

Oluwole T. Okewande

University of Ilorin, Nigeria

ORCID 0000-0002-9242-4227

Convergence of form and content between indigenous and Christian songs and beliefs of the Yoruba in southwestern Nigeria

Abstract

Beginning and the development of Yoruba written poetry was believed to be influenced by the Christian songs and hymns. However, this study demonstrates the impact of Yoruba traditional poetry and beliefs in the development of local Christian religion and beliefs in the present time. Relevant data on both Christian and indigenous Yoruba beliefs were sampled through observation as well as extracted from written texts such as songs, hymns and poems in the Yoruba language. On the basis of the ethnographic and empirical materials and texts examined, the study found out that there are many parallel elements relating to form and content in traditional Yoruba and contemporary Christian songs and beliefs. It is stated that the Yoruba religious poetry and songs are valuable cultural elements in contemporary time and actively participate in propagating the Christian beliefs in the Yoruba society. This study concludes that impact of Yoruba religious poetry and beliefs is felt on the Christian religion in the contemporary time just as the Christian religious songs contributed to the development of Yoruba poetry in the past.

Keywords: poetry, culture, religion, hymns, song, Christianity, Yoruba religion

1. Introduction

Poetry is an aspect of literature mostly expressed in short lines or verses. It can be in different structures such as in stanzas or in any other units established in

historical development. Poetry can also be in songs mode, may or may not be accompanied by musical instruments and dance. Language of poetry is unique in tones, meters, stress, rhythms, sounds among others. It can be in oral and written forms with various contents such as religious poetry where religious ideologies are basically the contents and themes of the poems as in the case of this study. Among the Yoruba¹, oral poetry was prominent long before the written form. That poetry covered mainly divinities, praise poetry, invocation, and incantation poetry, among many others. One of the ways written poetry was launched or developed among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria is by the adoption of the Christian hymns². However, this study investigates into how the indigenous Yoruba poetry³ has been adopted by the Christian Yoruba⁴ to propagate their belief in the present time.

Among the Yorùbá people of south-western Nigeria, "life is meaningless" without the God – *Olódùmarè*⁵ 'the Supreme Being'. However, after the propagation of foreign religions among the Yoruba, especially Christianity, the indigenous culture and religion was demeaned to such extent that the Yoruba people were described as "peculiar heathen", "refined heathen" and "so deluded and blinded" (Clarke 1972: 276-278). Religious instruction at Sunday church services did not include teaching of the Yoruba language and culture. The result was the imposition of foreign culture on the Africans and the active rejection of African culture, as "religion itself is largely culture-bound" (Işola 2010: 36). One of the criticisms in African culture today is manifested in the rate of religious intolerance between foreign religions and indigenous religions. It is worth the trouble to demonstrate the cultural and religious interrelationships between the two belief systems as possessing equivalent religious concepts and elements.

¹ Members of the Yoruba ethnic group are predominantly located in Southwestern in Nigeria. However, Yoruba are found also in other countries of the world such as Cuba, Benin Republic, Togo, Brazil, Jamaica and Trinidad. Yoruba is also a name of the language.

² Christian hymns are composed songs rendered in Christian services. Some Christian songs are also expressed in a chorus form.

³ These are poems, especially those in sung mode, that are associated with the peoples' religions and beliefs. In the past, those songs and poems were performed orally. However, most of them have been in a written form and were documented in various cultural life artefacts of the Yoruba.

⁴ These are the indigenous people converted to Christian religion.

⁵ *Olódùmarè* 'the Supreme Being' "is conceived as the original source of all life and of all the resources of life, the father of mankind and of things, who covers everything he has created with his divine providence" (Mulago 1999: 130).

2. Aim and scope of the study

The aim of this study is to establish the relevance of Yoruba traditional religious poetry and songs in the propagation of Christian beliefs in the present time. The objectives of the study are to contrast the Yoruba religious poetry and songs with the Yoruba Christian songs to establish the adaptations and interrelationships and to account for religious confluence between the Christian and Yoruba indigenous beliefs in the past and present in various forms. The time scope of this study is the past – before and during the advent of foreign religions and Western education to south-western Nigeria – up to the present time. Africans generally, and the Yoruba in particular, place more emphasis on “two-dimensional concept of time, namely a dynamic present and a long past. The future in this cyclic concept of time is greatly devalued. Events merely come and go. The past receives the main emphasis” (Oosthuizen 1999: 42). Even though Africans generally, and the Yoruba in particular, think about future in addition to the past and present, however, it is believed that past and present give birth to future and that the future can only be predicted. That is, what has happened and is happening can be empirically accounted for.

3. Methodology

Songs and poetry are cultural elements that can be well understood by different approaches. For this study a cultural approach is adopted. Unlike the other critical approaches, cultural criticism (or cultural studies) does not offer a single way of analyzing literature. No central methodology is associated with cultural studies. The term “cultural studies” refers to a relatively recent interdisciplinary field of academic inquiry. This field borrows methodologies from other approaches to analyze a wide variety of cultural products and practices. A single approach will miss too much; it will overlook important aspects of culture not perceptible to that particular angle of vision. A multiple approach will pick up an insight here – a piece of knowledge and more of culture will enter into the inquiry (Kennedy & Gioia 2007: 665-666).

The opinion above demonstrates that cultural approach paves way for swapping of cultural ideas across various cultural elements. Cultural materials or elements can be analyzed from different perspectives. This means that there is no one way in which the meaning relates to the cultural material. One of the major cultural elements is religion. Every society is known with unique systems of living, including their belief system about the spiritual beings. Since culture evinces different aspects of people’s life, cultural studies encompasses anthropology,

sociology, history, religion, and social science disciplines. It investigates how a phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, social class, and gender (Famuwagun 2016).

There are two different views about how the traditional religion can be protected by African culture. The holistic approach canvasses that African religion should be at the center of culture. The second school of thought sees religion as an important aspect of culture that should be respected "but not necessarily espoused" (Işola 2010: 37). What is pertinent is the imperativeness of indigenous culture and religion on the activities of the people. How God and various religious concepts can adequately be comprehended or understood within the rubrics of culture.

Relevant data – songs and poems relating to religion and beliefs of Christian Yoruba and Yoruba practicing the indigenous religion were carefully sampled and analyzed in contexts, contents, structures, forms and meanings to account for their relevance in the past and present time.

4. Historical overview of the Yoruba poetry (oral and written)

Among the Yoruba, before the advent of literacy, orality was the only means of communication. This is a situation, where poems are "stored in the memory and then spoken, recited, chanted or sung on specific occasions" (Akporobaro 2001: 35). Large volumes of the Yoruba poetry are associated with indigenous Yoruba religion. Whatever they do "is to be seen in their religious systems" (Clarke 1972: 276). Therefore, it may be in order to classify Yoruba oral poetry into two main streams: religious and non-religious.

Oral poetry performance is an innate activity among the Yoruba. This is because some of their religious activities are performed in a poetic mode. This makes oral poetry generational. That is: "*àjẹbí àtí iṣẹ́ iran dé iran ní ewi alohùn bí rárà tàbí ijálá sisun jẹ́ fún àwọn apohùn*" (Àjàyí 2001: 139) which means: 'Oral poetry is innate and a profession is passed on from one generation to another in poems such as *rárà* or *ijálá* for the oral artist'. This opinion shows that an act of oral poetry is handed down from one generation to another through Yoruba indigenous religion. Among them, *rárà* includes poetry associated with Èṣù, the Yoruba divinity of justice, whereas *ijálá* refers to poetry associated with Ògún, the Yoruba divinity of iron and war.

