

The Socio-Religious Implications of the Confrontations between Yoruba Religion and Christianity in Egbe, Kogi State

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Abstract: *Religious confrontations have often times been seen and discussed by many scholars as frequent experiences between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria with claims that Yoruba Religion is tolerant, accommodating and hence, seems to be free from violent events or confrontations with other religions in Nigeria. However, historically, religious confrontations occurred between Adherents of Yoruba Religion and Christians in Egbe with socio-religious effects. In addition, scholars had paid more attention on the immediate implications of the conflicts than how the confrontations affect the socio-religious relationships of people in the long term in the society. This paper therefore examines the socio-religious implications of the confrontations between Yoruba Religion and Christianity in Egbe. The implications of the confrontations are studied in order to see the immediate and long term implications of the*

confrontations in the past and present socio-religious interactions between the adherents of Yoruba Religion and Christianity. To achieve this, the historical research method was used to gather and present historical data which can be used to forecast likely future results. Descriptive method was employed to present data gathered from observations and interviews. Findings in this work revealed that Daike (the so-called leader of Yoruba Religion who led the confrontation) and late King Asalu only used religion to fight for their personal interest, Titcombe also made use of negative names' calling and modernisation to attract and convert many Adherents of Yoruba Religion, and till date, Christians in Egbe see Christianity as being superior to other religions. This paper therefore concludes that religions in Egbe should respect the religious freedom of one another since there is no parameter to measure and determine which religion is superior among the World Religions.

Keywords: *Religious Confrontations, Yoruba Religion, Christianity, socio-religious Implications.*

Introduction

Before the arrival of Christian missionary in the 19th century, African Traditional Religion was the only religion in Egbe. Christian missionary aimed at Christianising the people of Egbe, and with this intension, coupled with the fact that African Traditional Religion was the only religion then, confrontation was inevitable. Christianity has been the dominating religion in Egbe despite the fact that African Traditional Religion was in existence before its arrival, and Islam was also in

existence in the town. Consequently, Christians in Egbe often times claim superiority over other religious adherents in Egbe, such has affected the socio-religious interactions among the religions, leading to suspiciousness, mistrust, confrontations and division in the society and hence, the need for this study.

Academic discourses on religious confrontations had often times been on confrontations or conflicts between Christians and Muslims. Opoola (2012), for instance, cites 62 and Olademo (2013) gives 43 cases of religious violence in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims, and among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, no or little specific report on religious conflicts between Adherents of Yoruba Religion and Devotees of other religions. This concentration occurs, possibly, because majority of Nigeria populations are members of the two foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) and whatever happen between the Adherents of the duo will largely affect majority of the Nigeria population. In addition, the common historical data positioned Yoruba Religious Adherents to be accommodating, and to have entertained religious freedom in Yorubaland (Soyinka, 2008; Oyebola, 2012). Oyebola (2012) affirms that religious conflicts exist in Yorubaland at the ideational level, not at the brutish level. Adebayo and Oloyede (2017) exemplify this view by revealing that *Ifá* (the divinity in charge of divination in Yorubaland) instructed the people of Osogbo and Abeokuta to accommodate Muslim and Christian Missionaries respectively. However, Sulaiman (2010) states that adherents of African Traditional Religion were hostile to the earliest or newly converted Muslims in Ado Ekiti, Ikere-Ekiti, Ikole-Ekiti, Awo-Ekiti, Ido-Ekiti, and Erinmope-Ekiti. It appears that Sulaiman's work

concentrates on the immediate implications of the confrontations between Muslims and Christians in Ekiti. However, the post-implications of the confrontations are also important for contemporary studies. Studies on the post-implications of the confrontations will reveal the impact of the past confrontations on current religious interactions in the society.

In some areas, the hospitable attitude of some Nigerians towards missionaries was for certain reasons. In this regards, Omotoye (2012) unfolds the fact that Yoruba did not accept Christian Missionaries for the pure sake of the gospel but because of some socio-political and economic benefits. While in some quarters, confrontations between some Indigenes and Missionaries are inevitable because the Missionaries were set to convert people, dominate the socio-religious space and possibly replace the indigenous culture and system with Western culture and system. With these aims and the attempt to actualise these, the Missionaries experienced resistance from some Adherents of Yoruba Religion in Egbe. The resistance happened 111 years ago (in Egbe, Christianity was 100 years old in 2008) but the effects are visible till date especially in the socio-religious interactions between Yoruba Religion (a subset of African Traditional Religion) and Christianity in Egbe. This paper therefore examines the immediate and post-immediate implications of the confrontations between Yoruba Religion and Christianity in Egbe.

