclusion we can draw from this is that, an individual's choice of *Ori* from heaven is not an exercise of free choice.

⁷ Ibid

⁸G. Solomon, (1990). *Determinism and Freedom*. London: Epworth Press. p. 226

⁹ B. Martin (1989). *The Existentialist Theology*. New York: Bookham Association.

¹⁰H. Labeodan(2011). "The Problem of Evil, Freewill, Causality Responsibility and the Yoruba Concept of *Ori*: A Synthesis." *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*. XLIII (2):154.

¹¹S. Gbadegesin (1984). Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective, *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*. 7:182.

Idowu avers that *Akunleyan*, a destiny that one kneels down and chooses gives a picture of what happens in the pre-existence life. According to Yoruba tradition, the individual ontological “self” is a self – conscious, rational and free “being”. In Yoruba tradition, destiny which the rational self” chooses in heaven becomes an individual’s lot in life. That is why the Yoruba say:

*Akunleyan se oun ni adayeba: A daye tan oju
nkanni*¹²

*A destiny one kneels down and chooses it is that
which one finds on getting to the world, but
when one gets to the world one becomes
impatient.*

The difference between *akunleyan*, a destiny one kneels down and choose and *akunlegba*, a destiny one kneels down to receives is centred on the words *yan*, choose and *gba* receive. Does an individual ontological “being” chooses his own race, colour, parents, success, and failure in the primordial existence or simply receives them from the Supreme Deity? Be that as it may, what I think our traditional thought wants to convey to us about *akunleyan*, a destiny one kneels down and chooses, is that every individual is responsible for his destiny. In other words, our destinies are in our hands. Whatever we make out of them either good or bad becomes our responsibility.

Yoruba cosmology presents a picture of man, solitary individual, picking his way (aided by his *Ori*, Destiny chosen by himself before coming to the world) between a variety of forces. Granted that the choice of *Ori* in heaven is not a free one; the freedom to do something about your choice exists in life! So once you have made your choice, you are free to make good use of it or mess it up in life. Or, if it was a bad *Ori*, Yoruba belief that man is also free to seek redress by mean of sacrifice or propitiation. Since this can be done, man therefore becomes responsible for whatever he does with his *Ori*. Yoruba are partially freewillers.

Yoruba Notion of Determinism

The concept of causality is very central to Yoruba traditional thought and religion. Every event has a cause. There is no action

¹²Idowu, E.B. (1996) Op.cit. p.154

without a cause, every event has a cause, and the cause is always an agent or some agent utilizing some forces. The Yoruba believe that a person has had his biography or life history written before he comes into the world (through birth). It is this biography that the person comes to the world to fulfil – as can be seen in the notion of *Ori* (inner head/destiny), which is described variously as *ayanmo* (destiny that is affixed on a person), *akunleyan* (destiny which is chosen while kneeling), and *akunlegba* (destiny which is received while kneeling).

The opinions of Yoruba scholars vary on the issue of determinism and human freedom. Some scholars, for example, Abimbola hold to a rigidly fatalistic interpretation of Determinism/Predestination, thereby suggesting that human freedom is illusory, because not even the god can change *Ori*. *Ori* is said to be the essence of luck and the most important force responsible for human success or failure¹³. Furthermore, whatever has not been approved by one's *Ori* cannot be approved by the divinities. Hence the *Ori* is his personal god and is more interested in a person's welfare. So if a person needs anything he must first make his desire known to his *Ori* before any other god, and if a man's *Ori* is not sympathy with his cause, no god will sympathize with him and consequently he will not have the things he wants. The *Ori* that has been selected for an individual in heaven cannot be altered on earth and "indeed the gods themselves are not in a position to change a man's destiny"¹⁴.

From the above we can see that a fatalistic interpretation of predestination is given in which the individual has no right to exercise any freedom since everything has been sealed by an individual's *Ori*. There is no room for chance in Yoruba metaphysics; the universe is ruled by the principle of causality, and every event is an effect of a cause. According to Balogun, there are two kinds of determinism: hard and soft determinism¹⁵. The hard determinism does not allow freedom while the soft determinism gives room for freedom.

¹³ W. Abimbola (1975) *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa*. UNESCO. p.189

¹⁴ W. Abimbola (1976) *IFA: An Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press. p.142.

¹⁵ O.A. Balogun (2007). "The Concept of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation" *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16(1): 116-130.

Ori in Relation to Freewill and Determinism among the Yoruba

It is believed that Yoruba religion has shown convincingly that the people believe in *Ori*¹⁶. One of the essential elements that make human beings is *Ori*. It is the contention of the people that “*Ori* that comes into the world to fulfil a destiny”. The Yoruba believe that, “*Ori* is closely related to God and it is given to man by God Himself ... “the Source Being” or “the Source from which being originated”¹⁷. This shows that it is only the Supreme Being that can put *Ori*, the essence of being or the personality-soul into man.” Their views x-ray the Yoruba position that *Ori*’s origin is godly and thereby unpolluted from heaven. Thus, *Ori* is regarded as one of the gods in the Yoruba pantheon and possibly, the greatest god of all¹⁸. *Ori* is the compass of an individual’s destiny. This is why Dopamu says, “Destiny is the function of *Ori*”¹⁹.

However, a critical examination of the Yoruba concept of *ori* seems to suggest that the Yoruba are fatalists and hard determinists. Although in theory, the destiny of a person is said to be unaltered because it became doubly sealed after its choice, but in actual sense, it does not seem to be so. Upon a deeper reflection and practical experience, several factors have occasioned an alteration in destiny on earth; either for good or bad. An individual’s destiny may be changed for good or for bad. Instances of this abound within the Yoruba cultural milieu. The Yoruba believe in the consultation of the god of divination (*Orunmila*) to now know the kind of *ori* one had chosen and to perhaps alter an unfavourable destiny through the help of some spiritual forces and by the application of the right type of sacrifices. *Ebo* (Sacrifice) among the Yoruba is believed to be capable of influencing human destiny either for good or bad. Sacrifice is a form of communication between the natural and the supernatural realms of the Yoruba cosmos.

¹⁶E.B. Idowu (1996). Op.cit.

¹⁷J. O. Awolalu & P. A. Dopamu (2005). *West African Traditional Religion* revised edition Nigeria: Macmillan Publications.

¹⁸W. Abimbola, (1975). *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa*. UNESCO.

¹⁹P. A. Dopamu (1985). “*The Yoruba Concept of Personality-Soul and Its Relations to Human Acts and Accountability*” being a paper presented at the Assembly of the World Religious at Americana Great Gorge Conference Center, McAfee, New Jersey, November 15-21.

Besides the above avenues, other agents of possible change in the fulfilment of destiny include evil forces such as witchcraft and some other demonic forces. In addition to factors influencing an alteration in the status of destiny is one's own character. One's act of behaviour can affect one's destiny for the worse. In all these instances, the Yoruba believe that destiny can be altered.

The possibility of altering one's destiny presents some forms of antinomies in Yoruba thought. At one point, it is said that one's destiny is unalterable. At another, it is held that it is alterable through some factors. What do we make of this seeming contradiction? What is suggested is that there does seem confusion in the whole idea of *ori* and its connection with human destiny. However, such puzzles become cleared when we realize that the Yoruba also posit another concept, *afowofa* (the infliction of a problem on oneself or causation of a problem by oneself) as explanation for some of the problems that befall a person²⁰.

The Yoruba trace the cause of some events to the individual person who performs the action and not any supernatural force outside of man. Such actions are located in the realm of the natural and are empirically observable. It is for this reason that people are punished for wrongdoing because they are believed to be responsible for their actions. This then suggests that in the analysis of the concepts of *ori* or destiny, the Yoruba falls within what is called 'soft determinism'. The nature of *ori* and human destiny in Yoruba belief is neither fatalism the strict sense of it, nor hard determinism. The Yoruba conception of human destiny is indeed soft-deterministic in nature. Soft determinism here refers to a situation where a person is held responsible for actions deliberately performed by him while attributing to his '*ori*' those whose 'cause' transcends him. This soft-deterministic interpretation of the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny is more consistent, correct and coherent with Yoruba belief and cultural practice than any other metaphysical interpretation. A proper look into the traditional Yoruba beliefs in *ori* and human destiny suggests that the Yoruba are better referred to as soft-determinists and not hard determinists as some scholars want us to believe.

Indeed, a soft-deterministic conception of destiny in Yoruba thought is truly reflective of and coherent with the belief of the people on moral responsibility and freedom. It is because of the

²⁰O.A. Balogun (2007). "The Concept of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation" *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16(1):126.

freedom, morality and responsibility which are accommodated by this conception of destiny that make the alterability of destiny meaningful and consistent. Situating the concept of 'ori' and human destiny in traditional Yoruba thought within the framework of soft determinism can help in taking care of the inconsistencies and problems associated with the hard-deterministic interpretations of the Yoruba concepts *ori* and human destiny.

A Critique of the Yoruba Perception of Freewill and Determinism in Relation to Ori

Humans have freewill to always do good and/or evil, for if he does not, then he does not have Freewill. To limit man to doing good alone without the possibility of doing evil will as suggested by Flew²¹, is opposed to freedom. However, the level of knowledge, exposure, and admonition guides man's Freewill, which influences his interest, motivation, ambition and taste. Man is free to do either, or both good and evil, but he could be admonished to do good in order to make life comfortable for himself and his community. Thus, God has made man in the form to 'always freely choose the right'. Man must however develop his reasoning capacity under the influence of what is considered as godly morality that aims at peace and development.

The use of 'freewill' 'choice making', decision-making and all sorts are relevant to certain familiar human situation and should not be rejected. This is right, but the act of making those choices, the use of Freewill could be based on ignorance, level of knowledge or intelligence. Even though the use of those terms should be allowed based on 'familiar human situation', *the foundation or the propelling force behind the choices*, Freewill is *the determinant factor*.

Thus, human has Freewill to always do good and/or evil, for 'if he does not, then he does not have Freewill. To limit man to doing good alone without the possibility of doing evil, is opposed to freedom. However, the level of knowledge, exposure, and admonition guides man's Freewill, which influences his interest, motivation, ambition and taste. Human is free to do either, or both good and evil, but he could be admonished to do good in order to make man in the form to 'always freely choose the right'. Humans must, however, develop their reasoning capacity under the

²¹A. Flew (1966). *The Free Will-Determinism Debate*. London: S.C.M. Press Ltd.

influence of what is considered as godly morality that aims at peace and development and be subject to God's discipline without showing that God is imperfect.

Determinism contains the concept of inevitability and cause. This is considered relevant to this discussion. Every child that will become an adult must pass through a teenage age. Such is inevitable. That is natural. However, many other events considered inevitable in Determinism are ordinary events, which are fully under the control of the individual, based on the level of the acquired knowledge of the individual, and the community of the people concerned.

The Yoruba concept of determinism also uses God as the explanation of every happening i.e. pantheistic in nature. "God gave men freewill" this makes open the possibility of doing evil as well as good. The power to act and not act is given to man but such power is ready predestined to take place by God. In fact, it is the Yoruba traditional belief that there are other extra-terrestrial beings that see to the affairs of the world some are good, some are evil, e.g. deities, divinities, and witches.