The emergence of oral poetry among the Yoruba is believed to be initiated through *Ifá*, the divinity of divination and wisdom. It is established that "*látí igbà*

tí Ọ̀rúnmilà tí bèrẹ̀ sí fí ohùn orin ka Odù Ifá, ó dájú pé láti igbà nàà ní ewi tí bèrẹ̀ ní ilẹ̀ Yoruba" (Oyelaran & Adewole 2007: 36) which means: 'It is certain that the time Ọ̀rúnmilà has been adopting sung mode to recite *Ifá* verses marks the beginning of poetry among the Yoruba'. Ọ̀rúnmilà, is the *Ifá* progenitor. It is observed from the above statement that poetry is associated with song. It can also be established from the statement above that Yoruba poetry evolves from the knowledge of *Ifá*. This can be true because, on the one hand, without *Ifá* "the importance of the other Yoruba gods would diminish" (Abimbola 1976: 9), while on the other hand, "*Ifá* is Yoruba culture in its true dynamic and traditional sense" (Abimbola 1977a: 14).

Pieces of non-religious poetry are as numerous as the activities of the Yoruba people. This can be universal – poetry which cut across all the Yoruba communities and the community-based poetry that is localized in scope. Oral poetry such as *ọ̀fọ̀*, the Yoruba incantation and *oríkì* and *orílẹ̀*, the praise poetry or panegyrics and totem belong to universal oral poetry. Among the community-based poetry are *ẹ̀fẹ̀*, a satire poem among the Ègbádò community of Ògùn State of Nigeria and *àṣamọ̀*, commonly performed among the Èkìtì communities of Èkìtì State of Nigeria. Some oral poetry are gender-bound while some are gender-neutral. For example, *ẹ̀fẹ̀* is performed by the male gender while *aṣamọ̀* is performed by both males and females (Olabimtan 1988: x).

In oral poetry, because of its association with the society, the religion, language and the oral artist belong to the society. The poet and the poems depend on the society. The oral artists usually expressed the voice of his society which was largely ruled by customs in which the element of individual judgment and initiative was small since the society itself was conservative in its outlook and tended towards the stereotyping of attitudes, behavior, practices, and even ways of thinking (Olabimtan 1981: 157).

In oral performance, an artist speaks from the community or society. He/she is seen as a community spokesperson. The situation is, however, different with the Yoruba society undergoing the process of adaptation as a result of literacy. The adaptation and survival of orality into the world of print is itself a rich and significant, and remains powerful in spite of repeated predictions of its demise. It has developed the idea of the author as a legal owner of words on the page. This is bound up with many other developments (Matterson & Jones 2000: 94).

In this situation, there is a shift of the society from absolutely being in custody of all the materials in poetry. Poets are free of developing and employing their ideas and language into poetry. While the community can be regarded as the

author in an oral performance, the poet has the sole authorship in written poetry. However, the language used, including the poet, are assets of the society.

The transformation of Yoruba oral poetry into written poetry arises from the advent of the European Christian missionaries in Yoruba nation. Even though the missionaries' main objective was not to take the Yoruba language into the path of writing, however, such action was found to be expedient for the propagation of the Gospel. As earlier explained, literacy was absent among the Yoruba people before the advent of the missionaries. Therefore, "credit must be given to the early missionaries for reducing the Yoruba language into writing, analyzing its grammar and through translations and compositions, laying the foundation for its literature" (Awoniyi 1978: 144-145). Christian missionary work was instrumental to the development of Yoruba language to written form. The advent of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) brought different changes to the religion and language of the Yoruba. As a result of this, it is difficult to talk about the development of Yoruba language without the influence of the Christian missions. With literacy knowledge brought by the Christian missions to the Yoruba communities, the Yoruba people, following indigenous religion, converted to Christianity and gained an opportunity to receive Western education. One of the prominent Yoruba who became a Christian was Samuel Ajayi Crowther. He was a native of nowadays Nigeria who acquired education in Freetown, the capital of Sierra-Leone. He was a resettled slave ordained as a priest by the CMS in 1843. With the aid of education, he wrote and published some works that influenced the development of the Yoruba language such as *A grammar of the Yoruba language* (1843). "This was soon followed by a primer (1949), a grammar (1852), and a translation of the Bible (1867); all were published by S.A. Crowther and the CMS could thus be credited with the founding of a written literature for Yoruba. Other prominent names in the development of Yoruba Studies at that time were C.A. Gollmer, H. Kilham, T. King, J. Raban and H. Townsend" (Akinlabi & Adeniyi 2007: 32).

As a result of introduction of literacy among the Yoruba, magazines and newspapers were launched through which opinions and ideas were expressed. Sixteen of such newspapers were identified and listed by Ogunşina (2001: 193). It was also noticed that some of the newspapers and magazines' coverage were limited to certain communities. Newspapers such as *Ìwé Ìròyìn Èkó* 'The Lagos Newspaper' (est. 1888) with E.M. Thomas as the Editor, *Ìwé Èkó* 'Lagos Paper' (est. 1891) and *Nìgbà tí ọwọ́ bá dílẹ̀* 'In Leisure Hours' (est. 1910) with the CMS as the editor covered Lagos communities. Again, it is observed that Christian missionaries had impact on printing poetry and other Yoruba literary texts. The few educated Yoruba were able to publish their ideas and findings. Since 1896,

Adetimikan Obasa began to collect Yoruba philosophical thoughts, which were published as a book in 1927. The development of the Yoruba poetry from oral to written form paved way for poetry to reach wider audience, inspire creativity and generate documentation. As a result of this advantage, we are able to discover first known Yoruba written piece of poetry as *Igbà Arò àti Igbà Ayò* 'The time of mourning and the time of joy' (1860), written by Oḷabimtan in memory of Francis Allen. Therefore, "there is no doubt that the emergence of many Yoruba newspapers and non-religious books was an indication of the rising literacy status of the Yoruba language" (Awoniyi 1978: 75). It is observed that literacy was a catalyst of transforming Yoruba oral poetry, and thus the society, into adherents of written (or printed) tradition.

The role of the British colonial government, and later the Nigerian government, in education also had effect on the development of Yoruba literature, in which poetry was not left out. The government was in charge of school curricular, selection of relevant texts, and discovering of poets and writers. In Nigerian context, the government serves as motivator and regulator of literatures to be adopted in public schools. For example, it was observed "following the establishment of Yoruba literature Committee⁶ and the emergence of local authors, that the situation improved. The immediate function of the committee was to produce, as quickly as possible, a series of books in Yoruba" (Awoniyi 1978: 75). Different groups were also formed to complement individual efforts in promoting Yoruba written poetry. In the present times, the development of both oral and written poetry cannot be overemphasized. There are crisscrossing relationships between the two. Therefore, both oral and written poetry are dependent on each other.

5. Data presentation

Yoruba written poetry was reduced into writing through Christian songs and hymns as a simple form of adaptation. Oḷábimtán's findings of 1860 revealed that the first known Yoruba written poem entitled *Igbà arò àti Ayò* 'Time of sorrow and joy' that was published in 1859 can be regarded as the maiden edition of Yoruba written poetry as earlier explained. He opines about the first Yoruba poetry that:

Lóòótọ́, èdè Yoruba ni wọn fi kọ ọ́, şùgbọ́n típé típé ni ihun àti imọ́ ìjìnlẹ̀ èrò inú rẹ̀ so mó Bíbélí àti orin àwọn omolẹ́yìn Krisití. Igbékalẹ̀ ilà kòòkan nínú ewi náà bá orin tí a mò sí

⁶ I.e. Western Region Literature Committee established in 1952.