Theoretical Framework

This paper hinged on the radical structural theory propounded by the Marxist dialectical scholars such as Marx, Engel, and Lenin amongst others. The theory is used for this study to reveals the exploitative actions of

Asalu (the king during the arrival of Christian missionary in Egbe) and Daike (a traditional priest in Egbe), and the domineering attitude of Christianity in Egbe. The radical structure theory is also employed for this paper to show the reaction of some adherents of African Traditional Religion to religious changes within their territory after the advent of Christianity. It is applied to see 'incompatible interests based on competition' (Faleti, 2019) for the conversion of the souls of the devotees of African Traditional Religion. The conversion was not forceful. It is interesting to state that the unjust and exploitative expressions from few individuals like Asalu and Daike made many people in Egbe subservient, and hence, they quickly accept Christianity. For instance, Daike forcefully acquired a newly wedded wife of another man. The husband reported the incident to Asalu to intervene as the traditional ruler, but Asalu also took the woman as his own wife (Trend upon the Lion, 2008).

The theory maintains that confrontations can be traced to the domination of a class by another in the society (Enamuduet al., 2015). Christians can be viewed and compared to bourgeoisie and devotees of African Traditional Religion as proletariat. The capitalist society is characterised by social stratification; the existence of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Christian missionary polarised the society into two; Christians and unbelievers, which should rather be Christians and Non-Christians. Christians are the majority, which made the traditional institution to lose its economic, social, political and religious relevance to a large extent. Hence, confrontations occurred as a way of resisting, struggling and recovering power from the Christian missionary.

Historical Background of Egbe

Egbe is an ancient town bordering Kogi and Kwara States, Nigeria. Before the creation of Kogi State on 27th August, 1991, Egbe was one of the towns in Kwara State. Egbe is surrounded by seven hills of Savannah vegetation and old earthen walls, which served as defensive structures for the town during the Yoruba and Nupe raids in the last century (Simoyan, 1991). In addition, the hills add more beauty to the town. Namely, the hills are *Oluwo*, *Pepelebe*, *Kelaye*, *Elure*, *Ogo*, *Ijalu* and *Amokele* (Simoyan, 1991). The hills and old earthen walls have not only protected the people of Egbe, but had also served as weapons of protection for the non-indigenes in Egbe. Hence, the town has won the appellation: *ÌlùOlódiàtiàbò* (the town with earthen wall and safety) (Arosanyin 2014). Therefore, people trooped in to take refuge in Egbe during war periods (Arosanyin, 2014). Mainly, before now, there were two classified clans in Egbe. The first clan was classified as *ÀyìnOdi* (Outer Clans) (Simoyan, 1991). This clan lived on the hills and forest areas in Egbe. They were scattered communities with a distance of two to four kilometres from one another (Simoyan, 1991). This group includes the people of Ilemla, Iloko, Opada and Ido-Egbe.

The second group or category was called *InáOdi* (Inner clans). They lived in a fenced area by the earthen walls. They include: Okoa, Ahinke, Isaba, Odo Owon, Otun and Ijalu. *Aku* is the Egbe word for clan. In sum, the *InáOdi* (Inner Clans) lived down the hills, while the *ÀyìnOdi* (Outer Clans) lived on the hills (Simoyan, 1991). Egbe is made up of immigrants from different places. At the time of settlement, each group chooses where to stay. In other words, settling up or down the hills is a matter of choice.

However, later, the clans on the hills were invited by those down the hills to come down permanently. The invitation availed them of the opportunity to unite as one. Hence, they live together and defend each other in case of external aggression (Arosanyin, 2014). There is no much information on the first person or groups that lived or founded Egbe. According to Simoyan (1991), there might be a group of original inhabitants of the land. But nothing was recorded or known about them. Majorly, the historical account of the people of Egbe is centred on the immigrant groups in Egbe as the founding members of the town. Simoyan (1991) notes that the Yagba-Yoruba are immigrants from Ilé-Ifè and Oyo Ile while the other group of immigrants from Nupeland was Okun people who returned after being captured by the Nupe soldiers.

What is available as the history of the founder of the town is a myth which some people may question its validity. The myth involved *Ere*, *Eri* and *Ogbe*; neighbouring towns. According to the myth, four brothers from the east founded *Yagba* West. One of them saw a strange nut on a tree in the bush. What made the nut strange is unknown. But the nut was fascinating that one of them, not the one who saw it first, climbed to pluck it. The third brother collected and carried the nut from that place to plant it. However, it was the fourth brother who planted it instead (Dada, 2012).