Idowu, argued that one's destiny, his future existence or whatever he becomes in life or whatever activities or events that occurred in life are all traceable to the type of destiny his *ori* had chosen for him at creation; that with the Yoruba, the notion of 'chance' or 'freedom' becomes otiose since whatever happens to a person is attributed to the choices, which his *ori* makes²². In other words, that once a destiny has been chosen, it becomes doubly sealed and totally impossible to change, even the preternatural forces are not in position to alter it; and that the Yoruba are hard-deterministic and fatalistic in their belief in and conception *ori* and human destiny. There are two fundamental problems with this kind of submission.

Balogun postulates that virtually all Yoruba African philosophers who have commented on *ori* vis-à-vis the freewill-determinism problem have overlooked a point that is quite clear in the exposition of the two important religious scholars on this issue²³ (that is, Bolaji Idowu and Wande Abimbola). Indeed, virtually all these Yoruba African Philosophers who have written on *ori*, human personality, vis-à-vis freewill cite these two religious scholars, but these philosophers all overlook one point, which is obvious in the writing of these religious scholars: *Ori* is limited to

²² E.B. Idowu (1996). Op.cit. 187

²³A.O. Balogun (2007) Op. cit. p. 125

issues of material success (i.e things like wealth, riches and success in one's profession). Ori has nothing to do with moral character, and as such it does not affect all of human actions and/or inactions.

Ori in Yoruba thought is concerned only with issues of material success in life at a general level. Arguably, nowhere in any of the ancient Yoruba scriptures (that is, the *Ifa* literary corpus, *Ijala* and *Ewi, Egungun*, and *Esa Egungun*) is there the claim that moral character can be pre-determined by one's earlier choice of *Ori*. Given this critical point that *Ori* is not about moral character, but about issues of prosperous or impoverished destiny, then establishing the case for soft determinism becomes more resonant with the Yoruba cultural belief. However, before we explore the plausibility of such, let us examine the second prank of the problem²⁴.

The second problem has to do with the fatalistic conclusion of some of these scholars, which if carried to its logical conclusion; it will be unjustified to hold a person responsible for his actions since the causes of his actions are external to him and beyond his control. With the fatalistic interpretation of the Yoruba belief in *ori* and human destiny, the practice of performance of character formation becomes otiose (unnecessary), since it is not a product of man's making. Besides, the doctrine of fatalism, rather than promising perfect understanding and removing the temptation of viewing things in terms of human wickedness, as Oduwole argues, it indeed nullifies the efficacy of reason, stifles creativity and spirit of hard work. But is there a way out of this dilemma? Is the Yoruba belief in *ori* and human destiny rigidly fatalistic and hard-deterministic, or does it appear so merely at the surface level?

A surface look at the Yoruba concept of *ori* will seem to suggest that the Yoruba are incurable fatalists and hard determinists. Although in theory, the destiny of a person is said to be unaltered because it became doubly sealed after its choice, but in actual sense, it does not seem to be so. Upon a deeper reflection and practical experience, several factors have occasioned an alteration in destiny on earth; either for good or bad. An individual's destiny may be changed for good or for bad. Instances of this abound within the Yoruba cultural milieu. The Yoruba believe in the consultation of the god of divination (*Orunmila*) to know the kind of *ori* one had chosen and to perhaps alter an unfavourable destiny through the help of some spiritual forces and by the application of the right type of sacrifices. *Ebo* (Sacrifice) among the Yoruba is

²⁴A.O. Balogun(2007) op. cit. p.126.

believed to be capable of influencing human destiny either for good or bad. Sacrifice is a form of communication between the natural and the supernatural realms of the Yoruba cosmos.

According to Kola Abimbola, sacrifice is forgoing, relinquishing or doing without something in the expectation of gaining something else²⁵. Among the Yoruba, it is more of food for the gods; a social act; a means of repentance; and, insurance against failure. It is founded on the ideal of mutual exchange or reciprocity between man and the spirits in order to influence or bring about positive changes in man's life. It is for this reason that the Yoruba often say:

*Riru ebo nii gbeni, airu ebo kii gbeniyan*²⁶
Making of sacrifice favours one than its utter refusal

Ese is another closely related principle with *ebo* that stresses the possibility of alteration in man's destiny. *Ese*, which is the principle of individual strife and struggle signifies that choosing a good *Ori* is not sufficient without having to struggle and strive for success in life. *Ese* acts like a catalyst to the realization or otherwise of one's destiny.

Besides the above avenues, other agents of possible change in the fulfilment of destiny include evil forces such as witchcraft and some other demonic forces. In addition to factors influencing an alteration in the status of destiny is one's own character. One's act of rashness or impulse behaviour can affect one's destiny for the worse. While an impatient person will run at a faster pace than his *ori*, thereby losing its support, an idle mind will spoil an otherwise prosperous destiny. In all these practical instances, the Yoruba believe that destiny can be altered.

The possibility of altering one's destiny presents some forms of antinomies in Yoruba thought. At one point, it is said that one's destiny is unalterable. At another, it is held that it is alterable through some factors. What do we make of this seeming contradiction? What is suggested is that there does seem confusion in the whole idea of *ori* and its connection with human destiny. However, such puzzles become cleared when we realize that the Yoruba also posit another concept, *afowofa* (the infliction of a

²⁵Kola Abimbola (2006). *Yoruba Culture: A Philosophical Account*. Birmingham: Iroko Academic Publishers.

²⁶J.O. Awolalu (1981). *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, London: Longman

problem on oneself or causation of a problem by oneself) as explanation for some of the problems that befall a person.

Balogun observes that Yoruba trace the cause of some events to the individual person who performs the action and not any supernatural force outside of man²⁷. Such actions are located in the realm of the natural and are empirically observable. It is for this reason that people are punished for wrongdoing because they are believed to be responsible for their actions. This then suggests that in the analysis of the concepts of *ori* or destiny, The Yoruba falls within the gamut of what is called 'soft-determinism' in metaphysical terms. The nature of *ori* and human destiny in Yoruba belief is neither based on fatalism in the strict sense of it, nor on hard determinism. The Yoruba conception of human destiny is indeed soft-deterministic in nature. Soft determinism here refers to a situation where a person is held responsible for actions deliberately performed by him while attributing to his '*ori*' those whose 'causes' transcend him. This soft-deterministic interpretation of the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny is more consistent, correct and coherent with Yoruba belief and cultural practice than any other metaphysical interpretation. A proper look into the traditional Yoruba cosmos and their beliefs in *ori* and human destiny suggests that the Yoruba are better referred to as soft-determinists and not fatalists and hard determinists as some scholars want us to believe²⁸. Unlike a fatalist who easily resigns himself to fate with respect to future situations, the Yoruba as soft determinists are hopefully gratified of being able to help future situations. In the same vein, they are rationally conscious of being held responsible for present actions which they deliberately carried out or executed.

Indeed, a soft-deterministic conception of destiny in Yoruba thought is truly reflective of and coherent with the belief of the people on moral responsibility and freedom. It is because of the freedom, morality and responsibility which are accommodated by this conception of destiny that make the alterability of destiny meaningful and consistent. Situating the concept of '*ori*' and human destiny in traditional Yoruba thought within the framework of soft determinism can help in taking care of the inconsistencies and problems associated with the fatalistic interpretations of the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny. Such problems are occasioned

²⁷A.O. Balogun (2007). Op. cit. p. 126-127.

²⁸S. Ade Ali 1995. "The Yoruba Conception of Destiny: A Critical Analysis". *Journal of Philosophy and Development* 1&2(1): 100-106.

by practical existential experiences of the Yoruba in noting some factors (such as one's action, sacrifices, evil machination etc.) as potent forces in altering one's destiny even when fatalism suggests that the choice of one's *ori* is irrevocable and unalterable. With soft determinism, the possibility of changing an unfavourable destiny; of worshipping the guardian ancestral spirit of hard work; of consciously guiding against other's interception of a favourable destiny, become apparent.

Balogun, in consonance with this article's soft-deterministic interpretation of the concepts of *ori* and human destiny argues that the Yoruba conception of destiny is repugnant of harsh words of hard determinism, repudiating fatality and necessity²⁹. The temptation to consider the metaphysical nature of the Yoruba belief in *ori* and human destiny in the light of fatalism or hard determinism (as Bolaji Idowu, Richard Taylor³⁰, Ebun Oduwole³¹, etc have done) is natural; however, incorrect. It is only inexplicable traits of a person either towards evil or good that the Yoruba explain through appeal to destiny. Destiny in this sense signifies an un-freedom act which only implies a transcendental relation that explains the unusual, baffling and untoward complexities of life which must come to pass no matter what. Only destiny understood in this sense is analogous to fatalism. Outside this sense, and as it is often the case, the belief in '*ori*' and human destiny in Yoruba coheres with the notion of *afowofa* (self-causation), where one is held responsible for actions deliberately performed by oneself, while attributing to his *ori* those whose causes transcend him. It is when the effort to rectify a bad destiny or to maintain a good destiny come to a naught that the Yoruba recourse to fate (fatalism).

The "freedom" in freewill is the glorious ability of our minds to reprogram themselves and to evaluate automatic thoughts and emotions. We all have this ability, and we all choose to utilize it to a greater or lesser degree. The effects of nature, nurture, random events, and past decisions are not eliminated, but can be modified by our ability to project consequences and by our power to influence choices - by our awareness of freewill itself. All of this

²⁹A.O. Balogun (2007) Op. cit. p. 1227-128

³⁰H. Richard (2011). "Response to 'Free Will as Advanced Action Control for Human Social Life and Culture'" by Roy F. Baumeister, A. William Crescioni and Jessica L. Alquist". *Neuroethics* 4: 13-16. doi:10.1007/s12152-009-9046-8.

³¹E.O. Oduwole (1996). "The Yoruba Concepts of 'Ori' and Human Destiny: A Fatalistic Interpretation". *Journal of Philosophy and Development* 2(1&2): 40-52.

abstract thinking, projecting and deciding is the product of mechanistic causation, determined but not determinable. It is this freedom that makes us human.

However, in an attempt to offer explanation for some baffling, untoward and inexplicable events, the Yoruba have recourse to fatalistic interpretation of destiny. Given the reality of few instances of events as these in the life of the Yoruba, there is the temptation to conclude that the metaphysical nature of *ori* and human destiny in traditional Yoruba is basically fatalistic or hard-deterministic. However, upon further critical reflection and overwhelming supporting evidence in Yoruba thought, the paper has shown that such conclusion is exclusive of other salient issues, factors and problems surrounding the concepts of *ori* and human destiny. Hence, this has led to an incorrect interpretation. The validity and reality of the concepts of '*afowofa*' (self-causation), rewards and punishment, the efficacy of reason, *ebo* (sacrifice), and *ese* (hard work), freedom and moral responsibility; all true of the Yoruba, seem to demand for a more inclusive metaphysical explanation of the nature of the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny.