'Common Metre' (CM) mu...bẹ̀ẹ̀ ni àtídídé pẹ̀lú ìdàgbàsókè lífířẹ̀ò àpílẹ̀kọ̀ Yoruba kò sẹ̀yìn Bibé̀lì àtì ẹ̀sìn ọ̀mọ̀lẹ̀yìn Kírísítì ní ilẹ̀ Yoruba ní ìbèrè pèpè

(Ogúnřina 2001: 194-195)

"It is true, it was written in Yoruba language, however its structure and philosophy is related to the Bible and the hymn of the Christian believers. The structures of each of the lines of the poem follow the pattern known as "Common Metre" (CM) and that the beginning and development of Yoruba literature is the Bible and the Christian religion".

This opinion clearly shows the role of the Christian songs in the development of written Yoruba poetry. That is "the advent of Christian missionary and Western education has helped in reducing the Yoruba into writing which makes Yoruba poetry to be documented" (Ojo 2016: 54).

This presentation is to demonstrate how Christian religious songs influenced the composition of Yoruba written poems and how the Yoruba indigenous religious songs (as well as some other non-religious songs) influenced the composition of contemporary Yoruba Christian songs. Songs are translated and grouped thematically, according to the topics discussed later.

5.1. Correlation in terms of meter and syllable structure

These are data samples relating to *lẹ̀bẹ̀jì* and *lẹ̀fá* songs adapted in meter and syllable structures to Christian songs in Yoruba.

- (1) a. *Wa bá mi gbé! Alé fẹ̀rẹ̀ lẹ̀ tán*
 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide'
Òkùnkùn sù; Olúwa bá mi gbé
 'The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.'
Bí olùrànlówó míràn bá yẹ
 'When other helpers fail, and comforts flee'
Ìránwó aláìní wá bá mi gbé
 'Help of the helpless, O abides with me.'
 (The Apostolic Church Hymn 797 as translated)
- b. *Ẹ̀yìn ará Èkó àtẹ̀kún rẹ̀ ẹ̀*
 'People of Lagos and its environments'
Mo yọ̀ fún yín, mo tún yọ̀ fúnra mi
 'I rejoice with you and myself'
Ní tí pájagunmólú tàjò bọ̀
 'That the victorious warrior came from battle front.'

'Àní Mákòlì olóore ilẹ̀ wa.'

'That is, Macaulay, the benefactor of our land.'

(Ogunṣina 2001: 194-195)

- (2) a. *Bẹ̀ tí ń wí ló máa rí*

'It is sanctioned as you are saying.'

Bẹ̀ tí ń wí ló máa rí

'It is sanctioned as you are saying.'

Ohun ẹ̀ wí ò, arò á rò mọ̀

'What you have said is sanctioned by the authority of arò.'

Bẹ̀ tí ń wí ló máa rí

'It is sanctioned as you are saying.'

(Yoruba poem on engagement program)

- b. *Wẹ̀rẹ̀ ló bá mi ẹ̀ ẹ̀*

'He accomplished it for me easily.'

Wẹ̀rẹ̀ ló bá mi ẹ̀ ẹ̀

'He accomplished it for me easily.'

Ohun táyẹ̀ rò pé kò ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀

'What the world thought is impossible.'

Wẹ̀rẹ̀ ló bá mi ẹ̀ ẹ̀

'He accomplished it for me easily.'

(Christian song adapted from Yoruba indigenous song)

- (3) a. *Epo mbe, ẹ̀wà mbe o*

'There is red-oil, there are beans.'

Epo mbe, ẹ̀wà mbe o

'There is red-oil, there are beans.'

Àyà mi kò já, o ní 'ye

'I am not afraid at all.'

Àyà mi kò já,

'I am not afraid'

Lati bi'beji

'To give birth to twins.'

Epo mbe, ẹ̀wà mbe o

'There is red-oil, there are beans.'

(Daramola & Jeje 1967: 281)

- b. *Àwa ó ọ̀rò ilẹ̀ wa o*

'We shall celebrate our family rite.'

Àwa ó ọ̀rò ilẹ̀ wa o

'We shall celebrate our family rite.'

Ìgbàgbọ̀ ò pe...Ó yee

'Christianity does not... You got it.'

Ìgbàgbọ̀ kò pe káwa ma sọ̀rò

'Christianity does not forbid.'

Àwa ó sọ̀rò ilé wa o

'We shall celebrate our family rite.'

c. *Àwa ó yin bàbá lógo o*

'We are going to praise farther.'

Àwa ó yin bàbá lógo o

'We are going to praise farther.'

Kò mà ní rẹ̀ wá, ó yee

'We shall not be tired..., oh yes.'

Kò mà ní rẹ̀ wá láti yin Jesu

'We shall not be tired to praise Jesus.'

Àwa ó yin bàbá lógo o

'We are going to give praise farther.'

(common Christian song collected during the fieldwork)

(4) a. *Bàbáláwo, mo wá bèbè*

'Ifá priest, I have come to plead'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Bàbáláwo, mo wá bèbè

'Ifá priest, I have come to plead'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Oògùn t'ó ẹ̀ fún mi lẹ̀rẹ̀kàn

'The charm he prepared for me the other time'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

T'ó ní ng má mọ̀ wọ kan 'nu

'That I was told not to touch mouth with hand'

Aluginrin.

'Aluginrin'

T'ó ní ng má mà mèsè kan nu

'That I was told not to touch mouth with legs'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Gbòrìgbò l'ó yó mí tètè

'I had a slippery leg on the floor'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Mó f'òwó bá 'bè, mó mú bá 'nu

'I touched the place and my mouth'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Mó bó 'jú wò 'kùn, ó yó kèndu

'I looked at my tummy so big'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Babaláwò, mó wá bèbè

'Ifá priest, I have come to plead'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

Babaláwò, mó wá bèbè

'Ifá priest, I have come to plead'

Aluginrin

'Aluginrin.'

(Babalọla 1973: 81)

- b. *Baba mí lórùn mó wá bèbè*
'My father in heaven, I have come to plead'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

Baba mí lórùn mó wá bèbè

'My father in heaven, I have come to plead'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

Ìkìlò tó ẹ ní Kalfari

'The warning he gave at Calvary'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

T'ó ní n má mọ bá láwò ẹ

'That he warned me not to have anything to do with Ifá priest'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

T'ó ni n má mò b'ólòpèlè se

'That he warned me not to have anything to do with *Òpèlè* diviner'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

Ìjì ayé yíí ló pò lápò jù

'It is the unbearable overwhelming storms of this world'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

Mo sáré mo tọ aláwo lọ

'I ran to the *Ífá* priest for rescue'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

Wọ̀n ní n mépo o, kí n máta sí

'I was told to sacrifice with red oil in addition with pepper'

Baba rere

'A good father.'

Wọ̀n ní n mádiyẹ kí n maşọ funfun

'I was told to sacrifice with hen and white cloth'

Baba rere...

'A good father...'

(an adapted Christian song collected during the fieldwork)

5.2. Correlation in terms of content and themes

The following examples relate to Yoruba indigenous religious poems and songs and Yoruba Christian songs, canvassing the same beliefs. In some poems both Yoruba and Christian beliefs are perceived to have the same content, themes or subject-matter and meanings. Such content and themes evince equivalence in religious mediators between Christianity and indigenous Yoruba religion and the beliefs in death and resurrection after death.

- (5) a. *Eni rere kojá lọ sí apá kejì odò*
 'A good person has crossed to the other side of the river'
Ó dí iwájú Olódùmarè Baba
 'Till the presence of the *Olódùmarè* the farther'
Kí á tó fojú gánní ara wa
 'Before we see each other physically.'
Sùn 're o! Eni rere sùn 're o
 'Sleep well! Good person sleep well.'