Chronologically, the first brother who saw the nut founded *Èrí*. This is because: *Òunlóri* (he was the first person who saw it). The second brother founded *Èré* since *Òunló re* (was the one who plucked it). Also, the third brother who took the nut away from that point founded *Ògbé* because *Òunlógbe* (he was the person who carried the nut away). The fourth brother, who

planted the seed found *Ègbè* because *Òunlógbe* (he was the one who planted it). In addition, the four brothers were said to be sons of *ÌyáÀgbà* (old woman); the Oyo Princess and the founder of Yagbaland (Dada, 2012).

In Yorubaland, there are many *ÌyáÀgbà*. Hence, it will be useful if we are told the real name of the *ÌyáÀgbà*. Also, there may be more than one Oyo Princess. The names of the characters were not given in the myth. But nevertheless, the myth is popular among the people of Egbe. The hope of truth of this myth resides in the cordial relationship between *ere* and *Egbe*. Also, the evidence is in the praise names of *Owa* of *Egbe*, that *Egbe*, Koro and possibly *Ogbe* were once ruled as a single Kingdom under one ruler. It was expressed thus: *Owáòunlól'Ègbè, á niKóro, ipepew'Ògbè* (*Owa* who is the ruler of *Egbe* and Koro and still nurses the hope of annexing *Ogbe* to his domain) (Simoyan, 1991).

Some school of thoughts dismissed the myth because they believe that *Egbe* has her own distinct foundation and origin through her autochthonous and immigrant population (Simoyan, 1991). Prince Kelaye, the crowned prince of Oyo was one of the immigrants. He migrated because of the new law that prince should commit suicide immediately after the death of the King since they reigned together. The law was introduced because Kelaye committed a crime which should not go unpunished (Simoyan, 1991), but the offence was not specified by Simoyan. He migrated from Oyo either after the death of Alaafin Sango or between the reigns of Alaafin Ajaka and Oluaso (Dada, 2012). It is possible that the migration was after the death of Alaafin Sango because it is believed that he introduced the cult of Sango to *Egbe* (Simoyan, 1991). In his search for

settlement, he stayed a while in Ijodo and later moved from Akitipo to Ikati in *Okoa* (the Oldest Oyo immigrant settlement in Egbe) (Simoyan, 1991). These several movements were made to ensure his safety from Nupe's attack.

In *Okoa*, some of his brothers left him to establish new clans. Otun was founded by one of them. Also, one of them settled with other aboriginals in Ijagan. The clans founded by the Oyo immigrants' are Odo Owon, Ahinke, Isaba, Ijagan, Otun and Ijalu (Simoyan, 1991). The Ile-Ife immigrants founded Opada, Iloko, and Ilemla. Ido-Egbe was founded by the Nupe immigrants (Simoyan, 1991). Hence, the Ido-Egbe was the only non-Yoruba clan in Egbe. The people of Egbe speak Yoruba language popularly called Yagba or Okun language. The town is well known for her hospitality and people come from far and near to trade in Egbe. In agriculture, the town is blessed with fertile land. Farmers cultivate yam, cassava, maize, beans, corn and fruits. The natural resources in Egbe are Cassiterite, Columbite and Tantalite. There are valuable trees like *Madrine* tree in Egbe. They engage in weaving of cloth, farming, hunting, trading of goods, and modern jobs like teaching, office attendant, and engineering works. Egbe is one of the fastest growing towns in Kogi State (Simoyan, 1981).

Culturally, they eat almost all the Yoruba foods like *amala*, *eba*, *tuwo* and *iyam*. Men wear *buba* and *sokoto* (native cloth and trouser). Women wear *buba* and *iro* (native cloth sewed in female style to cover other parts of the body). In the olden days, men use *bante* (thick cloth to cover the private part). They wear local sandal. Later, people got used to white men style of dressing. It is appropriate to state that the first settlers

in *Egbe* are the *Ododi* people; presently in Ahinke, Oke Egbe (Simoyan 1981).

Religions in Egbe

Egbe is a multi-religious town with the existence of Yoruba or Okun Religion, Christianity and Islam. Before the advent of Christianity in Egbe, Yoruba religion was the only religion in Egbe. The religion has five main features. The features are belief in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine. These features of the religion found expression in the sacred and secular spaces in Egbe. Presently, majority of the people of Egbe are Christians, while very few of the indigenes are adherents of Yoruba Religion. There are Muslims in Egbe, but they are non-indigenes. These set of people are in Egbe for commercial purpose. However, despite the setback which the indigenous religion suffers, the religion is still in existence and active. People still patronise herbalists, medicine men and women, diviners and magicians in Egbe. Also, the sight of some animals such as dog and pig suggest to us that Islam is not dominant in Egbe. Muslims in Egbe are either from Ilorin or Northern parts of the country.