It is in this regard that the paper offers and defends soft determinism as a better alternative causal explanatory paradigm. Though critiques may perhaps want to raise a fundamental question that will vitiate the veracity of our soft-deterministic defense of *ori* and human destiny in Yoruba thought: Are humans really free in issues of material wealth if in Yoruba culture they had no say in the determination of the contents of their *Ori* in *Ajala's* house? This question is quite important and cannot be ignored. While it is true that there are external constraints or factors at the supernatural realm in the choice of *Ori* at *Ajala's* house, it is however, salient to note also that at the natural plane, there are various avenues *ebo* (sacrifice), *ese* (hard work), *iwa* (character), and *afowofa* (self-caused) open to man, and which require his freewill in order to (re)shape and (re) influence his chances of chosen destiny (whether good or bad) on earth³².

³²Makinde, M.A. 1985. "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yoruba Concept of 'Ori' and Human Destiny". *International Studies in Philosophy*. XVII (1): 50-66.

Conclusion

The most important implication though remains self-determination. We want and need control over our lives. We suffer the consequences of our actions irrespective of whether chosen by freewill or by default, so it makes sense to strive for the exercise of freewill, to make decisions that are likely to bring us closer to optimizing our lives - to set goals and to achieve them. Increased control implies increased personal responsibility for our lives and actions. That is an important aspect of what makes us human. I think it is reasonable to say that the scope of our freewill is a measure of our humanness. We are beings of self-made soul in the sense that we can decide to take charge of this process, or to default and leave it up to random influences to take us where they may. The implicit or explicit recognition and acceptance of freewill is probably the single most important factor determining who we are; it is a factor we have control over. The use of freewill, by its very nature, cannot be enforced by external agents. Society and parents can encourage its use and discourage the lack of responsibility, but each individual has to choose the degree of utilization of one's volitional ability. Proper, internally generated self-esteem carries with it an inherent commitment to the use of freewill. Unfortunately, many current social policies discourage the belief in freewill, undermine personal responsibility, and rely on external pseudo self-esteem rather than the real thing.

Metaphorical Mapping of Civic and Christian Responsibilities in Mark 12:13-17: Implications for Petty Traders and Revenue Collectors in Kumasi, Ghana

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Abstract

The article explores the meaning of Mark 12:13-17 in the light of the apparent contention between petty traders and revenue collectors in Kumasi. The philosophy behind the work is that while the meaning of the statement “render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” is ambiguous, it was able to challenge and provoke both parties (Herodians and Pharisees) to truly reflect their motives for accepting or rejecting taxation. In this study, the teaching of Jesus is taken as a metaphoric statement with the capacity to generate multiple meanings. The study uses the technique of Lakoff¹ to map the attitudes of the Herodians and Pharisees unto revenue collectors and petty traders as supporters and rejecters of taxation respectively, and in dialogue with Jesus. In this way, the statement of Jesus becomes a double-edged sword inducing appropriate responses from each group. The study concludes that honesty in the sight of God should be the attitudes of both petty traders (in declaring their monthly returns) and revenue collectors (in their modus operandi) to avoid corruption so

¹ George Lakoff “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor” in Ortony, Andrew (ed.) *Metaphor and Thought* (2nd edition), (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
<https://terpconnect.umd.edu/~israel/lakoff-ConTheorMetaphor.pdf>

that they may both render what is due to God and to Caesar. The study recommends that revenue collectors and petty traders work as partners with common interest rather than as opponents to be defeated since they are both images of God and citizens of Ghana.

Keywords:

Authorities, Revenue Collectors, Petty Traders, Taxation, Civic Responsibilities, Metaphor and Mapping.

Introduction

Paul Ricoeur argues that the purpose of every interpretation is not just to explain a text for understanding. Rather, the final goal of interpretation is to understand oneself and the way one behaves in the world. This is because every text unlocks a manner of being in the world and invites the reader to appropriate this unlocking in order to understand oneself as suggested in the text. Ricoeur explains that writing de-contextualizes a text from its relationship with the author, first reader, and the context, which produces it. The effect of this is that the reference that was obvious to the author of the text may either be suspended or recontextualized in the new context of the reader. In the absence of the author, first reader and the context in which the text is produced, the text can be constructed and reconstructed from various angles to generate multiples of meaning probably not anticipated by the author- this is called "surplus of meaning"²

Ricoeur, however, wanted to find out if this surplus of meaning generated from literary work is cognitive, that is, whether the extension of meaning forms internal part of the signification of a text or it is just something external and emotive. To do this, Ricoeur resorted to metaphor. Following Aristotle, he defines metaphor as 'application to a thing of a name that belongs to something else'. The transfer of name is usually "from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species or from analogy"³ For him, the theory of metaphor comes from the theory of rhetoric, and in traditional rhetoric, a metaphor is a figure of

² Paul Ricoeur *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. (University of Michigan: Fortress Press, 1980).

³ ____ *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*. Trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello. (Toronto:University of Toronto Press 1977), 47

speech with double meaning (one is literal and the other is figurative). However, the figurative meaning of metaphor is always derived from and may be the opposite of the literal meaning. In other words, a metaphor concerns two opposed interpretations of an utterance which is possible to create tension. It is this tension in a metaphor that is able to generate meaning from a relationship that was previously not in existence. This new relationship is a semantic innovation that is able to extend the meaning of an utterance and offer new insight into reality.

George Lakoff confirms that a Metaphor involves the understanding of one domain of experience in terms of a very different domain of experience. He states further that this is technically called “mapping” from the source domain to the target domain.⁴ The mapping is done in such a way that ontological correspondences in the domain of one entity correspond systematically to entities in the other domain. To make it easier to remember what mappings are in the conceptual system, Lakoff and Johnson⁵ adopt a strategy for naming such mapping using mnemonic names. In this strategy, the target domain is described as the source domain due to similarities in some of their characteristics e.g. ‘Kwame is a tiger’. Taking it literary, this statement may not be true. This is because Kwame is not an animal but a human person, and a tiger is not a human person but an animal. Thus, the two are not related and putting the two together creates some form of tension. It is rather a set of correspondences in the two domains that are mapped. There may be some characteristics of the strength of Kwame that is similar to the knowledge and understanding of the strength of a tiger. Consequently, the statement in the example maps that knowledge and understanding of the strength of a tiger, which is well known, to structure the knowledge and understanding of the kind of strength that Kwame possesses. The source domain is that of the tiger and the target domain is that of Kwame and so Kwame has metaphorically become a tiger. It must be pointed out that the mapping is done selectively. Only the elements, characteristics or relationships of the source domain that are applicable to the target domain are mapped but the properties of the source domain that

⁴ Lakoff *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*.

⁵ G. Lakoff and M. Johnson *Metaphors we live by*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1980).

<https://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo3637992.html>

are not beneficial to the target domain are eliminated⁶ In this connection, Kwame may not be called a carnivore that longs for blood as a tiger does.

Davies further clarifies that metaphor allows a speaker to manipulate words that are able to create antithesis that speaks to different groups of audience. He adds that if such utterances are interpreted literally, they do not make sense, but they begin to make sense in the meaning that is created in the utterance figuratively⁷

In this work, I am studying a pronouncement story of Jesus metaphorically, because applying metaphor will allow me to map the knowledge, elements and characteristics of a source domain which is the biblical text, with Jesus, the Pharisees, the Herodians as the main characters to a target domain whose main characters are the petty traders and revenue collectors. The study is purely text-centered which means that background information are not the most essential part of the work. Issues that come out of the exegesis of the text are further discussed. Moreover, firsthand information was sourced qualitatively from the two interlocutors (petty traders and revenue collectors) to enrich the study after which some conclusions and recommendations are highlighted. I will begin with the exegesis of the text.

Examination of Mark 12:13-17

The text has parallels in Matthew (22:15-22) and Luke (20:20-26) and other non-canonical books like the gospel of Thomas and Egerton papyrus fragment 2 as well as the work of Justin. The incident took place in Jerusalem, around the Temple (11:11) immediately after the parable of the Wicked tenants in the Vineyard (Mk 12:1-12). The preceding parable concludes that the authorities wanted to arrest Jesus but were afraid / mindful of the crowd who had high respect for Jesus as a prophet of God. The passage under study, is one of a series of controversial stories that serves as a further strategy to gather incriminating evidence to arrest Jesus (Evans, 2001). This creates tension and suspense in the

⁶ Pierre.Van Hecker *Provoked to Speech: Biblical Hermeneutics as Conversation*. R. Bieringer, R. Burggraeve, E. Nathan & M. Steegen (eds.). (Peeters: Leuven-Parijs-Walpole, MA, 2014).

⁷ Davis, A. "Allegorically Speaking in Galatians 4:21-5:1" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14 (2), 161-174 (Trinity South West University Press, 2004). https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_2004b_01_Davis_Ga4_Allegory.pdf

unfolding dialogue as to what is going to happen. (The passage is provided for readers).

Mark 12:13-17.

¹³ Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. ¹⁴ And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." ¹⁶ And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.⁸

For the sake of clarity, the passage is divided into 3 sections: the introduction (13), the main body (14-17a) and the conclusion (17b), and the discussion will follow this order

Introduction of the Text (12:13)

The introductory part of the text begins with a delegation that was *apostellousi* (sent) from the word *apostello* (send out). The phrase does not give a hint as to who sent. We may gather from the preceding stories that the Sanhedrin- made up of the ruling priest, the scribes and elders (11:27, 12:1,12)- sent the delegation to Jesus. Gundry⁹ suggests that the word 'send' is the key word in the chapter recurring several times (12:2,3,4,5,6) and may imply that the delegation represent those who sent them just as the slaves and the son represent the owner of the vineyard (12:1-12).

The delegation consists of the Pharisees and the Herodians who were previously paired (3:6) as opposition groups plotting against Jesus. Their coming together here is a sign of the seriousness of the growing opposition against Jesus.

Herodians may be one of the political groups of the time who support the Herodian rulers and by implication the Roman authorities. Consequently, they may believe that it is important for

⁸ New Revised Standard Version (1989).

⁹ Robert H. Gundry *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

Jews to pay taxes either directly to the Roman authorities as it is done in Judaea or indirectly through the Herodian rulers. They will not like anybody to refuse to pay tax or incite others not to pay. It is not clear what the Herodians are doing in Jerusalem since they were no more ruling in Jerusalem at this time.. Some scholars suggest that they may have come to Jerusalem for the Passover pilgrimage (Lk 23:6-12) since Herod Antipas was also in Jerusalem for the feast¹⁰ The reason for the Herodians collaboration with the Pharisees to eliminate Jesus is not immediately known. It may become clearer as we discuss the Pharisees in the next paragraph.