(Daramola & Jeje 1967: 155-156)

b. *Títí àjín de yíó fi dé*
 'Until the Easter glory light the skies,'

T'áwọ̀n òkú n'nú Jesu y'ó jìnde
 'Until the dead in Jesus shall arise,'

Tí Jésù y'ó wá nínú ògo rẹ̀
 'And He shall come, but not in lowly guise,'

Sùn-re! Sùn-re! Sùn-re!
 'Goodnight! Goodnight! Goodnight!'

(The Apostolic Church Hymn 775 as translated)

c. *A ó pàdé létí odò*
 'Shall we gather at the river'

T'ésè ańgẹ̀lì tí tẹ̀
 'Where bright angel feet have trod'

T'ó mó gara bí krisitali
 'With its crystal tide forever'

Lábé itẹ̀ Olórun
 'Flowing by the throne of God'

(The Apostolic Church Hymn 164 as translated)

(6) *Ìgbàlà kò sí lọ̀dọ̀ ẹ̀lómíràn*
 'There is no salvation with anyone else.'

Ìgbàlà kò sí lọ̀dọ̀ ẹ̀nikànkàn
 'There is no salvation with anybody else.'

Lọ̀dọ̀ Jésù
 'In Jesus'

Nìkàn nìgbàlà wà
 'Alone there is salvation.'

(Christian song collected during the fieldwork)

(7) *Jésù ló tó ní gbà*
 'It is only Jesus who can save.'

Kò s'Òrìsà
 'There is no Òrìsà.'

Òrìsà kàn ò lè gba'ni là
 'No Òrìsà can save.'

Kò s'Òrìsà
 'There is no Òrìsà.'

(Christian song collected during the fieldwork)

- (8) *Kèn'fèrì, ẹ wá wo'gbàlà*
'The unbelievers come and see salvation'

E wo iṣẹ Olúwa
'See the work of God.'

Kèn'fèrì, ẹ wá wo'gbàlà
'The unbelievers come and see salvation.'

(Adeoye 1985: 49)

- (9) *Ayé la bá fá*
'We met *Ifá* in the world.'

Ayé la bá Mọlẹ⁷
'We met the divinities in the world.'

Ọsángangan nìgbàgbọ wọlé dé
'It was late in the day Christianity came.'

(a Yoruba indigenous song collected during the fieldwork)

- (10) *Mọ dójú tì mí o Jésù Olúwa*
'Do not put me to shame, Lord Jesus.'

Mọ dójú tì mí o Jésù Olúwa
'Do not put me to shame, Lord Jesus.'

Mo l'Égúngún nílẹ n ò 'gúngún
'I have *Egúngún* deity at home, I didn't worship *Egúngún* deity.'

Mo tẹlé ọ léyìn n ò bọrìṣà...
'I followed you at the expense of *Ọrìṣà*...'

⁷ This song is wrongly expressed. For example, the word is *Imọlẹ* or *Mọlẹ* 'divinities' as against *Imòlẹ* or *Mòlẹ* 'Islam'. The error has equally been copied in the written text:

Ayé la bá 'Fá
'We met *Ifá* in the world.'
Ayé la bá 'Mòlẹ
'We met Islam in the world.'
Ọsán gangan nìgbàgbọ wọlé dé
'It was on the day that Christianity arrived.'

(Abimbola 1999: 52)

The field research conducted revealed that both Christianity and Islam came later into the Yoruba communities. To corroborate it with the empirical data, Mustapha et. al. opine that "iran Yoruba *kòḍokan ló ní èsìn kan pàtó tí wọn máa n sìn kí èsìn àjẹjì) Kristi àti Islam tó gbòde kan*" (1986: 119) which means: 'Every Yoruba family had one indigenous way of worship before Christianity and Islam came as popular religions'. The two religions are both foreign. The divinities and *Ifá* are the indigenous forms of religious worship.

Mọ́ dójú tì mí o Jésù Olúwa

'Do not put me to shame, Lord Jesus.'

(A Yoruba indigenous song collected during the fieldwork)

(11) *Ọlọrun dídán, Ọlọrun dídán*

'God the perfect one, God the perfect one,'

Ọlọrun dídán, Ọlọrun funfun

'God the perfect one, God the white one,'

Ọlọrun baba Ọlọrun Èlà

'God the farther the Èlà divinity.'

O nínú fúnfun, ó níwà funfun

'He has a pure mind and character..'

(A Yoruba indigenous song collected during a Christian Sunday service)

5.3. Direct copying

The following examples present a form of literary adaptation by imitating a political Yoruba song by the Yoruba Christians, without any modification.

(12) *Kí lè ní f'Ọba pè?*

'What are you comparing king with?'

Ọba o, Ọba aláṣe, Ọba

'Oh king, the one with an authoritative power, the king,'

Ọba tó-tó bí aró

'Oh king, the one with words of command,'

Ọba o, Ọba aláṣe, Ọba

'Oh king, the one with an authoritative power, the king,'

Ọba rẹ-rẹ bí osùn

'King, the one with order of command.'

(a Yoruba indigenous political song collected during a Christian Sunday service)

5.4. Lexical substitution

Lexical substitution is a phenomenon of substituting a word in Yoruba song with a keyword in the Christian context.

(13) a *Ọmọ ni yóó jogún o*

'Children shall inherit'

Aṣọ iyì tí mo ra

'**Precious cloth** that I bought.'

Omọ ni yóó jogún o
 'Children shall inherit'

Iṣẹ ọwọ mi
 'The work of my hand.'

(a Yoruba indigenous funeral song collected during fieldwork)

- b *Omọ ni yóó jogún o*
 'Children shall inherit'

Bíbélí *tí mo ra*
 'Bible that I bought.'

Omọ ni yóó jogún o
 'Children shall inherit'

Iṣẹ ọwọ mi
 'The work of my hand.'

(a Christian funeral song collected during fieldwork)

6. Analysis and discussion

6.1. Adaptation by syllable structure and tune shaped by the level of tones

One of the ways by which Yoruba written poetry was instituted and documented is by adaptation of Christian songs and hymns into a poetic mode; meaning that song or music are interrelated. The relationship "goes far beyond the stylistic requirements of songs. It has been established that poems are often adapted as songs and for thousands of years, poetry has been closely allied with songs" (DiYanni 1990: 545). The relationship between song or music and poetry makes adoption or adaptation of poems to song possible. This also makes the overall perception of Yoruba music to be founded upon poetry (Euba 1975). Adaptation can be realized in two forms: partial and total adaptation. In total adaptation there is a complete adaptation of the patterns, as well as correlation referring to tones, sounds and rhythms.

Religion is one of the cultural means through which poetry and song or music are encoded. Two types of religious poetry have been identified: narrative and lyrics. However, this study is concerned with the lyrics, which is associated with "brevity, melody, and emotional intensity. The music of lyrics makes them memorable, and their brevity contributes to the intensity of their emotional expressions, originally designed to be dung to a musical accomplishment" (DiYanni 1990: 545). Attributes of *lyrics* as a form of poetry expressed by DiYanni (1990)

makes song and poetry relevant in this regard. As a result of this, song mode helps in coping, adapting, as well as providing the easiest way of adaptation from “old” source to the new.

Although, there are different tunes to sing the song in (1), the common tune that is universal or general to various Christian organizations is used in this study.