Christianity was introduced into Egbe through the missionary activities of Thomas Titcombe, a missionary under Sudan Interior Mission; who arrived in Egbe in 1908. He was born on 17th September, 1881 to the family of Mr. and Mrs. George and Sarah Titcombe in a small railroad town of Swindon, Wiltshire, England (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). Titcombe chose Egbe for his mission station because Egbe was the most populous town in Yagbaland with a big market centre. Therefore, he described Egbe as 'the capital of Yagba' (Simonyan,

1991). On his arrival in Egbe, he was given the name OyinboEgbe (the white man of Egbe). Being a white man, most of the people in Egbe were afraid because of his white complexion. At this time, most black people see the white as strange beings and hence called them Orisa (god).

The Confrontations between Christianity and Yoruba Religion in Egbe

The people of Egbe were quite responsive to the message of Titcombe. In 1906, there was an arrangement to make Islam the court religion in Egbe (Dada, 2015). King Asalu had it in mind to request the Emir of Ilorin to send Mallams (Islamic clerics) to teach Islam to the people of Egbe. However, with the arrival of Lang in 1906 and Titcombe in 1908 in Egbe, he changed his mind (Dada 2015:116). Also, this change of mind is tantamount to his unwillingness to be inferior to the Emir of Ilorin (Simonyan, 1991). Hence, he welcomed foreign missionaries.

The first confrontation occurred when the town suffered drought. It was a battle of superiority. Dáéké, the Sango Priest promised that there will be rainfall. Muslim clergies promised rain as well. Dáéké offered sacrifices of cow and other items to Sango; the divinity of thunder and lightning but, there was no rain. He climbed a palm tree thereafter. When Titcombe asked what he was doing up, he said: 'I am getting as near to Sango as I can' (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). He was on the tree for five days.

Apart from the fact that the people of Egbe needed rainfall for agricultural purpose, they needed rain before they could celebrate Opada festival. Hence, people sang:

Ake
mòsoròlárùnrí,
Dáéké, olómi,
Omòbáwasòjò
We had never
celebrated festival
in drought
Dáéké, who has
water,
Make rain for us
(Trend upon the
Lion, 2008).

It is evident that Dáéké was from Opada clan. Opada people are specialists in herbalism and rain making (Arosanyin, 2014). Why there was delay in rainfall was not known.

Later, Muslims started to pray for rain. They had a week-long fasting (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). However, next Sunday, David; a Christian convert, suggested that Christians should also pray for rain after reading the book of James 5:17-18. Christians were asked to come to church next day at 7:00pm to pray for rain. The adherents of the other two religions were outside the church to see what will happen. Christians came with the assurance that rain would fall since they came with their bread-brimmed umbrella hats. They prayed for more than twenty-five minutes. Suddenly, there was pinging sound of rainfall, and everybody ran back home.

It suffices to state that though it was when Christians prayed that it started raining, but it is possible that the rain fell because of the collective efforts and prayers of the three religions (Yoruba religion, Islam and Christianity). However, here the credit was given to Christians. Furthermore, Titcombe criticised Dáéké of

wasting his time on the top of the tree since Dáeké's God was seen as powerless. Also, Muslims accused Dáeké of worshipping false gods. Later, Dáeké and Muslims joined hands together to abuse Titcombe. These are experiences of religious accusation and counter-accusation, abuse, absence of religious pluralism, understanding and tolerance, and religious exclusivism.

Second, there were confrontations between Titcombe and King Asalu. The king was angry that Titcombe did not preach to the people in his presence. There, he asked Titcombe to preach to him and twelve (12) of his retainers (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). He ministered to them, but Titcombe revealed that:

I thought the Chief was my friend, although he did not understand my real purpose. However, as I heard more of the language, I realized his friendliness was superficial. He was actually fearful and jealous. The people gave him gifts for me; some he passed on, others he kept for himself (Sophie de la Haye, 1971 p. 30).

Sequel to the above, there were claims that a witch doctor attempted to poison him through a powder which must not be inhaled, and a sharp poisonous thorn (Trend upon the Lion 2008). Thereafter, King Asalu compulsorily appointed a slave to always follow Titcombe around. When Titcombe finished preaching, the slave will stay behind to speak against him (Sophie de la Haye, 1971).

In the same vein, King Asalu sent for a Muslim Cleric to curse Titcombe five times in a day for three

months. He was later discouraged because it was an effort in futility. The misunderstanding became intensified that people were hindered from visiting Titcombe. But since people could not visit him, Titcombe and Fred Rutherford, a co-worker, decided to visit people. King Asalu's reaction was challenging as he ordered them not to preach to the lower classes (masses). Consequently, he can only preach to Asalu and his chiefs.