The Pharisees are almost always depicted as enemies of Jesus in the gospels. Jesus clashes with them on a number of issues such as the Sabbath observances (Mk 2:23-28// Mt 12:1-14 //Lk 6:1-11; 14:1-6), Jewish doctrines (Mk 3:1-6; 10:2-9 // Mt 19:1-9; 16:1-12; Lk 5:17-26), Jewish hygienic principles (Mk 2:15-22; 7:1-15 // Mt 9:11-13; 15:1-14// Lk 5:29-34), and issues bordering on religion and state (Mk 12:13-17). Although they are considered teachers of the law (Mt. 23) and they maintain strict observance of the law, Jesus attacked their piety as hypocritical, and both Jesus and John the Baptist described them “brood of vipers” (Mt. 3:7). It is clear from the gospels that they do not believe that Jesus was the son of God, that is why they considered his authority as coming from the prince of demons (Mt 9:34) and claimed that Jesus blasphemes on his claim to forgive sins (Mk 2:1-12). As preservers of the rule of Yahweh, the Pharisees may have considered payment of tax as going against the first commandment and so must have opposed it, although not as violently as the zealots. They may have even considered working for civil authorities as a betrayal to God and the kingdom of Israel. So they considered tax collectors as sinners, not only because they have the tendency to increase taxes for their own pocket but also because they worked for pagans. This may be the reason why, for once, they were good to Jesus and warned him of the intention of Herod to kill him (Lk. 13: 31). If the Pharisees are against the payment of taxes and the Herodians support the payment of taxes, then the two groups are not necessarily allies. They may have come together for a common purpose, which is suspended for readers to discover as the story unfolds.

The narrator makes us aware that the delegation is sent to Jesus with the intention to trap him *agreusosi* from the verb *agreuo* (‘to catch one unaware’ or simply ‘to trap’).. So the purpose of the visit

¹⁰ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington *The Gospel of Mark*. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 2002).

is to provoke Jesus to say something that may be used to trap him. With this introductory verse, the stage is prepared for the drama that is to unfold in the encounter between Jesus, the Pharisees and the Herodians. The next section discusses the body of the text, following the order of its two main parts: the question from the Delegation (12:14) and Jesus' answer (15-17a).

The Body of the discourse (14-17a). The question from the delegation (12:14).

The main question of the delegation is preceded by a preamble (14a) in which they address Jesus respectfully as *didaskale* (teacher/ Master/ Rabbi) This signifies someone with authority to deal with legal, moral and exegetical issues (10:17, John 3:2). They further describe Jesus as *alethes*" which may be translated as 'honest/ sincere/ truthful' referring to one who is straightforward and opposed to falsehood. Perhaps, for the sake of emphasis, they continue that Jesus is impartial and truly instructs people in the way of God, which confirms their earlier assertion that Jesus is not a hypocrite. It seems that the delegation pretended to be polite with Jesus as being the best way to trap one's enemy. The preamble above prepares the way for the main question in the next section.

The Main question (14b) begins with *exestin* (is it lawful / permitted or authorized) to pay tax *kenson* from *kenson* (tax / poll tax) to Caesar or not? The question is further stretched perhaps for the sake of emphasis "shall we give or not?" *domen may domen*. This question is certainly crucial for Jesus and for all the people. Evans suggests that the Jewish people detested paying taxes for various reasons. One of them was that it represents Jewish submission to pagan authority and it also implies support for the emperor's sovereignty and divinity, which is tantamount to idolatry.¹¹ Thus, if the Herodians support the payment of taxes, and the Pharisees oppose it, the fact that the question entailed a desire to trap Jesus becomes very clear. If his answer pleases one group, it will certainly displease the other. The Pharisees represent the interest of the Jewish people, many of whom would have loved Jesus to say that payment of taxes to Caesar is unlawful. Obviously then, any other response may make Jesus unpopular with his own people rendering him vulnerable for the Pharisees to arrest him.

¹¹C.A. Evans *Mark 8:27-16:20* Vol. 34B. (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001).

Jesus' own attitude towards the tax is not certain. Although he agreed that the tax should be paid and he instructed Simon to do so (Mt 17:25-27). At the same time, one is not sure if Jesus ever incited others not to pay tax to Caesar (Luke 23:2).

However, if Jesus refuses to endorse the payment of the tax, the Herodians will arrest him for committing treason. Hence, the seriousness of the trap set for Jesus.

Response of Jesus (15-17a)

Jesus' response is divided into two parts; a preamble (15-16) and the answer (17a).

In the preamble, the narrator gives a hint that Jesus recognizes the hypocrisy of his opponents and exposes them with a rhetorical question that does not require an answer because the answer is assumed in the question. The word he uses is *peirazete* from *peirazo* (put to the test / tempt). He requests them to provide a *denarius*, which is a Roman silver coin by which to pay the Roman tribute to a daily wage at the time or a penny in modern money.¹²

In verse 16, the fact that the Pharisees and Herodians brought a *denarius* implies that they were also using the money of Caesar with his image on it. Keener suggests that Jews in Palestine were using a copper coin that had no image on it. Anyone who uses the deified image of Caesar goes against the first commandment¹³. This gives Jesus the opportunity to ask further questions as in whose *eikon* (image) and *epigraphe* (inscription) is on the coin. By answering, the Pharisees betray themselves that they were using Caesar's coin.

Jesus then responded that if the coin belongs to Caesar because it bears his image and inscription then they should give it back to him. Paying tribute to the state is giving back the coin that belongs to the government¹⁴. It is not sure if by this statement Jesus was also implying that those who use that coin are also acknowledging the sovereignty of Caesar as against the law of God (Ex20:4). What this means is that, if one uses the coin, one is enjoying the services of the state and so must pay for them. Yet,

¹² Danahue and Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*. 345.

¹³ C.S. Keener *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

¹⁴ PHEME PERKINS. The Gospel of Mark: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections in *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol. VIII Nashville: Abindon Press, 1995. 673-674.

Jesus does not end there but goes further to talk about giving to God his due. The meaning of the answer is not immediately clear, so the opponent will have to think and decide what it means for them. It is as if the question is thrown back at them to answer for their individual selves.

Barry et al¹⁵ suggest that Jesus is telling his followers that if civil demand does not compromise with one's religious principles, then people are obliged to subject themselves to it. While it is important to pay tribute to legitimate civil authorities, God who is the creator of all things must be given his due. Cole¹⁶ confirms that if citizens enjoy the benefits of the state, they must pay tax for it; on the other hand, a civil leader must not also demand for the allegiance that belongs to God. Others interpret the passage to mean that since everything belongs to God, nothing should be given to Caesar, not even when it has been converted to money¹⁷. Now the next section will discuss relevance of the passage under study of petty traders and tax official in Kumasi Central Market.

2. The Kumasi Central Market

Kumasi is located in the transitional forest zone of Ghana and is about 270km north of the national capital, Accra. The Kumasi metropolis is the most populous district in the Ashanti Region. The Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly projected a population of 2,022,191 in 2010 based on a growth rate of 5.4%. The Metropolis is not entirely urban but estimated to be 48%, 46% and 6% urban, peri-urban and rural respectively¹⁸. The increase in population in Kumasi is largely attributed to rural-urban migration. In Ghana, there is generally economic and income disparities between the rural and urban areas. This trend gives the perception that there is availability of jobs in the urban areas, which attracts people to migrate to such areas for greener pastures. The economic activities in Kumasi can be categorized into Agriculture, Industry and Service.

The service sector is the economic backbone of Kumasi because it employs the economically active labour force, making,

¹⁵ Barry et al. *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016.

¹⁶ R.A. Cole. Mark. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed.), Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press 1994), 946-977

¹⁷ W.C. Kaiser et al *Hard sayings of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 1996.

¹⁸ KMA (2012)

Kumasi one of the most important economic hubs in the country. This means that the service sector, which is classified as the informal sector, has contributed immensely in reducing unemployment in the metropolis. This is confirmed by the international Labour Organisation (ILO) that the informal sector provides about 61% of employment to the urban labour force in developing countries¹⁹

Despite its significant role in reducing unemployment, the informal sector in many developing countries, is often underestimated in national tax accounts²⁰ Hence, the sector has little impact on the operations and development of national economy²¹

The Kumasi Central market (KCM) is one of the major commercial centers in the metropolis and the activities carried out ranges from market stall operations to open space trading of both perishable and non-perishable goods and services. Participants for this study were chosen from among those who trade in plastic footwear at the Roman Hill of KCM. Their educational background ranges from Primary school to Tertiary.²² The sources of supply of the products are China, Dubai, Lagos, Togo, Abijan and recently Accra and Kumasi. There are about One thousand (1000) people selling plastic slippers at the Roman Hill of which eighty percent (80%) are Female and twenty (20%) male. They hire shops for their operation at the cost between Thirty to fifty thousand (30,000 to 50,000) Cedis for a period between five to Ten years²³.

3. Taxation in the Kumasi Central Market

Tax is a mandatory contribution or financial charge to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and profits

¹⁹ I.R. Akintoye, "Enhancing the performance of the Informal Sector for the Economic Development of Nigeria: A Case Study of Lagos State." *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(1). 2006, 100-112. ; "Reducing Unemployment through the Informal Sector: A Case Study of Nigeria." *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 11: 97-106. 2008; International Labour Organisation, 2000.

²⁰ M.P. Todar and S.C. Smith (ed.). *Economic Development*, Tenth Edition, (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2011).

²¹ D. Tsikata. *Training in Ghana Politics, Issues and Tools*, (Accra, Woeli Publishing Services, 2001).

²² From Middle-school leavers, Junior and Senior High Schools as well as graduates from Tertiary Institutions.

²³ (Personal interviews and observations, August, 2017)

or businesses or levy that is added to the cost of goods, services and transactions²⁴ In many ways the raising of tax revenues is the most central activity of any state. Most essentially, revenue from taxation is what literally sustains the existence of the state, providing the funding for everything from social programs to infrastructure investment.

The Ghana Revenue Authority has been mandated by the Ghana Government to collect tax for and on its behalf. There are two main groups to be taxed: companies or corporate bodies and individuals, and the focus of this study is on the individual taxpayer. Individuals with a chargeable income are required to pay tax on gains or profit from employment, business or investment. Resident are expected to pay tax on income accruing in, derived from, brought into, or received in Ghana. While non-residents pay tax on income accruing in, and derived from Ghana regardless of whether the income is received in Ghana. An individual is considered resident if he or she has stayed in Ghana for an aggregate period of 183 days or more in any 12-month period. All incomes are aggregated and taxed after the various adjustments relating to the type of income earned are made. The aggregated income excludes capital gains, gifts and rent income

The tax rates are graduated with rates ranging from 0% to 25%. Annual income up to thousand two hundred (1,200) Ghana Cedis is taxed at 0%. Any income in excess of 25,920 Cedis is taxed at 25%²⁵. Again there are two sections of taxpayers: the individuals in the formal sector and those in the informal sector. This study focused on the informal sector, which is difficult to estimate the quantum of money to be paid as tax. To be able to know what exactly the practice is, I visited the central market at the Roman Hill and purposively selected and interviewed ten (10) footwear traders. Those selected have been in the business for a period ranging between ten (10) to twenty-eight (28) years with extended experiences with revenue collectors. Moreover, they are traders who have invested capitals ranging between ten to fifty thousand (10,000 to 50, 000) Cedis who own or have rented stalls for selling their wares. Interviews were conducted in Twi (an indigenous Akan language of Ghana), translated and transcribed. For the sake

²⁴T. Olaseyitan, An empirical analysis of tax leakages and economic growth in Nigeria. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 48(48), 2012; A.B. Ogundele, "Elements of Taxation". 1st Edition: Libri Service, Lagos, 1999.