Yoruba is a tonal language, operating with low (˘), high (´) and mid tones. Every vowel or nasal syllable carries a tone. Symbols used to indicate tones are placed on vowels in Yoruba, but only for high and mid tones. When a tone is not indicated on a vowel or a nasal syllable it is a mid-tone. Tones or their sequence may be also marked with L, H and M symbols, respectively.

The syllables in Christian hymn published to honor Herbert Macaulay in 1925 in *Èkó Àkété* newspaper are indicated in (1b). The song is curled from (1a) in number of syllables. The title of the original or source hymn is *Wá bá mi gbé* ‘Abide with me’. The song is prominent in most of the Christian denominations with different hymn numbers. For example, it is hymn 15 in Anglican Church as against 797 in Apostolic Church, where the number of syllables in the English version varies from 10 and 11 to 12 in one verse⁸.

(1a) *Wá/ bá/ mi/ gbé/! A/lé/ fẹ/rẹ/ lẹ/ tán* = 10 syllables
O/kún/kùn/ sù:/ O/lú/wa/ bá/ mi/ gbé = 10 syllables
Bí/ o/lù/ràn/lọ/wọ mi/ran/ bá/ yẹ = 10 syllables
ì/ràn/wọ/ a/lá/ní/ wá/ bá/ mi/ gbé = 10 syllables

(1b) *È/yin/ a/rá/ È/kó/ a/tẹ/kun/ rẹ* = 10 syllables
Mo/ yọ/ fún/ yín, / mo/ tún/ yọ/ fún/ra/ mi = 10 syllables
Ní/ tí/ pá/ja/gun/mó/lú/ tà/jò/ bọ = 10 syllables
À/ní/ Má/kọ/ll/ o/ló/re/ lẹ/ wa = 10 syllables

Since (1b) is adapted from (1a), the number of syllables is the same as indicated above. However, the situation in (2a) and (b) below is the opposite of what is observed in (1a) and (b), which this study is set to unravel.

In (2a) and (2b) Yoruba supplicatory songs and poems are the foundation for the composition of Yoruba Christian thanksgiving songs and poems.

⁸ *A/bi/de/ with/ me/, fast/ falls/ the/ e/ven/ti/de* = 12 syllables. But *abide* is two syllables, unless it is modulated by lengthening the [ay] diphthong.

The/ dark/ness/deep/ens;/ Lord/, with/ me/ a/bi/de = 11 syllables

When/ o/ther/ help/ers/ fail/ and/ com/forts/ flee = 10 syllables

Help/ of/ the/ help/less, o/ a/bi/des/ with/ me = 11 syllables

- (2a) *Bé/ tí/ ñ/ wí/ lo/ ma/ rí* = 7 syllables with tone pattern H/H/H/H/M/M/H
Bé/ tí/ ñ/ wí/ lo/ ma/ rí = 7 syllables with tone pattern H/H/H/H/M/M/H
O/hun/ e/ wá/ ò/ l, a/rò/ á/ rò/ mọ = 10 syllables with tone pattern M/M/M/H/L/M/L/H/L/M
Bé/ tí/ ñ/ wí/ lo/ ma/ rí = 7 syllables with tone pattern H/H/H/H/M/M/H
- (2b) *Wé/ré/ lól/ bá/ mi/ şe/ é* = 7 syllables with tone pattern H/H/H/H/M/M/H
Wé/ré/ lól/ bá/ mi/ şe/ é = 7 syllables with tone pattern H/H/H/H/M/M/H
O/hun/ a/yé/ rò/ pé/ kò/ şe/ é/ şe = 10 syllables with tone pattern M/M/M/H/L/H/L/H/H/M
Wé/ré/ lól/ bá/ mi/ şe/ é = 7 syllables with tone pattern H/H/H/H/M/M/H

It is observed that the syllable structure and partial tone sequence of Yoruba Christian song in (2b) is adapted from (a), wherein the adapted Yoruba Christian songs follow the same syllable numbers in lines and structures. There is correlation of tones in lines 1, 2 and 4, while there is partial tone correlation in line 3. That is, the Yoruba Christians song follows the patterns of the Yoruba poetry. Meaning that knowing the song of Yoruba poetry is implied in mastering the Yoruba Christian song. Generally, in songs “the same tune may be used to render more than one structurally lyrics” (Oyelaran 1975: 706).

As suggested by Oyelaran (1975), what is important is not to be too bothered by the type of line arrangement of a poem but rather “one should simply investigate which factor predominates all other rhythmical features in the poetry of a particular language” (Oyelaran 1975: 711). Yoruba language operates with a syllable tone which makes many poems in the language to be melodious.

Tone patterns in Yoruba make songs or music and poetry to be easily learnt, memorized and sung; which in effect, make the poem melodious. This is the case in (3c), where the melody of Christian song in (3c) is derived from the melody of Yoruba religious poetry in (3a) and (3b). The same syllable, tones and rhythmic relationship can be observed in *Ìbejì* song in (3a), (3b) and (3c). The *Ìbejì*⁹ song in (3a) was performed before the colonial era; when the culture of the Yoruba people have been hardly influenced by foreign ideas. The song may be accompanied by dance. However, in (3b), the adaptation of the patterns of syllables, tones, sounds and rhythms of *Ìbejì* song¹⁰ is formed. This was the case during the colonial era, when the Christianity and Islam were introduced in Yorùbá communities. During this period the “missionaries were determined to change indigenous institutions and behavior and thus saw themselves as Chris-

⁹ This means ‘twins’. Twins are regarded as one of the Yoruba primordial divinities.

¹⁰ This is a song relating to the twins. Among the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria, almost all the divinities have their poems and songs that are performed during different activities.

tian agents of civilization. Africans had to be thought different values, goals, and modes of behavior” (Harris 1972: 202-204). However, the song revealed the extent to which the Yorùbá people were religious. This is indicated in (3b) that succinctly shows that acceptance of foreign religions does not, in any way mean to abhor their own religion. Religiosity of the Yoruba Christian believers makes some to identify with both indigenous religion and Christianity. Abimbola opines that “I have met people who try to be Christians, Muslims and traditionalists at the same time. The fact is that African [religion – author] does not regard itself, unlike Christianity, as the only way leading to salvation. African traditionalists respect the faith of others as equally authentic and as an experience which they themselves can partake in” (1977b: 59).

Ìbejì song in (3a) is adapted by the Yoruba Christians. The difference is its contents (the wordings or message). The adoption of the tunes and melody between the songs in (3a), (3b) and (3c) indicates the indispensable roles of the Yorùbá cultural and religious values in the contemporary time. For example, although the song demonstrates to praise the Lord tirelessly in Christian mode of praise worship in song, the song was motivated through the inspiration of indigenous religious song of *Ìbejì*, meaning that whoever knows the tunes and rhythms of *Ìbejì* song could easily sing the adapted Christian song in (3c) along, because the song derives its origin from *Ìbejì* song. This establishes the proposal being canvassed in this study that some indigenous religious songs are bedrock or foundation for the foreign religions in propagating their beliefs in the present time. These songs have become part of the life of the Christian community. It has been canvassed that “if the song is successfully carried through, it is most likely to become part of the community’s permanent repertoire of song” (Ogunba 1975: 865).

The adaptation in sounds, tones and rhythms of typical African songs in the present day’s foreign religious songs, as indicated in *Ifá* poetic song in (4a) and (4b) and (11a), clearly supports this idea. Adaptation of the Yoruba songs among Yoruba Christians is not limited to a Yoruba divinity, but extends to other divinities, as indicated in (4a) and (4b), where *Ifá*¹¹ song is expressed in folktales mode. Not only the tones and rhythms of the *Ifá* song are adapted, but the contents show the belief in the *Ifá* religion as an alternative religious way of solving human problems. The folktale entitled *Ìjàpá lóyún ìjàngbòṅ*¹² (“Tortoise had trouble preg-

¹¹ The Yoruba deity of wisdom and divination.