How could Titcombe obey this order? Definitely, he could not Christianise people under this order. Hence, confrontations could not be averted:

The Idol worshippers joined the witch doctor and marched and danced around my house, singing and shouting profanity and demonstrating their hatred...The chief forbade anyone from bringing food to us. It was not safe to leave the house (Sophie de la Haye, 1971 p. 38).

He had only corn at home. After eating much of it, he had dysentery. The people outside sang abusively thus:

Óyínbòoníro, óyínbòoníro,

Ájeìkàsìnbíqniákún

Óyínbòoníro.

Lazy white man, Lazy white man,
He eats yesterday food like one who
is about to die,

Lazy white man

In addition, they sang to accuse and threaten him that:

ÓyínbòÈgbèdé ta láidè

Óróniólósó,

Oni é lòsò, àtìniólòsò,

Áfìhanlòsò

Opàkamùnpàye^yèrìn

Èmónnìbóyá

The white man of Egbe, a new
comer,

Identified witches

The innocent and witches

Are accused of witchcraft

We will use stick to kill him

No doubt (Trend upon the Lion,
2008).

Then, King Asalu has ordered them to kill Titcombe. One of the Chiefs, a new convert assisted Titcombe with his slave to fight against his antagonists. But Titcombe replied: ‘Thank you, but I do not need your slave’, because ‘I have the living God’ (Sophie de la Haye, 1971).

His foes were on the hilltop. As they were descending violently, the 11 young men who had been with Titcombe for safety formed a circle round him. When they reached about 50 feet before getting to Titcombe, they stumbled and fell down. The matter reached a critical point when some Christians cleared a piece of land to build Church. Trouble sprang because they cut part of the grove trees. King Asalu, therefore, sent a messenger to the British Resident at Patigi to report this and other actions. Titcombe claimed that the allegations were false (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). But it was observed that Christians did not obtain the King’s permission to clear the land.

As a result of the above, at the individual level, some Christian converts were disowned by their parents and some were beaten up (Erinle, 2014). For example, Sayomi, the son of the king refused to worship

the gods upon the King's command. He was tied on both hand and foot and beaten until his back was jagged. As if that was not enough, he was left outside in the hot sun (Sophie de la Haye, 1971).

Reasons for the Confrontations

Majorly, as stated in the theoretical framework of this study, politics and struggle for power in order to dominate are the reasons for the confrontations. King Asalu welcomed Titcombe to Egbe to boost his political and economic strengths. His interests were political and economical in nature, not religious. Not once, Titcombe accused him of using the missionary to threaten his people. According to Ijagbemi (1986), King Asalu loved to be seen publicly with the white missionary and being visited often by the missionary.

Further, the gifts for Titcombe must be channelled through him. He intended to supervise and control the missionary movement of Titcombe. However, it will be difficult, if not impossible to subject a white man under him. Worthy of note is the fact that Asalu was under the colonial master. But we need to state clearly that Asalu might want to supervise his movement and gifts because of security reasons. For instance, concerning the gifts, he did that possibly to protect Titcombe from being poisoned.

An understanding of Asalu's responsibilities will help here. In 1903, out of all the clan leaders, he became the leader of Yagbaland. The staff of office was given to him in 1904. By 1906/1907, he was made the District Head of Yagba-Egbe, now Yagba West (Simonyan, 1991). As a District Head, in the colonial era, his duties were to maintain:

Law and order in his district. He had to study closely the movement of population, especially those of aliens. He was the district Judge; assessment of population was his duty. He had to assess, tax the people and ensure that the taxes were paid promptly. Above all, he was the British representative on the spot and had to tour his area of authority regularly adjudging cases and seeing to the general welfare of the people. The physical development of the area was one of his many duties (Simonyan, 1991 pp. 119-120).

Asalu's confrontations with Titcombe were products of lack of deep understanding of his duty. He was to study closely the movement of the population, particularly, the aliens. He never considered the aim and the motive behind this duty. This was to ensure smooth and continuous domination of British rule in the area against any external rule. It was to study and report to the British power, not to act on his own. There should be no clash in supervising and controlling Titcombe's movement and the gifts as we have seen, but to issue command that he should not preach to the masses again, is an order which generated incessant violence.

King Asalu's roles are majorly supervisory. The main authority was in the hand of the colonial masters. Partially excluding the Northern part of Nigeria, British rulers often supported missionary activities (Fleck, 2013). Colonial authority used the traditional rulers in

order not to disrupt the existing system, for effective communication to the people; using black against black and to ensure low cost of administration due to inadequate British officers and fund (Turaki, 1993). Asalu was afraid because the missionary activities might undermine his authority. But why did he welcome Titcombe? Why should he expect a missionary to read the Bible to him alone? This is the result of differences in interest or conflict of interest as noted by the radical structural theory.