²⁵ Ghana Tax guide, 2012

of confidentiality and anonymity the names of the interviewees have been withheld. The age of Participants ranges between 39-62 years. Since women form the majority of plastic footwear traders, more women (eight) than men (two) were interviewed. The study, was carried out from August to December 2017, the data presented and discussed in the subsequent sections.

Responses from Petty Traders

i. Who are your suppliers?

Eight (8) respondents said “we travel to places like Accra, Lagos, Lome, and Abijan to get our supplies. On our way home, apart from the expensive transportation cost that almost consumed all our profits, we are always harassed at the various barriers and police posts. When we come to the market then the Internal Revenue officials will also appear to demand more taxes on the same goods” Two (2) respondent said “ we have travelled to China and Dubai before but the Chinese have now infiltrated our Markets here in Ghana with their goods, and travel round to supply traders even on credit and no one is stopping them, so we have stopped going to China. It seems that when we need help and protection from authorities, we do not get them, all they care is to collect money from us” However, all Ten (10) respondents agreed that “the Chinese now supply us goods on credit and we pay them from our daily sales” It seems that traders are trying to suggest that they are overburden with taxes.

ii. What are your sources of income?

Five (5) responded that “we work with loans from St. Peter’s Credit Union at the Roman Hill, two (2) people said “we secured our loans from a rural bank”, and three (3) said “we work with loans from other credit unions around the Market area” All the ten people shared that they pay for their loans on daily, weekly, or monthly basis from their sales depending on the arrangements made with their bankers.

iii. Apart from the cost of the footwear, what other expenses do you incur?

All ten respondents mentioned some or all of the following: “we spend money on transportation, KMA dues, taxes, electricity and

water bills, monthly deductions for the shop in which we operate, wage for our workers, and other personal expenses like telephone unit to communicate with suppliers and customers” One of them added that “Sometimes, a product is sold below cost price when new products are released and the old ones become out-of-date” This addition was confirmed by all. Another person shared that “as we continue in business, our Capital will be reducing and when we take stock, it becomes clear that we are not gaining but losing”.

iv. How many workers support you?

Six (6) respondents said ‘we have two official workers, one porter to help carry the goods as and when it is necessary and one sales personnel’, Four (4) respondents said “we have, in addition to two official workers, other family members who support us during vacation and on festive days”.

v. How much sales are you able to make in a day?

Three (3) respondents said “we sell between Zero to Thousand (0 to 1000) Cedis,” two people also said that “we sell between Fifty to Two thousand (50 to 2000) Cedis”, three others said “we sell between fifty to Three thousand (50 to 3000), and two people said “we sell between one hundred to four thousand (100 to 4000) Cedis” All respondents mentioned that sales are seasonal, they boom on festive days. Sales for ordinary days are not encouraging and life becomes very boring except on Mondays when customers buy products to sell in the rural areas.

vi. How do you keep records?

All ten respondents indicated that “we receive constant and regular supplies from the Chinese on credit, then they give us receipts and payment plans” they added that “Some of the suppliers collect their money on daily or weekly bases, in this way we are able to keep track on how much we have received, how much we have paid and what is left to be paid” They clarified further that “the problem is that the many different products one has, the better the market, so we do not wait for the store to be empty, we are always receiving products from supplier A or B or C with a payment plan prepared for us to follow”. In addition to these, the following were also recorded:

Three (3) respondents said “initially, we employed accountants to help us record all supplies, sales and other expenses but their wages alone drained our coffers and so we could not continue, lest we go out of business” these three added further that “now we are keeping all receipts and writing daily sales”. Three other people responded that “we keep the receipt from our suppliers and the payments we make each day and these serve as our records. Two people mentioned that “we write all our purchases and sales, and keep records of the utility bills, payment of wages and all other expenses”. Two others said that “we are working with our relatives who keep the records for us and they are paid” It appears that keeping records is a problem for some of them.

vii. How do you calculate your tax?

All the ten (10) respondents indicate that they do not keep money on them because at one point or another, they had been attacked by robbers. On the other hand, if they leave money at the shop and there is a fire outbreak they lose everything. After paying their suppliers, they make daily contributions to *Susu* Collectors²⁶ who work for the rural banks or credit unions. This is the money they use to pay their bills. Each respondent has the following to add:

Three (3) respondents reported that “we contribute fifteen (15) Cedis a day to the credit unions” Two responded that “we contribute twenty (20) Cedis a day” three people said that “we also contribute twenty five (25) Cedis every day” and two respondents revealed that “we contribute thirty (30) Cedis per day. At the end of the month, this is used to pay the wages of workers, electricity and water bills, phone cards and other expenses. However, the amount that each trader is able to contribute is the same amount they want to pay as their monthly tax. This means that the one who contributes twenty (20) Cedis will pay sixty (60) Cedis every quarter and Two hundred and forty (240) Cedis annually, and the one who contribute Thirty (30) Cedis a day, will pay ninety (90) Cedis every quarter and Three hundred and sixty (360) Cedis annually. These calculations are however, rejected by the revenue officials.

²⁶ This is a traditional type of banking system, where a bank agent goes round to collect a fixed amount of money from contributors to be deposited at the bank daily for a fee.

viii. What are some of the problems you encounter in relation to tax?

All ten (10) respondents indicated that usually they pay bribes to tax officials so that they can get the tax payable reduced for them. While the paying of bribes was agreeable to traders as well as tax officials, there is usually tension between them regarding the amount of money they need to pay in bribes. The traders complained about the rigidity with which tax officials make their claims, disregarding constraints that make business impossible periodically. Tax officials insist on calculating bribes due them even when traders are, for instance, bereaved or sick and unable to go to work. One respondent recounted “a tax official asked me to bribe him with five hundred (500) Cedis for my tax to be reduced. When I did not pay the bribe requested, the tax official slammed me with a bill of one thousand Cedis (1000), and since I could not pay that also, my shop was padlocked”. Four others responded “we paid two hundred (200) Cedis each to the tax officials because we cannot continue to litigate with them” two others claimed that “we do not understand how tax officials calculate our tax, they reject our own estimations and imposed their projections on us. When we challenged them then they threatened to send us to court, or close our shops”. The other two respondents shared that “anytime we challenged tax officials, we loose a lot, so we negotiate on the amount of bribe to pay so that they give us reasonable tax to pay”. We may conclude that petty traders are reluctant to pay tax for reasons both similar to and different from Pharisees. In table 1 an attempt is made to map some characteristics of Pharisees unto petty traders, keeping in mind that only relevant elements are mapped.

Table 1: Mapping some of the knowledge, characteristics and understanding of Pharisees that are applicable unto Traders with regard to the role they play in the text and their attitude to tax.

PHARISEES	TRADERS
They represent the Jewish people	They represent KCM traders.
They came to Jesus to trap him	They claim to be Christians.
They do not want to pay tax because:	They do not want to pay tax because:
They do not support the ruling Herod and Caesar.	They may/may not support the ruling government.
It is a sign of their submission to pagan ruler	They feel overburdened with taxes.
They consider tax collectors as	They do not benefit from paying

<p>cheaters and working for pagans It is a sign that they endorse the sovereignty and divinity of Caesar It is against the first commandment Their reason for not paying tax is more theological and financial</p>	<p>tax and they may be condoning corruption. Tax officials are not honest and take bribe from them. They are not able to keep records, they thrive better in oral culture. They are not listened to in the assessment concerning their business. Their reason for not paying tax is more financial and not theological.</p>
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Source: Nsiah, 2018

In this connection, petty traders are Pharisees for the following reasons:

1. Just as Pharisees represent the Jewish people, they also represent KCM traders at the Roman Hill.
2. Like the Pharisees, traders would have loved Jesus to abolish the payment of taxes.
3. Jesus on the other hand would have described them as hypocrites because they are using the money of the Bank of Ghana and other facilities of the state that must be paid for.
4. Jesus would have challenged them to act in conscience and render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.
5. Unlike the Pharisees, what is due the state in this case is the right return of their business and what belongs to God is their conscience, honesty and sincere attitude not only in the business but also in dealing with all other areas of their life.

3.2 Responses from Revenue Collectors

Revenue collectors, who serve as tax officials at the *Suame* Tax office and are in charge of collecting taxes at KCM were also interviewed. Five (5) officials, between the age of 30 to 49 years, who have worked for 5 to 15 years at the tax office were selected to participate in the study.

What is your field of Work?

Two responded “we work at the division of CEDM- Compliance Enforcement Debt and Management. It is a unit that does programs

and activities aimed at reviewing data and collecting data. This division also maintains the debt register, monitor debt liability and adjust assessment". The third responded I work at cost. This section reviews accounts of taxpayers and businesses. The fourth person shared " I work at the taxpayer service section. We offer education to tax payers, both newly registered and old, potential traders and the public. The fifth respondent said "I am at the auditor section. We all collaborate with one another to make revenue collection a success".

ii May I know how new people are introduced to tax.

One respondent shared that "traders are supposed to register with the tax payer service and discuss issues with the client service unit". She continued that "Ghana practices progressive tax system: those in the higher income bracket pay more than those in the lower income bracket. For the self-employed or the informal sector, the tax is calculated on their profit. To do that they have to submit their account to the office so that we can determine their taxable income and calculate the tax". The second respondent added that "traders are to prepare their own account based on their businesses and submit to us. We find out whether the calculations are correct, footnotes are correct, make adjustments, send account to be appended and checked if there is any liabilities to be paid. We also request for documents or records of businesses, grant interviews to make us understand their businesses and educate the public". The third respondent shared that "traders are classified under the informal sector and they are given provisional assessment. If the assessment is too much, they should pay 30% and then make a complain about it by writing a letter to the commission and based on the evidence available, the commissioner may either reject or maintain the provisional assessment". The fourth responded "traders must come to our office with their business registration certificate (those registered with the registrar general, but those who have not been registered by the registrar general are given a provisional certificate). They are then educated on tax payment, as to know whether they should pay yearly or quarterly". The fifth respondent added that "sometimes, traders want to know the government in power so that they decide whether to pay or not". He added that, "although most of them are not illiterates because some of them are teachers and nurses, they find it difficult to keep records to make the assessment transparent".

iii Do you get them involved in calculating their tax?

One respondent argued that “when the enforcement department goes to collect taxes, we speak to traders one on one. The compliance will value their returns individually but most of the time we do not trust the assessment of traders so we give them provisional ones”. The second respondent claimed that “since traders are in the informal sector, they find it difficult to understand how the tax systems operate”. The third respondent shared that “when traders are given the assessment, they are supposed to divide it into four and pay them quarterly but they bring in a lot of excuses”. The fourth respondent added that “record keeping is a big problem for traders. There is a perception that if they write everything, the we will be able to know the amount they get and they do not want that, so although they are making a lot of profit, they do not want to declare them”. The fifth respondent reasoned that “the local people are not paying in groups. Some are put on the tax count. The minimum amount is GHS 25 and maximum is GHS 35 per quarter. After sometime we do migrate them to the temporary system before they are put on permanent system fund”. It appears there is lack of trust between tax officials and traders on the quantum of money to be paid.

iv Is tax negotiable?