¹² Tortoise was instructed by the *Ifá* priest not to touch the mouth with its hand. However, it disobeyed the instruction. The disobedience made the tortoise’s stomach to swell up which forced it back to the *Ifá* priest to plead for mercy.

nancy') is adopted to produce Yoruba Christian song in (4b). The song demonstrates that the multiple problems encountered by the Yoruba Christian converts make them to go or fall back to indigenous ways of solving the current problems, even after conversion to Christianity. The song in (4b) reveals that indigenous religion is a reliable religion for solving problems in life.

The implication of this is that *Ifá* religious song is adapted and accepted by different audience (religious group), such a song becomes part of the group assets. This is the situation with the acceptance of Yoruba indigenous religious songs and poetry by the Yoruba Christians. Acceptance of a poem is informed by the value of the poem, to the "new community" because of the roles such a poem is perceived to play in achieving the group objectives. That is, "our consideration of a poem's value is a measure of its involvement with our lives, with our way of thinking [...] we consider the perspectives from which they are written [...] we will come to value poems whose content we have lived" (DiYanni 1990: 417). Christian songs following Yoruba cultural patterns and beliefs demonstrate the past cultural system of living associated with the people.

To the Yoruba people *Ifá* and other divinities have been in existence, guiding peoples' ways of life with developments. This belief is expressed in song (9). It is observed that "foreign religion and modern trends have not been able to relegate traditional religion to the status of a thing of the past. The religion is as relevant and meaningful to a good number of the Yoruba Muslims and Christians alike in contemporary Yorubaland as it was in the pre-Islamic and Christian era" (Abimbola 1999: 58).

Some of the songs examined are realized as form of poetry where "the tones, moods and voices of the lyric poems are as variable and as complexly intertwined a human feeling, thought, and imagination allow" (DiYanni 1990: 545). In examples (1-4) in the data above there is adoption of the same number of syllables, following the same tunes and melody. This is a situation "in which the poet establishes a pattern of a certain number of syllables to a line" (Kennedy & Gioia 2007: 119).

6.2. Contrastive analysis of indigenous Yoruba and Christian beliefs

The Yoruba poems in (5) evidence their belief about the dead; while Christian hymns in (5b) and (5c) demonstrate the Christian belief about the dead. The Christian hymns in Yoruba and Yoruba poetry as well as their beliefs system can

be related. That is, there is a synergy or a nexus around their contents and themes. In both Yoruba and Christian beliefs, it can be established that the dead are believed to have crossed to the other side of the river, the dead shall appear before the throne of God – the *Olódùmarè* in Yoruba traditional belief, the dead and the living shall see each other physically on resurrection day and the dead is not dead, but “sleeps”. The belief of the Yoruba about the dead “sleeping” is supported by their reference to the dead as the one ‘sleeping’ or ‘slumbering’ – *olòògbé*. That is, the Yoruba call the dead *olòògbé*, meaning roughly ‘the late one’. One can establish a parallel in the belief of the Christians and the followers of the Yoruba indigenous religion by the songs and poems. The poems and songs are prominent in use during Christian wake-keep and the Yoruba poem about the dead as encapsulated in the examples (5a-c). The Christians believe in resurrection, a situation where, the dead rise again. This belief is also in the Yoruba belief, meaning that “*ki í şe igbà tí àwọn ẹ̀lẹ̀sin Muşùlùmí tàbí ẹ̀lẹ̀sin Kristi kó ẹ̀sin wọn dé ni Yorùba tí gbàgbọ̀ pé àjínḡde ñ be*” which means ‘it is not when the Muslim and Christians brought their religions that Yoruba believe in resurrection’ (Arómọ́lárań & Mustapha 1976: 56).

The Yoruba Christian songs in (6-8) demonstrate some misconceptions about Yoruba beliefs by the Christian believers; thinking that there is no parallel or confluence in the beliefs of the two religions. For example, like in many other religions, the Yoruba believe that there are mediators, messengers of God, the *Olódùmare*, called *Òrìşà*. *Òrìşà* are “national and heroic symbols as well as divine messengers” (Abimbọ́la 1977b: 54). However, the advent of Christianity and Islam to the Yoruba societies abhors the believe that the *òrìşà* qualify as saviors, divine messengers and mediators. The belief of the Christian religion, on the contrary, is expressed in songs (6) and (7). To the Christians “It is only Jesus who can save” and “Jesus is the Lord”. On the counterpart, the Yoruba belief in the *òrìşà* as their saviors is expressed in their names and naming system. Names such as *Ífàgbàmlà* ‘Ífà saved me’ and *Orògbàmi* ‘Orò saved me’ express the belief in eternity and the belief in salvation through *òrìşà*. Christian song in (8) demonstrates that the Yoruba people following the indigenous beliefs are regarded as *kènḡfèrì* ‘the unbelievers’. It is a misconception and ignorance on the part of the foreign religions to regard the Yoruba as unbelievers or “heathen”. The ignorance is occasioned by “*àwọn Kìrìstìyèni àti Muşùlùmí kò şe iwádíí tí ó jìnlẹ̀ gidigidi nipa ẹ̀sin àti igbàgbọ̀ àwọn Yoruba ki wọn tó má pè wọn ní kènḡfèrì*” (Adeoye 1985: 50) which means ‘The Christians and the Muslims did not research critically into the religion and belief of the Yoruba before they regard them to be unbelievers’. The content of the song in example (9) demonstrates that before the advent of

foreign religions, the Yoruba had their belief rooted in 'the only one God' – *Ọlórún kan ̣ọso* (Adeoye 1985: 50). *Ìrètè-Ogbè*¹³ corpus says that:

Religion is about haven,
Heaven is unknown,
The unknown creates fear,
The spirituality torment seeks solution religion.

(Salami 2002: iv)

This opinion shows that religion teaches about Heaven. Heaven is a universal phenomenon, therefore, it is unfounded for a religion to claim the monopoly of Heaven. The Yoruba believe that living in the world is a "journey", Heaven is the "home". This opinion buttresses the belief expressed in a Yoruba proverb: *Ayé lojà, ọrun nilé* 'The world is a marketplace, Heaven is home'. That is "The Yoruba concept of existence transcends the time when the individual is on earth. It goes beyond the period" (Abimbola 1975: 417). Yoruba religion and beliefs are well founded and grounded in philosophical ideas or thoughts.

The Yoruba song in example (10) reflects the opinions of the Yoruba Christian converts in the early period. The song reflects the idea that even though the Yoruba Christian converts have accepted the new religion, however, their indigenous ways of worship have not been discarded. The belief of Africans generally and the Yoruba in particular "supersedes the one-dimensional approach of the modernist worldview" (Oosthuizen 1999: 38). This situation whereby Africans strongly hold on to their indigenous beliefs subsists till the present time. One can also aver from the song that the traditional religious songs influence in one way or the other the foreign religious songs. It is so because, in a way, "tradition establishes a relation between past and present" (Munoz 2003: xvii). The mutual relationship between the past and the present could result "in the assimilation, adaptation and accommodation, of aspects of other peoples' cultures. The end product could be cultural refinement, advancement or development" (Unoh 1986: 3).