It was Asalu who instigated people against Titcombe, because he saw Titcombe as a bad influence on the populace (Ijagbemi, 1986). Without mincing words, Asalu never intended for himself and his people to be Christians. According to Titcombe, Asalu's portion of the sacrifices was not available as before (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). People of Egbe could not be intimidated as again by him. Sorcerers used to be a threat to the people of Egbe. The people of Egbe were bold to the point that they were threatening sorcerers. For instance, they wanted to kill Dáeké, a sorcerer, but he was rescued by Titcombe.

Other reasons for the confrontations are differences in culture and belief. As noted earlier, Christians cleared a piece of land, and cut down some of the trees in the grove. The grove trees were believed to be sacred. Consequently, this generated negative reactions from the traditional ruler who has been seeking tangible means of petitioning Titcombe. He thereby reported through his messenger to the colonial ruler (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). In addition, the public use of wrong and abusive terms for the indigenous religion is another reason. Most times, he called the people animists (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). It is not a

taboo that the people believe in spiritual beings. Spirits are invisible, but their existence is a reality. They worshipped spirits, not the image of worship. His expressions on Yoruba Religion showed that he lacked the true knowledge of the indigenous religion. The divinities are not idols. Divinities have separate existence from the inanimate objects used to represent them. He also failed to rightly identify the official functions of Osanyin. He called him the god of sickness and health (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). Rather, Osanyin is the divinity of magic and medicine.

However, is it right to describe the confrontations as the confrontations between Yoruba religion and Titcombe? Asalu, the back bone of the contention was a traditional ruler; a king. According to Idowu (1962), it is right to call him priest-king because he is divine. In addition, he owned the town and all the cults. He is called *Oba alase; ekeji Orisa* - the King, the commander and wielder of authority next to the Orisa, and a King is often called Orisa (divinity) (Ajayi, 1993). Ogunade (2009) also identified the place of a divine King as Priest-King. The King combines spiritual and political functions. More often, this found expression during festivals. Thus, the Yoruba say: *Gbogboodunl'odun Oba* (Every festival belongs to the King) (Dopamu, 2010). Parrinder (1954) comments that the African Kings; including the Yoruba Kings, are approached with religious awe, and they are intermediaries between their people and ancestors, divinities and God. Hence, they are not only secular rulers, but also divine rulers.

From the above awareness, it is a truism that KingAsalu also represented Yoruba Religion. But his struggle was not for Yoruba religion, but only used the religion as the weapon of violence to fight his own

course. The set of people used were the sorcerers who Titcombe often called witch doctors (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). It is germane to consider that most herbalist, medicine man or woman, priest or priestess, diviners, and magician possess the knowledge of sorcery, but they are not expected to use it because sorcery it is harmful. The code of conduct for indigenous religious specialists is spelt out in Ifá corpus; Odu (chapter) Iwori Meji. They must possess sincerity, hopefulness, tolerance, endurance, faithfulness, forgiveness, love, peace, and trustworthiness amongst others (Akintunde, 2009).

Hence, Asalu and Dáéké were not truthful or faithful to their callings. They exploited people, threatened and inflicted diseases on people in order to exploit them. In the opening scene of the centenary film, Dáéké deprived a man of his new married wife. The man went to report to Asalu, but Asalu claimed the woman to himself (Trend upon the Lion, 2008). Despite Titcombe's negative description of the people and their religion, this study believes that there are good eggs among the devotees of Yoruba Religion who will not allow any King to use them for his selfish aim. Hence, the set of people who are involved in crisis matter.

The Socio-Religious Implications of the Confrontations

After King Asalu reported the events in Egbe concerning Titcombe to the British Resident in Patigi, Titcombe followed it up with his own side of the story thus: 'The matter concerned a few trees, not belonging to anyone in particular' (Sophie de la Haye, 1971). The action of the Resident Officer should not keep one in suspense. He called King Asalu in 1910 to ere and banished him and his wives to Okeloke where he died.

He was accused of misappropriation of public fund. Thereafter, his (Asalu) elder brother, Paul AmpitanAgbana, popularly called Ope was enthroned as the new uniting King of Egbe; uniting because in Egbe, each Clan had their Kings or leaders. Agbana did not only co-operate with the missionary, but he was also a Christian and attended church meetings frequently. He took the name Paul when he was baptised (Simoyan, 1991).