One respondent argued “when a provisional assessment is given and it is too much for a trader, he/she has the right to object it”. She clarified “the law says that pay 30% of the provisional assessment pending determination of the objection. The commission department looks at the assessment and the reasons for the objection”. She argued further that “if the commissioner is not satisfied, the case may move from the commissioner’s hand to the high court, then to the court of appeal then to the supreme court. It is only the Supreme Court that takes the final decision”. The second respondent is of the view that “one cannot bargain tax. which is paid on the income earned”. He continued “we have self assessment where some people assess themselves and anticipate that, within a year, this is the amount they can pay. At the end of the year, one is supposed to submit the assessment to our office, so that judgment is made as to whether the assessment submitted needs adjustment or not”. He cautioned that “If one does not

submit the assessment, and there is information to the fact that the suggestions brought are not what is supposed to, then the assessment can be amended. There is penalty for wrong assessment". The third respondent rather thinks that "traders do object to the provisional assessment given to them. Sometimes, some provisional assessments are withdrawn and others are maintained". The fourth respondent suggested that "we always look at the previous year's assessment to determine the current year's assessment. Using natural axis and recommendation from the head office, certain percentage may be added". He gave example that "for instance, if last year you paid a tax of GHS 100, then the government says we should add 3% to the expenditure, then 3% of the GHS 100 would be added". The fifth respondent added that "Taxes are paid on profit, so if traders are able to demonstrate they have made a loss, tax cannot be charged, provided they keep good records and their records say they did not make any profit". He cautioned that "But if there are no records to back their claim then their loses may not be accepted". One may conclude that there is lack of understanding between tax officials and traders. Tax officials admit that some traders are unable to keep records. Tax officials are not able to help these traders except to slammed penalties on them.

v. What are some of the problems you encounter when collecting tax and what is the way forward?

One respondent shared that "traders do not want to pay tax although they enjoy the services of the state". Two respondents claimed "when we organize seminar and workshops, traders are unable to attend. Very few people would like to leave their work to attend, but that is the time that we educate people about the benefit of paying tax". Two other respondents added "people think that the government is not using the taxpayer's money for development or at least, they do not benefit from the tax". There is lack of value on tax.

vi. Do you receive bribe or incentive from traders?

Two respondents have received appreciation gift from traders for helping them but not bribe. Three respondents have been paid for working at the week-ends for traders but have never received bribe from them.

Now I will map the characteristics of Herodians unto tax officials in table 2 below.

Table 2: Mapping the relevant knowledge, characteristics and understanding of Herodians unto Tax officials in terms of the role in the text and attitude to tax.

HERODIANS	TAX OFFICIALS
<p>They support the payment of tax as it helps them to keep their position</p> <p>They are insensitive to the welfare of the people</p> <p>They approach Jesus positively although they intended to trap him.</p> <p>They are very suspicious of Jesus and are looking for incriminating evidence to arrest him.</p> <p>Jesus exposed their hypocrisy and pretense.</p>	<p>They support the payment of tax as it helps them to keep their job</p> <p>They are not interested in the welfare of traders but are domineering and accusatory.</p> <p>They do not approach traders positively, they are educated, superior and backed by the law they imposed assessment on traders and take advantage of them. They look for incriminating evidence to take bribe from them or lock their stores and send them to court.</p>

Source: Nsiah, 2018

In this connection, tax officials are Herodians for the following reasons:

1. Tax officials are working for and on behalf of the State.
2. They would have love Jesus to confirm the payment of taxes and Jesus would have described them as hypocrites for, through their cheating they have not rendered good service even to the nation they claim to support. Thus, they have not acted in conscience as good Christians.
3. Jesus’ teaching to render what is due to Caesar and to God will be a challenge to them to think upon and appropriate it for themselves.
4. In this context, and unlike the Herodians, what is due to the state is for them to genuinely assist traders to pay taxes that reflect their businesses. Even if they allowed each trader to pay two hundred and forty (240.00) Cedis a year, for about one thousand people, Ghana could earn two hundred and forty thousand (240,000) Cedis and that could have been a good service to the state than for them to pocket a greater part of the money.

4. Conclusion

The study sets off to map relevant characteristics of Pharisees and Herodians as they are found in Mark 12:13-17 unto petty traders and revenue collectors respectively. At the end of the research I discovered that Petty traders are playing special roles in providing employment opportunities in the informal sector and contributing their quota for national development and so they should be acknowledged and encouraged. However, they are not able to keep good records and are not transparent and honest in their tax returns. They resolve this problem by paying bribe to tax officials to negotiate their tax assessment. Using metaphorical readings of the text, one can say that petty traders are Pharisees and would have love Jesus to abolish the payment of tax. Jesus' answer therefore is a challenge to them to be honest as Christians and as good citizens of Ghana. As they render what is due to the state, they are also honouring God since all things belong to him.

The tax officials on the other hand need to consider traders as partners, listen to them, respect their views and their oral cultural situation and assist them so that traders too will collaborate with them. Thus, in this case too, a metaphorical reading may allow for understanding tax officials in the light of their source domain, Herodians, in that they are interested in enforcing the payment of tax to keep their jobs and enrich their pockets. The teaching of Jesus is equally, a challenge to them to be good Christians and responsible citizens of Ghana.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that The Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and Ghana Revenue Authority come together to organize systematic and regular marketing and managerial capacity building for traders to upgrade their business skills. There should be sufficient taxpayer service to make taxpayer compliance easy. Traders should be educated with pamphlets and other relevant information so that the ordinary person will understand the tax system. Tax officials should be empowered to consider taxpayers as partners to be supported rather than opponents to be defeated. It is also important that basic infrastructural services are improved in the market so that tax is experienced as a value for money.

A Critical Study of the Translation of Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Translation of the Bible

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Abstract

Bible translation from the Source Languages (SL) to Receptor Languages (RL) is not a straightforward exercise. The question is whether Bible translation involves interpretation. Using the mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics approach, this study sought to examine Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Bible, comparing it with the Greek. Its objective was to find out whether the translation of the Greek in Dangme *kai euthus to pneuma auton ekballei eis tēn erēmon* as *Amlônôuuô, Mumi Klôuklôuô tse eyi se ke ho nga a nôya* ('Immediately, The Holy Spirit pushed him by head from behind into the wilderness') generates a new meaning. The study found out that the translation of *ekballein* into Dangme was a problem that confronted the translator; this was because the word implies a strong action. On the other hand, indigenous Dangme Bible readers did not understand how the Holy Spirit could "push" Jesus into the wilderness. It is being proposed that the translation of Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Bible should be *Amlôô mi nôuuô, Mumiô ha ne e ho nga a nôya* (Immediately the Spirit made him go into the wilderness). The study has thus added to the varied translations and interpretations of Mark 1:12.

Keywords:

Jesus, Spirit, Dangme, translation, Mark 1:12

Introduction

Bible translation, the scientific and interdisciplinary process of changing a text in the source language (SL) into a receptor language (RL); and or conveying a biblical message from one language to another is a complex process.¹ The complexity is seen in the fact that the process evolves a new text as a result of decoding the source text on several levels and encoding² the text to conform to the receptor language by means of the linguistic, literary, and cultural conventions of the receptor language.³

Van der Watt and Kruger opine that to be able to interpret a text well and then translate it into a target language, the translator should establish the meaning of the source text as far as it is possible. They explain that, to find the meaning of the source text, one should make effort to understand the construction of semantics of words that includes phonology and lexicography; the construction of sentences that is, syntax and some stylistic elements, such as figurative language, metaphors, idioms, symbolism, sarcasm, irony etc.; the structure of paragraphs, including the analysis of sentences and discourses; the genre of texts; including the use of micro, maso and macro genres; and the socio-cultural and historical background of the text – the element that deals with knowledge of the world, society, geography, history, etc., of the particular community to whom the source document was written. Thus, it is not only the linguistic elements that are needed to interpret a text but also *historico-socio-cultural* information about the context in which the source text was written. This means that the element of culture cannot be overlooked in any serious Bible translation enterprise.⁴

The Dangme are a West African people dwelling in modern Ghana and they are about the third largest ethnic group in southern Ghana aside the Akan and Ewe.⁵ Geographically, Dangme land stretches along the coast from Prampram on the west, to Ada on the east, and from the sea on the south across a

¹ E. A. Nida, The paradoxes of translation, *The Bible Translator*, 42(2a), (1991):5.

² Decoding means the operation by which a receptor interprets a discourse and understands its message; encoding means the operation by which a sender plans and composes a discourse and conveys it. See Nida & Taber (1982, 200).

³ Nida describes the actual process of translating as a technology that employs the insights and principles of a number of behavioral sciences in order to accomplish its goal of effective interlingual communication. (Nida (1991:10).

⁴ J. G. Van der Watt & Y. Kruger, "Some considerations on bible translation as complex process" *Acta Theologica Supplementum 2* (2002):16-17.

⁵ Hugo Huber, *The Krobo: Traditional, Social and Religious Life of a West African People* (Freiburg: St Paul's Press, 1973), 23.

very dry and sparsely-inhabited plain to the Akuapem ridge on the north.⁶

The Dangme tribes are Adaa, Nugo, Gbugblaa and Kpomi near the sea, and Osudoku, ManyaKlo, YilɔKlo and Sɛ in the hinterland. ManyaKlo and YilɔKlo extend through the hills and forest north of Koforidua, and are quite different geographically from the rest of the Dangme tribes.⁷ What meaning does the translation of *ekballō* as *tse eyi se* (pushed him by the head from behind) in the Dangme Bible generate? What are the implications of the meaning to Dangme Bible readers?

1. Methodology

The study used the mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics methodology⁸ a step-by-step procedure that analyses, adopts and adapts words and phrases in biblical texts in order to appropriate the word of God for indigenous Bible reading communities. The methodology includes exegesis of the text under study; it requires that knowledgeable people in a mother-tongue should be interviewed for deeper understanding of the usage of words and phrases. Nine Dangme scholars and Dangme Bible readers were interviewed to give their interpretations and implications of *tse eyi se ke ho*. A questionnaire on five different translations of Mark 1:12 in Dangme was distributed among one thousand Dangme mother-tongue Bible readers in the eight Dangme speaking areas, to test their understanding of Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Bible.

1.1 Exegesis of Mark 1:12

The Wider Context of Mark 1:12

The prologue⁸ of the Gospel of Mark, forms the wider context of Mark 1:12. Mark's opening words, "the beginning of the good

⁶ E. O. Apronti & M. E. Kropp-Dakubu, "Towards a Dialectical Geography of Dangme" *African e-Journals* 35 pdf, accessed online at digital.lib.msu.edu/project/africanjournals, 18/12/17.

⁷Apronti&Kropp-Dakubu (35).