The Yoruba Christian song in (11) makes reference to *Ẹlà* divinity, the one with pure mind and character. Among the Yoruba, some of the attributes of *Ẹlà* are: "the spirit of truth, rightness, and amicable living, working on earth to create and promote order, happiness, and understanding among the inhabitants of the earth" (Simpson 1980: 17). Equivalence is made between *Ẹlà* and Jesus in the

¹³ One of the minor *Odù Ifá* corpora. It is also called *Ìrètègbè*.

song. *Èlà* is regarded as *Àyánté Ọmọ* 'The chosen child' (Adeoye 1985: 237). The resemblance between *Èlà* and Jesus Christ in Yoruba religion can further be substantiated with Biblical reference. For example, Mathew (17:5); Luke (9:6) says: "And the voice came out of the cloud, saying: 'This is My Son, whom I have chosen, listen to Him'".

6.3. Adaptation by copying indigenous Yoruba poetry into Christian context

Yoruba political song in (12) is an example of an imitation of indigenous song embedded into Christian religious context. The original song is used for acknowledging the unchallenging and authoritative power of the Yoruba king. This song is, however, adopted by contemporary Yoruba Christians to acknowledge the power of God or Jesus Christ as a king. The song is in a copied form and adopted without any modification. That is, unlike the previously presented songs where there were adaptations in tones, syllable, melody or structure but differences in content, this song is adopted both in content and meaning. The difference lies in the context and place of song performance. That is, while the song is rendered by the Yoruba mostly in a palace or at a political event where the presence of the king is acknowledged, it is however, rendered by the Yoruba Christians mostly in churches and during Christian religious events, acknowledging the spiritual power and presence of Jesus Christ (God). This song was excerpted from political context – the source, and moved on to religious context – the variant way of interpreting its lyrics.

6.4. Adaptation by lexical substitution in indigenous and Christian religious poetry of Yoruba

In (13a) and (13b) there are lexical items that are substituted with each other in the process of adaptation. Such lexical interchange or replacement can result in semantic shift or variation. The change of semantic field results in the change of contextual field. The performance context of Yoruba poem in (13a) is a funeral event; where cloth is one of the heritages for the children of the deceased. For the song in the adapted Christian form, the context is a Yoruba Christian funeral. *Aşọ iyi* 'precious cloth' well understood in the Yoruba indigenous cultural context is substituted with *bíbélì* 'Bible' adjoined to the Christian religion.

All the Yoruba songs in adapted Christian form which were examined in this study are sung in modern times. "Modernity", including the new belief systems introduced by the foreign religions has not been able to "depose" the indigenous

Yoruba culture and religion but rather started to use it as a media for propagating foreign religious missions. Opinion of Oluwole further buttresses on this observation when he says: "it is in the area of resilience and change that African traditional religion has demonstrated its most important contribution to contemporary knowledge. African traditional religion has been quite receptive to change. For example, its encounter with the two monotheistic religions which have come to Africa, Christianity and Islam, as well as with modernity, has transformed the religion and triggered various kinds of responses to the encounter" (1999: 31). Oluwole says that while some scholars think that "changes in the traditional worldview are due to the presence of Christianity and Islam" (1999: 31), Horton's opinion proves the contrary: "Horton argues that this conclusion is wrong and suggests that traditional religion was already actively responding to ongoing social change at the time of contact with other religions" (Oluwole 1999: 31). The adaptation of Yoruba religious songs by the foreign religions undertaken by this study further buttresses the argument of Horton. The missionaries that brought and thought or imposed new belief systems on Africans seemed to have forgotten that "in primitive society culture and civilization are peculiarly interdependent and inseparable. This harmony is destroyed when an alien technology is imposed on them. It destroys the media through which their native culture expressed itself. Occasionally, this may happen through the direct introduction of an alien culture possessing higher prestige, as, for example, through missionaries, but generally the native is able to resist this impact" (Maciver & Page 1950: 577). Although there are dominant forces of the foreign religions imposed on the indigenous culture and religions, the indigenous cultural modes of propagating culture, such as songs and system of beliefs, are potent media through which African cultural values are appreciated till today. The cultural and religious emancipation of the Yoruba is a product of "Independent African Churches in which biblical and African worldviews are combined in meaningful ways to the converts" (Oluwole 1999: 31).

Despite the level of civilization and modern (technology and scientific) developments, African cultural and religious values cannot be overemphasized. Such impact and influence are not limited to the past, but also felt in the present times. It is observed that "a belief is normally defined as its worth. This is why it seems that values actually permeate every aspect of human life [...] Some social values, especially in African society, cannot exactly be separated from religious, moral, political values and so on" (Idang 2015: 4). The important roles of culture as manifested in contemporary Yoruba poetry has been demonstrated in this study.

It has been observed that religion is intended to “water” culture, “sanitize” it, to make cultural life more stable. I conclude: you can change your religion, and espouse a foreign one, but you cannot change your culture. The truth is that if your culture has not socialized you into acceptable standards of right and wrong, if you have not internalize those humane qualities of integrity, honesty, transparency, accountability through your own culture, there will be no foundation on which any religion can build. “Being born again” really means going back to your God-given culture to learn to be a good person (Işola 2009: 108).

The criticism against the African cultures and religions generally, and Yoruba religion and beliefs in particular, cannot be sustained in the present times. That is, the belief and assumptions that “African culture and civilization was barren, empty, backward, unproductive, and unproductive for any intellectual stimulations. Africa is no historical part of the world, it has not movement or development to exhibit” (Ajayi 2005: 6). This supports the opinion that with the coming of the European Christian Missions, and the Muslim intrusion into Yorubaland, “the main features of Yoruba culture have certainly survived, but there can be no doubt at all that a certain blending, a certain accommodation of the old and new, have had to be arranged” (Uya 1986: 24).

7. Conclusion

This study concludes that there is synergy between the indigenous Yoruba songs and Christian Yoruba songs, as well as between their beliefs. This is mediated by syllable structure, tunes shaped by the level of tones, contents and themes, direct copying and lexical substitution. The nexus is informed as a result of a new transformation and reformation whereby the former – the Yoruba indigenous songs, poetry and belief system are integrated to the present – the contemporary Christian Yoruba religious songs and belief system. The contemporary Yoruba Christian songs, poetry and beliefs can be described as a “re-creation of the past within a rational process of re-traditionalization” (Munoz 2003: xvi). The process of development of the present from the past is a transitional one, “transitional societies would become modern, once the process of substitution is completed” (Munoz 2003: xvi). References to *Ìbeji*, *Egúngún*, *Ifá*, *Èlè* divinities in the contemporary Yoruba Christian songs and in churches during services, as demonstrated in this study, attest to the transformation process going on between the two systems of beliefs.