With this new development, every obstacle had been removed. Hence, the gospel spread like wide fire. Titcombe became popular than the King himself. Most people in Egbe were then Christians. Titcombe capitalised on the selfishness or self-centeredness of King Asalu and false indigenous religious specialists to cause the eclipse of Yoruba Religion then. But it should be noted that people with this kind of attitude exists in all religions. For instance, the bible intimates us with the existence of false Prophet (Matthew 7:15). Also, in Taoism, there are Celestial masters called Popes, who exploited people with their self-acclaimed knowledge of how to attain immortality (Umejesi, 2010). However, despite the setback Yoruba religion is a/an living and active in Egbe. Despite the confrontations, there was no bloodshed.

But the place of Yoruba religion in Egbe has been affected by the advent of Christianity in Egbe. The religion suffered setback in its encounter with Christianity, western civilization and education. Christianity at a point almost rendered the indigenous religion insignificant. Most people in Egbe see the religion as outdated, fetish, not fashionable and devilish. They abandoned the worship or veneration of the divinities and ancestors.

In furtherance of the above, *Àjàforùntí* image was removed and replaced with Christian inscription from Colossians 2: 13-14. There is a myth in Egbe that Sango fought on behalf of the people of Egbe against their enemies. Sango imprinted his image on the hill where he landed after the war, and where he landed on is called *Àjàforùntí*. The imprinted image was moulded and placed at the T-junction between Odo Egbe and Oke Egbe. So, it was the moulded image that was demolished by late King Kayode Owa. In the same vein, most of the shrines are in sorrowful mood without a priest or priestess. People hardly venerate the ancestors like before. Many youths in Egbe know nothing or little about the indigenous religion. Not only this, most elders see the practice of the indigenous religion as belonging to the age of ignorance and inferior. Hence, to them, Yoruba Religion in Egbe is a thing of the past and Christianity is superior to Yoruba Religion.

At this juncture, it suffices to cite an example. In the course of this research, we visited the shrine of a divinity called *Òrìsà Ayewakuleyin*. *Òrìsà Ayewakuleyin* communicated to his priest like *Òsanyìn*. The priest is the only one who understands what the *Òrìsà* (divinities) says. Before, there were festivals organised in honour of *Òrìsà Ayewakuleyin*. The festival is celebrated every seventh month of the year for seven days. People from Aiyede, Obbo-Ayegunle, Igbaruku, Ejiba, Eri, Ere and other parts of Kogi State and Kwara State used to attend the festival. They will dance, sing and eat for the seven days. They consult the *Òrìsà* through the priest concerning their challenges. In most cases, sacrifices would be performed by the client (Ajewole, 2021). However, after the priest died, the next person to take the baton of leadership refused to occupy the

position because he is a Christian and an elder in the church. Therefore, till date, the divinity has no priests, because the next person to his priesthood is a Christian.

In addition, in Apoto, the shrine of a divinity called *Okuru* was destroyed and a house was built on the land. Most people prefer to associate with Christianity. This is the result of the inventions by the missionaries. Few of the old people are the major adherents of the indigenous religion with little hope of the youth to handover the indigenous practice to. Most of the rituals in Egbe through which the religion found expression or manifest are abandoned. One of the rituals is the *Akefun* ritual. This ritual is performed to avert evil in the society. If the impending evil is not serious, the senior age grade of men will perform the ritual. In this instance, they will assemble in a spot with their war weapons. When the war drum sounds, they will dance wildly around the town. As prescribed by *Ifá* (Oracle divinity), sacrifices will be offered to the gods. Thereafter, they will dance back to their homes.

On the other hand, women would perform the ritual if the impending evil is serious. Here, they would carry their weaving tools called *apasa* (it resembles a sword). Also, the women would paint half of their bodies with clay and expose their left breasts. But, in a pathetic case, they would perform the ritual in complete nude. This ritual takes place in the night, and people must be indoors (Dada, 2021). They make sacrifices of foods and a cow. The items are bought with community fund. If they (women) will wear clothes, they will wear men's clothes with the right leg shoe on the left leg, and left leg shoe on the right leg (Dada 2021). This traditional practice was condemned by missionary, and abandoned by the people of Egbe. However, there are some rituals and practices

that are still in place in Egbe. For instance, Ifon ritual is still performed and active in Egbe. It is a ritual for young maidens in Ogbaonimosi, Apoto, Okoa, Isaba and Ijagan (Oni, 2021). Maidens must perform this ritual before marriage. The aim of the ritual is to train the maidens for marital task and for them to be fruitful after wedding.

The ritual takes place at the shrine of *Iyelamo* (the river goddess) in *Odo Egbe* (very close to Egbe market). The maidens will stay in door for seven days. They wear white clothes and cover their faces with white clothes also. They process in the night to the shrine on a single file. They go with a white fowl each to the shrine. The fowl will be presented to *Iyelamo* for sacrifice (Osanyingbemi, 2021). *Iyelamo* or *Otumo* is one of the important divinities in Egbe. It was said that *Iyelamo* helped Egbe when enemies encompassed her. *Otumo* turned to a woman, and fried akara (beans cake) for the enemies. They ate it and died. Also, out of her generosity, she usually gives people fowl. But, if anyone takes her fowl forceful, it will disappear back to her shrine (Dada, 2021).