⁸There is a long-standing debate on the function and extent of Mark's prologue. On one hand, it appears that the purpose of Mark's prologue (like the birth narratives in Matt and Luke and the prologue of John) is to introduce the reader to Jesus' true significance as the Messiah and Son of God before the story about him begins. However, it is not clear where the prologue ends and the gospel 'proper' starts. It is just the first verse that is introductory or verses 1-8? If the introduction includes verses 2-11 then the place of John the Baptist as recorded is

news”⁹ of Jesus Christ, the Son of God serves more or less as the title of the whole work.⁹ The entire story of Jesus’ ministry is “good news” for the whole world. Mark’s quotation of the Old Testament prophets in verses 2-3 - Malachi (3:1) and Isaiah (40:3) - “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”; ‘a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him’” - introduces John the Baptizer, who prepares the way for Jesus Christ through preaching of repentance and baptism (vv.4-8).

In immediate context of Mark 1:12 in which Jesus comes to the scene and goes through baptism by John (v.9). At Jesus’ baptism the Spirit took possession of him (Mark 1:10-11). Immediately after that the Spirit took him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mark 1:12-13). Mark’s description of how Jesus went to the wilderness to be tempted is quite abrupt that it calls for investigation. Craig A. Evans says that the evangelist’s choice of words is curious, for to “drive out” *ekballein* is frequently used to describe the casting out of demons (cf. Mark 1:34, 39; 3:15, 22, 23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 28, 38).¹⁰ “The Markan evangelist may have wished to emphasize the power of the Spirit...[for] when the Spirit moves, dramatic things happen”. However in the parallel accounts of the same incidence in Matt and Luke, the picture is different - *ho Iesous anēchthē eis tēn erēmōn tou pneumatos*¹¹ “the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness” (Matt 4:1); *ēgeto en tōi pneumati en tēi erēmōi*¹² “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1). So which is which: did the Spirit “throw”, “drag” or “push” Jesus into the wilderness or make him go into the wilderness? What might have informed Mark to report the incident the way he did? Mark used *to pneuma auton*

very important, not only as the promised forerunner of the Messiah but also as setting the pattern for his life, rejection and death. (Carson et al, *New Bible Commentary* 950). My position is that verses 1-8 constitute the introductory part of Mark’s gospel.

⁹Mark’s language of “beginning”, “good news”, and “Son of God” deliberately echoes the Roman doctrine of the divine emperor. Thus, Mark is saying to the Roman world that Caesar neither is the beginning of the good news for the world, nor is God’s son; Messiah Jesus is. As such, Mark’s opening words directly challenge the Roman emperor cult. Craig A. Evans, “Mark”, In: James D. G. Dunn & John W. Rogerson (eds.), *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U. K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1066.

⁹Evans, “Mark”, 1066.

¹⁰Evans, “Mark”, 1067.

¹¹Evans, “Mark”, 1067.

¹²*Bible Works* 6.

ekballei, “the Spirit threw him” because of his reading community who were probably Roman soldiers. The urgency of the action in 1:3: *phōnē boōntos en tē erēmōi, hetoimasate tēn hodon kuriou, eutheias poieite tas tribous autou* (“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him”, stressed by the use of the aorist imperative *hetoimasate* “Prepare [now]”, suggests this. Further to that is Mark’s use of a forceful word *ekballei* “he cast out” which his readers understood. Again, the editorial links like *euthus* “straightaway”, “immediately” (1:12, 18) in the account of Jesus’ ministry; and the impressive speed of urgency, that is, the racy nature of the narratives – the healing of the paralytic man (2:1-12), the stilling of the storm (4:35-41), and the cure of the deaf and mute man (7:31-37) and the blind man (8:22-26) – suggest that his readers have military background; they were people who had no time to waste.

1.2 Morphological and Syntactical Analysis Mark 1:12

kai euthus to pneuma auton ekballei eis tēn erēmon The text begins with *kai* is a conjunction meaning “and”, “even”, “also”.¹³ The preferred meaning in the context is “and”. It links Jesus’ baptism in verse 9-11 to his being carried away into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. It makes the two episodes a continuum, one following the other.

Euthus is an adverb meaning “straightaway”, “immediately”.¹⁴ It shows the urgency with which Jesus left the scene of his baptism. The word keeps the narrating moving at a pace throughout in the book, as it chronicles Jesus’ travels of his three-year ministry on earth. *Euthus* which is applied to a servant, agrees with the theme of the Gospel of Mark: “Jesus the Servant of God.” The word which is found eighty times in the New Testament occurs in Mark alone about forty times.¹⁵

To pneuma is a reference to the spirit that descended upon Jesus at his baptism (v.10).¹⁶ Robert Bratcher and Eugene Nida have cautioned that in this context, it is quiet important that one makes sure that the word used for “spirit” carries the proper connotation,

¹³Bible Works 6.

¹⁴Bible Works 6.

¹⁵Bible Works 6.

¹⁶Bible Works 6.

for “driving one out into an uninhabited region” is precisely what demons are usually credited with doing.¹⁷

Auton is a pronoun accusative masculine singular, referring to Jesus on whom the Spirit performs an action.¹⁸ *ekballei eis tēn erēmon*. *Ekballei* is a verb indicative active third person singular of *ekballō*. It means “he cast out”. The word is very forceful in the Greek. It shows the action of the Spirit with Jesus. He is cast out *eis* “into” *tēn erēmon* “the desert”. Jesus was literally “thrust” into the desert; he was literally compelled to go there. Barton *et al*, have noted that “This does not mean that Jesus was reluctant to go, but rather he was intensely determined to go, in agreement with the Spirit.”¹⁹ Mark used the same word to denote the expulsion of demons (1:34, 39; 3:15, 22-23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 28, 38). Where people are involved, force is always indicated (1:43; 5:40; 11:15; 12:8). Mark used the word once in relation to the removal of an eye (9:47). As John Grassmick has rightly noted, Mark’s use of *ekballei* reflects his forceful style.²⁰ Matthew and Luke however use the milder words *anēchthē* “was led up” (Matt 4:1) and *ēgeto* “was led” (Luke 4:1) to describe the Spirit’s activity after Jesus’ baptism.

In the New Testament *ekballō* appears eighty-one times to illustrate a wide range of meanings. It must be noted however that *ekballō* has a theological bearing only in connection with casting out demons (cf. Matt 7:22; 8:10 par. 9:34; 12:26 f; 17:19 par. Luke 13:32). Thus, the translation of the verb *ekballei* is the contention in Mark 1:12. Bratcher and Nida opine that since Mark often uses *ekballō* for the casting out of demons and in this passage combines it with the vigorous word *euthus*, it ought to be translated by something stronger – “forced out” or “thrown out.”²¹ However, how can the Spirit throw out Jesus? “Throw out” or “cast out” is too strong a term for depicting the Spirit’s activity with Jesus. The author proposes, “The Spirit made Jesus go into the wilderness.”

¹⁷Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene. A. Nida, *The Translators Handbook on Mark* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), 33.

¹⁸*Bible Works* 6.

¹⁹Barton et al, *Mark: Life Application Commentary*, 18.

²⁰ John D. Grassmick, “Mark” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (eds.) *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs: Victor Imprint, 2000), 106.

²¹ R. G. Bratcher and E. A. Nida, *A Translators Handbook on the Gospel of Mark* (Leiden: United Bible Societies, 1991), 32.

1.3 The Meaning of Mark 1:12

After Jesus' baptism, he went forward in the power of the Spirit and at once, the Spirit sent him farther out into the desert region. Even though the word "sent" is from a strong verb *ekballō* which reflects Mark's forceful style of writing, reflected in the way he presented how demons are cast out, the thought in Mark 1:12 is that of a strong moral compulsion by which the Spirit led Jesus to take the offensive against temptation and evil instead of avoiding them. This is the way the verse should be understood. Mark 1:12 will be translated into Dangme and discussed in the subsequent section.

3. Mark 1:12 in Dangme Bible

Amlônôuuô, MumiKlôuklôuôtse eyi se ke ho nga a nôya ("Immediately, the Holy Spirit pushed him by head from behind into the wilderness").²²This same verse has been translated in the *Somi He ô*²³ as *Amlônôuuô, Mumiôkpakalâkâ ho nga a nôya*. ("Immediately, the Spirit led him into the wilderness").

Mumiô (1977) has been rendered *MumiKlôuklôuô* (1999); *kpakalâ*(1977) is *tse e yi se*(1999). Spirit and Holy Spirit; any difference? Why the qualification of the Spirit with "Holy"? Does it make any difference to the Dangme Bible reading community?

3.1 Problem with the translation

Tse eyise [pushed him by the head from behind] means applying a force to someone from behind. It is an idiomatic expression to compel reluctance of a weaker person to do something against his or her wish. Among the Dangme *nône a tse eyi se* (pushed by the head from behind) is a "bad boy/girl." The phrase is also used for someone whose time to die is not yet up, but has been forced to face death. Thus, the phrase in Mark 1:12 *MumiKlôuklôuô tse eyi se ke ho* means that Jesus was a "bad boy." However, that was not the testimony given of him by the Father at his baptism. God spoke from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). The phrase also implies that it was not yet time for Jesus to be tempted, but the Spirit forced him to go to the wilderness to face Satan.

3.2 Understanding of Mark 1:12 by Dangme Bible translators

²²*NgmamiKlôuklôuô*(The Bible in Dangme) (BSG/UBS, 1999).

²³New Testament in Dangme, (BSU/UBS, 1977).

In an interview with Gloria Kitcher-Asare,²⁴ one of the surviving translators of the Dangme Bible on the use of the phrase, *MumiKlôuklôuôtse eyi se ke ho nga a nôya* (And immediately, the Spirit pushed him by the head into the wilderness) in Mark 1:12 she said, "Until you drew my attention to it, I never thought of it as a lexical issue that could affect the interpretation of the text." She has thus agreed that the phrase is culturally inappropriate to be used for Jesus and his relation with the Spirit.

Escober Leiku²⁵ is another member of the Dangme Bible translation team. In an interview, with him, he said, "Even though the phrase *tse eyi se* in Dangme is used for bad boys, that is not the sense in which they used it in Mark 1:12 for the Spirit's activity with Jesus. He continued, "What we mean in that verse is that Jesus did not go into the wilderness by his own volition, but he was moved by the Spirit to go. In that sense, if we want an alternate phrase then that will be, *Mumiô faaleke hongaanôya* (The Spirit moved him into the wilderness).

Like Kitcher, Leiku has also confirmed the lexical inappropriateness of the phrase *tse eyi se* (push him by the head from behind); but unlike Kitcher, he has suggested an alternative translation of the phrase. Leiku's alternative translation of the phrase literally means that, Jesus was compelled by the Spirit to go into the wilderness.

*3.3 Researcher's comments on the Dangme renditions of the Greek *ekballei* ("cast out") as*

tse eyi se (push by the head)

Tse eyi se is an idiomatic expression meaning "to compel", "to hurry", "to rush" somebody to something reluctantly. Thus, the expression is forceful in nature. It agrees with the *ekballei* in the Greek text which semantically means "to make to depart forcefully and unaccompanied." Perhaps the forceful nature of *ekballei* may have necessitated its translation into Dangme as *tse eyi se* (push by the head), a phrase used to compel unwilling persons against their will to perform a task. Even though the Dangme rendition does not mean that Jesus was an unwilling person, in the thought of the indigenous Dangme it is implied. The issue here is; how can such an unwilling person be divine?