References

- Abimbola, W. 1976. *Ifá: An exposition of Ifá literary corpus*. Ibadan: University Publishers.
- Abimbola, W. 1977a. *Ifá divination poetry*. New York: Nok Publishers.
- Abimbola, W. 1975. "Ìwàpèlè: The concept of good character in Ifá literary corpus". *Yoruba oral tradition: Poetry in music, dance and drama*, ed. by W. Abimbola. Ilé-Ife: University of Ifè. 389-420.
- Abimbola, W. 1999. "The place of African traditional religion in contemporary Africa". *African traditional religion in contemporary society*, ed. by J. K. Olupona. USA: Paragon House. 51-58.
- Abimbola, W. 1977b. "The Yoruba traditional religion in Brazil: Problems and prospects". *Department of African Languages and Literatures Seminar Series 1(1)*, ed. by O. Oyelaran. Ilé-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University. 1-64.
- Adeoye, C.L. 1985. *Ìgbàgbọ̀ àti Èsìn Yorùbá [Belief and Religion of Yoruba]*. Ibadan: Evans Brothers Publishers.
- Ajayi, B. 2001. "Litiresò Alohùn Yoruba". *Èkó ̀jìnlẹ̀ Yoruba, Èdè, Litiresò àti Aṣà [Critical Yoruba studies, language, literature and culture]*, ed. by B. Ajayi. Ijebu-Ode: Shebitimo Publications. 132-144.
- Ajayi, A. 2005. "Sources for the study of early African culture and civilization". *African Culture and Civilization*, ed. by A. Ajayi. Ibadan: Atlantis Book. 22-34.
- Àjayí, Y. 2012. "The stylistic significant of focus construction in the oṣo corpus". *Stylistics in Theory and Practice*, ed. by R. A. Lawal. Ilorin: Bamitex Publishers. 184-194.
- Akinlabi, A. & H. Adeniyi. 2007. "The language and its dialects". *Culture and custom of the Yoruba*, ed. by T. Falola & A. Akinyemi. Austin, TX: Pan African University Press. 31-43.
- Akporobaro, F.B.O. 2001. *Introduction to African oral literature*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing Company.
- Arómóláran, A. & O. Mustapha. 1976. *Àkómólédè ̀jìnlẹ̀ Yorùbá 3 [Yoruba language teaching for children 3]*. Lagos: Macmillan Publishers.
- Awoniyi, T.A. 1978. *Yoruba language in education*. Ibadan: Oxford University Publishers.
- Babalola, A. 1973. *Àkójopò Àlò ̀jàpá. Apá kinní [Collections of folktales. Part I]*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, W. 1972. *Travels and explorations in Yorùbáland (1854-1858)*, ed. by J. Àtandá. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Daramola, O. & J. Adebayo. 1967. *Àwọn Aṣà àti Òrìṣà Ilẹ̀ Yorùbá [The culture and Yoruba gods]*. Ibadan: Onibon-oje Publishers.
- DiYanni, R. 1990. *Literature: Reading fiction, poetry, drama, and the essay (2nd ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

- Euba, A. 1975. "The interrelationship of music and poetry in Yoruba tradition". *Yoruba oral tradition: Poetry in music, dance and drama*, ed. by W. Abimbola. Ilé-Ife: University of Ifè. 472-487.
- Famuwagun, T.D. 2016. *Culture and value change in some selected Yoruba home video*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Harris, J. 1972. *Africans and their history*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Holy Bible*. 1925. Roman pronouncing edition. Philadelphia: Holman Company Publishers.
- Idang, G. 2015. "African culture and values". *Phronimon* 16(2). 97-111.
- Işola, A. 2010. "Making culture memorable: Essays on language, culture and development", ed. by O. Oladipo & D. Adeleke. Ibadan: Hope Publication & DB Marty Books.
- Işola, A. 1975. "Rhythm in Yoruba oral poetry". Seminar paper. School of African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos.
- Işola, A. 2009. "Yoruba culture in education". *Ọmọlẹwabi: Its Concept and Education in Yorubaland*, ed. by A. Ogundejì & A. Akangbe. Ibadan: Ibadan Cultural Studies Group. 89-112.
- Jẹgẹdẹ, D. 1995. "Popular culture in urban Africa". *Africa: An interdisciplinary reader* (3rd ed.), ed. by P.M. Martins & P. O'Meara. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; London: James Currey. 273-274.
- Kennedy, X.J. & G. Dana. 2007. *Introduction to poetry* (12th ed.). New York: Pearson & Longman.
- Lobner, S. 2002. *Understanding semantics*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Maciver, R.M. & C. Page. 1950. *Society: An introductory analysis*. India: Laxmi Publications.
- Matterson, S. & D. Jones. 2000. *Studying poetry*. London: Hodder Arnold Publishers.
- Mulago, V. 1999. "Traditional African religion and Christianity". *Africa traditional religion in contemporary society*, ed. by J. K. Olupona. USA: Paragon House. 119-132.
- Munoz, L.J. 2003. *A living tradition: Studies in Yoruba civilization* (Foreword by J.F. Ade Ajayi). Ibadan: Bookcraft Publishers.
- Mustapha O., D. Ajayi & A. Amoo. 1986. *Oşùpá Èdè Yoruba 2; Ìwé Èdè Yoruba fún Ilé-Èkọ̀ Sékóndírì Qlódún Méta Kín-ín* [Moonlight of Yoruba language 2: A Yoruba text for the junior secondary schools]. Lagos: Nelson Publishers.
- N.A. 2001. *Iwe Orin Ijo Aposteli Naa* [The Apostolic Church Redemption Hymnal with Appendix]. Lagos: Victory Publishers.
- N.A. 1977. *The Apostolic Church Redemption Hymnal with Appendix*. Lagos: The Apostolic Church Lawna Literature Committee.
- Ogunba, O. 1975. "The performative of Yoruba oral poetry". *Yoruba oral tradition: Poetry in music, dance and drama*, ed. by W. Abimbola. Ilé-Ife: University of Ifè. 807-876.

- Ogunsina, B. 2001. "Ìdide àti Ìdàgbàsókè Lítíreṣọ̀ Àpilẹ̀kọ̀ Yoruba". *Èkó̀ Ijínlẹ̀ Yoruba, Èdè, Lítíreṣọ̀ àti Aṣà* [Critical Yoruba studies: Language, literature and culture], ed. by B. Ajayi. Ijẹ̀bú-Òde: Shebiotimọ̀ Publications. 189-205.
- Ojo, O.G. 2016. *Satire in Ṣobowale Ṣowande and Bunmi Ayelaagbe's poems*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Olúṣọ̀nà, J.K. 1999. "Major issues in the study of African traditional religion". *African traditional religion in contemporary society*, ed. by J. K. Olúṣọ̀nà. USA: Paragon House. 25-33.
- Oosthizen, G.C. 1999. "The place of traditional religion in contemporary South Africa". *Africa traditional religion in contemporary society*, ed. by J.K. Olúṣọ̀nà. USA: Paragon House. 35-51.
- Oyelaran, O. 1979. "On rhythm in Yoruba poetry". *Yoruba oral tradition: Poetry in music, dance and drama*, ed. by W. Abimbola. Ilé-Ife: University of Ifẹ̀. 775-793.
- Oyelaran, O. & L. Adewọ̀le. 2007. *Iṣẹ̀mbayé àti Ilò Èdè Yoruba [Heritage and the use of Yoruba language]*. Ilẹ̀ṣà: Elyon Publishers.
- Ọ̀labímtan, A. (ed). 1988. *Àkọ̀jọ̀pọ̀ Ewì Àbáláyé àti Àpilẹ̀kọ̀* [Collections of Yoruba oral and written poetry]. Ibadan: Paperback Publishers Limited.
- Ọ̀labímtan, A. 1981. "The Èfẹ̀/Gèlèdẹ̀ Poet of Ègbádò Kétu Yoruba". *Oral poetry in Nigeria*, ed. by U. Abalogu, G. Ashiwaju & R. Amadi-Tshiwala. Lagos: Emaconprint. 157-167.
- Salami A. 2002. *Ifá: A complete divination*. Lagos: NIDD Publishers.
- Simpson, G. E. 1980. *Yoruba religion and medicine*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Unoh, S.O. 1986. "Communication in English: Does it help or hinder the cultural development of Nigeria". *Cultural development and nation building*, ed. by ed. S.O. Unoh. Ibadan: Spectrum Book Limited. 1-21.
- Uya, O.E. 1986. "Historical trends in the cultural development of Nigeria, with particular reference to the Cross River state". *Cultural Development and Nation Building*, ed. by S.O. Unoh. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 22-40.