The maidens will leave the shrine after the seventh day. Any maiden from the areas mentioned, who refused to perform the ritual will suffer *abiku* (born-to-die) or barrenness in her husband's house till the ritual is performed. In addition, although this is not true of birth rite and puberty rite which are in a state of coma, if not death, marriage and burial rites are active in Egbe. Earlier, we have stated in passing the belief of the Opada people on the hereafter by slaughtering a cow for the dead in order to have food to eat. We wish to add that before any dead person from Opada can be buried, a male family member must dig the ground three times

with hoe or jigger, before the ground can be dug up. They often demand for three colanuts and a crate of alcoholic drink.

Also, the children of the dead must pay a certain amount of money (N10, 000.00), but subject to negotiation. This is called *owoiteso* (the money for the stretch clothes). Mainly, it is for thanksgiving. Most people object this since there will be thanksgiving in the church. The wife of the deceased will stay in door for seven days immediately after burial. Ritual will be performed with pieces of meat. The meat will be half cooked. A woman from the late husband family will give her the meat to eat as the women recite some words only known to parties. Thereafter, the widow will observe another three months. For the three months, she must not go to the market. She must not visit anyone. Immediately the husband died, before burial, it is a taboo for her to see any visitor off. The three months end after the appearance of the third moon after the burial. The necessary rituals will be performed.

Furthermore, when it is a year after the burial, the final rituals will be performed. Here, the widow will off all the clothes and underwear on her to be burnt. Her hair will be shaved. She will be freed. The practice of a male member of the family taking her as wife is not common now. Before the one year ends, she must not go to any market. Despite the influence of Christianity on the indigenous religion of Egbe people, some still celebrate *Epa*, *Ogun*, *Igbemo* and other festivals in Egbe. Also, in time of trouble, some Christians do patronize indigenous religious specialists for help. For example, there was a wide spread case of a Reverend in Egbe who consulted a diviner secretly. He consulted the diviner because his wives used to die after wedding. He was

asked to use the blood of a fowl to wash his head publicly.

He hesitated, but decided to perform the ritual later. On Sunday, in the course of his sermon, he preaches against those who visit diviners. He informed the congregation that the diviners will ask for fowl and other items. Before the service, he has made arrangement for a fowl. He asked someone to bring the fowl with the cunning claim of demonstrating how the diviners perform rituals for them. He slaughtered it and used the blood to wash his head. Thereafter, he got married and the problem of premature death of his wife stopped. But, the action was not welcomed by members.

Presently, the indigenous religion is more pronounced in Odo Egbe than Oke Egbe. On both sides, people still recognise the benefits in the religion. Therefore, most people tap the milk and honey of the religion secretly. It suffices us to state that as long as the belief in witchcraft and sorcery exist, the practice (directly or indirectly) of the indigenous religion will live on and active. The eagerness to get a Chieftaincy title and to prosper in life will cause the religion to be active. It should be noted that most of the practitioners of the religion are old people. This is not too good for the future of the religion. Young people should be encouraged. There is need for the old ones to open up for them. Practitioners should desist from using sorcery to wreak havoc on others as it projects bad image on the religion. The power, knowledge, magic and medicine should be used to transform and develop Egbe and the world, not to cause pain. The festivals should be modernised and revived. This will attract the interest of corporate organisations for sponsorship.

Conclusion

The confrontations between Yoruba Religion and Christianity occurred because of religious competition, struggle for supremacy and power, exploitations and manipulations, and religious exclusivism. More so, the confrontations served as an avenue for religious contestation for membership, space, relevance and power. The contestation seems to favour Christianity since the religion comes with the sole aim of replacing and dominating other religions; especially African Traditional Religion. Christianity, with the support of the colonialist, outcome of the confrontations and the provision of western education, civilisation, medical care and culture, was regarded as the superior religion then and till date. Hence, Egbe is dominated by Christianity; especially Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), after the indigenous religious was condemned by Christians and abandoned by many indigenes. But nevertheless, Yoruba Religion is still active and manifest in Egbe and meaning that Egbe is multi-religious town. The religious space in Egbe, however, is largely void of religious pluralism as Christians see themselves as being superior to other religious adherents. Consequently, the socio-religious relationships among the populace in Egbe, before and now, is clouded with religious suspicious and lack of mutual respect for the religious worldviews of other religions apart from Christianity.

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