²⁴Gloria Kitcher-Asare is a graduate of the then School of Ghanaian Languages, Adjumako and the University of Cape Coast. Telephone interview.

²⁵Rev. EskoberLeiku is an Ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana; a graduate of the then School of Ghanaian Languages, Adjumako, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon and the University of Education, Winneba. He is one of the surviving members of the Dangme Bible Translation team.

That the translation of the phrase *tse eyi se* in the Dangme Bible is a problem is supported by the fact that some Greek-English translations²⁶ of the text render “cast” as “sent” - “At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness.”

3.4 Understanding and interpretations of Mark 1:12 by Dangme Bible readers

After the interview with the translators, the researcher administered questionnaire to one thousand²⁷ Dangme Bible readers in the eight Dangme speaking areas to test their understanding of the text:

Amlôônôuu, MumiKlôuklôuôtse e yi se ke ho nga a nôya (Mk.1:12).

- A. *MumiKlôuklôuônyee Yesuhemike ho nga a nôya* (“The Holy Spirit in front of Jesus led him to the desert”).
- B. *MumiKlôuklôuô nenge Yesu se ôtsitseleke ho nga a nôya* (“The Holy Spirit behind Jesus pushed him into the desert”).
- C. *MumiKlôuklôuô nu Yesune e gblaleke ho nga a nôya* (“The Holy Spirit got hold of Jesus and dragged him into the desert”).
- D. *MumiKlôuklôuô ha ne Yesu ho nga a nôya* (“The Holy Spirit made Jesus go into the desert”).
- E. *Hetoneômetsuoo* (All the above)

The results are as follows:

4. Table 2: Interpretation and Understanding of Mark 1:12

Dangme-speaking Area	Mk. 1:12				
	A	B	C	D	E
Ada	10(0.9%)	7(1.2%)	2(0.4%)	95(16.8%)	1(0.2%)
					115
Ningo	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	12(2.1%)	0(0%)
					12
Kpone	0(0%)	1(0.2%)	0 (0%)	11(1.9%)	0(0%)
					12
Prampram	2(0.4%)	4(0.7%)	0(0%)	10(1.8%)	2(0.4%)
					18
Shai	2(0.4%)	1(0.2%)	1(0.2%)	40(7.1%)	0(0%)
					44

²⁶John R. Kohlenberger III (Gen ed.) *NIV Greek and English New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2012); William D. Mounce, *Interlinear for the Rest of Us: The Reverse Interlinear for New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006).

²⁷565 Dangme Bible readers from the eight Dangme traditional areas responded to the questionnaire.

Osudoku	5(0.8%)	4(0.7%)	2(0.4%)	78(13.8%)	0(0%)
					89
Ma-Krobo	15(2.7%)	3(0.5%)	1(0.2%)	91(16.1%)	0(0%)
					110
Yilo-Krobo	8(1.4)	3(0.5%)	7(1.2%)	145(25.6)	2(0.4%)
					165
Total	42(7.4%)	23(4.1%)	13(2.3%)	482(85.3%)	5(0.9%)
					565(100)

Source: Field data 2015

4.1 Finding from the interpretations of field data on Mark 1:12

Mark 1:12 also recorded varied preferences from the respondents. Majority of the respondents, that is, four hundred and eighty-two (482) representing 85.3% interpret it as alternative D *MumiKlôuklôuô ô ha neYesu ho nga a nôya* (The Holy Spirit made Jesus go into the desert); forty-two (42) constituting 7.4% of the respondents also choose alternative A *MumiKlôuklôuô ô nyeeYesuhemike ho nga a nôya* (The Holy Spirit in front of Jesus led him to the desert); twenty-four (23) representing 4.1% indicated their understanding of the text for alternative B *MumiKlôuklôuô ô nengeYesu se ô tsitseleke ho nga a nôya* (The Holy Spirit behind Jesus pushed him into the desert); and fourteen (13) representing 2.3% also interpret the verse as alternative C *MumiKlôuklôuô ô nu Yesune e gblaleke ho nga a nôya* (The Holy Spirit got hold of Jesus and dragged him into the desert). However, five (5) of the respondents representing 0.9% indicated the understanding of the verse can be interpreted as all the alternatives. This means that, there was a varied understanding of the text by respondents irrespective of their tribes hence, their challenge of interpreting it.

5. A Comparative Analysis of Mark 1:12 in other southern Ghana Translations²⁸

The Ga and Ewe translations - *Nmale Kronkron Le* (Old Ga Bible)²⁹, *Åmale KrôâkrôâLe* (New Ga Bible),³⁰ *Biblia* (Old Ewe Bible),³¹ *Biblia* (New Ewe Bible)³² - use *kpla* and *kplô*, meaning “led” or “guided” and *do du* “rushed” to describe the Spirit’s activity with Jesus.

²⁸See J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Comparative Study of Mark 1:12 in Some Ghanaian Mother-tongue Translations of the Bible, *Journal of Arts and Culture* Volume 6, (November 2011): 67-73.

²⁹*NmaleKronkron Le* (Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1908).

³⁰*DmaleKronkronLe* (Accra: Bible Society of Ghana, 2006).

³¹*Biblia*(Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1931).

³²*Biblia*(Accra: Bible Society of Ghana, 2010).

Compare the above renderings with the following translations which also use milder expressions than what Mark used to translate *ekballei*: *Somi He ô* (Dangme New Testament),³³ *Wami Munyuô: Somi He ô Ke La ame*, (Dangme New Testament and Psalms)³⁴ render *ekballei* as *kpaka* “accompanied;” *wo leke ho* “sent him”; and three Akan newer translations – *Nkwa Asem* (Asante-Twi New Testament and Psalms),³⁵ *Nkwa Asem* (Akuapem-Twi New Testament and Psalms)³⁶ and *Twere Kronkron* (New Testament, English-Twi Version)³⁷ render the word as *de Yesukôô* “sent Jesus.”

The *Kyerew Kronkron* (Old Akuapem-Twi Bible),³⁸ *Twere Kronkron* (Old Asante-Twi Bible),³⁹ *Nwoma Krônkrôn* (Old Mfante Bible),⁴⁰ and *Ahyemu Fofor No Mu Nwoma* (Mfante New Testament; Interconfessional Revised edition)⁴¹ translate *ekballei* as *twee*, meaning “dragged,” and the *Ngmami Klôuklôuô* (Dangme Bible),⁴² *tsee yi se* “push by the head.” These expressions imply that perhaps Jesus was reluctant to go into the wilderness after his baptism.

There is no doubt about the fact that the Greek word *ekballō* implies a strong action. Nevertheless, rendering it with milder expressions could also mean that perhaps the latter translators were aware of the difficulty the earlier translators may have gone through and the challenge the translation of *ekballei* may cause in the religio-cultural context of Ghanaian mother-tongue Bible readers. Perhaps we can harmonize the rendering of *ekballō* in the various translations to give its theological interpretation.

6. A proposed translation of Mark 1:12 that fits into the religio-cultural context of the Dangme

Amlôô mi nôuuô, Mumiô ha ne e ho nga a nôya

(Immediately the Spirit made

him go into the wilderness] or [...the Spirit permitted him to go into the wilderness).

³³*Somi He ô* (Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1977).

³⁴*WamiMunyuô: Somi He ôKâ La amâ* (Accra: International Bible Society, 1997).

³⁵*NkwaAsâm*(Accra: International Bible Society, 1996).

³⁶*NkwaAsâm*(Accra: International Bible Society, 2000).

³⁷*TwerâKronkron*(Kumasi: New Word Publishing (Gh) Limited, 2013).

³⁸*KyerâwKronkron*(Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1964)

³⁹*TwerâKronkron*(Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1964).

⁴⁰*NwomaKrônkrôn*(Accra: Bible Society of Ghana, 1948).

⁴¹*AhyemuFofor No Mu Nwoma* (Bungay, Suffolk: United Bible Societies, 1982).

⁴²*NgmamiKlôuklôuô* (Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1999).

The research report indicates that 482 (85.3%) of the respondents in the eight Dangme Bible reading communities are in favour of the translation of Mark 1:12 as, *Mumi Klôuklôuô ha ne Yesu ho nga a nôya* (The Holy Spirit made Jesus go into the wilderness). This translation would clear the confusion in the minds of Dangme bible readers who do not understand how the Holy Spirit could “push” Jesus into the wilderness. It will also help them to understand that when one is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, one is under His control; the Holy Spirit permits one to do what pleases God. The Holy Spirit’s activity understood in this would help determine when the Spirit or otherwise is working in the lives of people. This would be a check on the numerous charismatic experiences of people, whose activities sometimes create doubt in the minds of people.

7. Discussion

The proposed translation of Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Bible has confirmed Derrida’s philosophy of Deconstruction⁴³ cited by Tyson that, “A text does not have a fixed meaning. It can be translated or remolded in the religio-cultural thought of a reading community.”⁴⁴ It also affirms the position of Mugambi and Smith that in the contextual approach to Biblical Hermeneutics (the bigger umbrella under which Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics falls), “there is a movement away from the ‘context of the text’ and the text itself to the context of the readers.”⁴⁵ This is done to factor some concerns of the readers into the translated text, so that readers see the Bible as God’s message for their communities. The findings of this research is also in line with Manus,⁴⁶ Yorke and Renju⁴⁷ Wendland and Loba-Mkole⁴⁸ that Contextual Hermeneutics

⁴³Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁴⁴Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York/London: Routledge, 2006), 258-259.

⁴⁵J. N. K. Mugambi & Johnson Smit (eds.), *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004), 23-24.

⁴⁶U. C. Manus, *Intercultural Hermeneutics* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004).

⁴⁷G. L. Yorke & P. M. Renju (eds.) *Bible Translation & African Languages* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004).

⁴⁸E. R. Wendland & J-C Loba-Mkole, *Biblical Texts & African Audiences* (Nairobi: Acton, 2004). _____, *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2005).

enable readers bring their own points of view and concerns to a text and so may end up with different meanings.

8. Conclusion

No two languages are the same and so there are bound to be interpretations, additions and omissions when a written document is being translated from one language to another. This assertion applies to Bible translation. The critical study of the translation of Mark 1:12 in the Dangme Bible has proved this assertion; it has evolved a new translation of the text in Dangme, which is acceptable to indigenous Dangme Bible readers. The study has thus, added to the varied translations and interpretations of Mark 1:12.

Whilst interpretation in Bible translation may be seen as a problem, its advantages outweigh the disadvantages in the sense that mother-tongue Bible readers want to hear God speak to them in their own mother-tongues. It is therefore important that Bible translators translate meaning instead of exact words and idioms from the Source Languages (SL) into Receptor Languages (RL). Nevertheless, this must be done with caution, using appropriate lexical but culturally appropriate terms that evolve from the history, worldview, language and literature of mother-tongue speakers, to enable them accept God's message to them.