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Titled

RELIGION: THE COMPLEX EQUATION OF ACCEPTANCE BETWEEN MAN, GOD-gods AND MATERIALS

Delivered By

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ON

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DEDICATION

This inaugural is dedicated to All of Humanity
who have given Total Acceptance to Fellow Humanity
thus removing inhumanity of man-to-man
be it in Religion
or
elsewhere it may be within humanity.

RELIGION: THE COMPLEX EQUATION OF ACCEPTANCE BETWEEN MAN, GOD-GODS AND MATERIALS

The Visitor to the University, His Excellency Engineer Adebayo Olusegun Oni/His Representative,

The Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor and other Members of Council,

The Vice –Chancellor, Prof. James Oladipo Kolawole,

Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic and Administrative),

Principal Officers of this University and of other Sister Institutions,

Members of Senate,

Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments,

Professors, Your Royal Highnesses and Chiefs,

My Lords, Spiritual and Temporal,

Academic and Professional Colleagues,

Staff and Students of UNAD and Other Institutions,

Distinguished Guests and Friends,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Great Ladies and Gentlemen.

I.   Introduction

I.1   Background

It is with thanks and gratitude to God and in all humbleness that I stand here this 9th day of December to give this inaugural lecture, the second from the Faculty of Arts, Department of Religious Studies, after a break of fourteen years as the first was given in March 1995. Many things, religious and otherwise – have changed dramatically within the time. One of the many changes is the rate of proliferation of Denominations and Religions. (Jemiriye, 1998c & d)

The rate of proliferation of new Denominations and Religions the world over is not only alarming and embarrassing, but is leading to a heavy doubt as to the truthfulness, genuineness, effectiveness and proclamation of any of the Denomination and Faiths. (Jemiriye, 1998f).   The current wave of high emotionalism is often characterized by such fanatical claims like faith-healing for all, speaking in tongues, missionary activities, over simplicity of faiths, wealth for all, prosperity theology and heavy material accumulation by the leaders at the expense of their trapped or half-informed members. (Jemiriye 1989)

Experiences at joint programmes, where all these denominations meet show that a case needs be made, and that it needs be made urgently, for what Religion should be. In many ecumenical meetings, the highly emotional groups always feel that their mode (religious, language, prayer or worship) is the right and must be imposed on other groups. Order of Service are often lousy or noisy and with little

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or no reason – theological or contemporary – to back such order. This calls for a rethink on Religion! (Jemiriye, 1998f)

Most unfortunate is the fact that Religion is the only field, where the incompetent is allowed to self-license his/her self as whatever and allowed to fool, deceive, lead or mislead the simple or less matured people. The law of the land protects the most foolish or ignorant person in any community from being operated upon by a carpenter. (Jemiriye   ) The law requires competence in surgery before the individual can perform such a feat called operation. But Religion allows anybody to claim-arrogate any power and fantasy to him or herself, collect any group of people and form a religious organisation!

Unavoidably, Religion has conveniently become the only field where the unschooled, untaught, incompetent, self-asserted, self-graduated , self-licensed, self-canonized and self-justified is allowed to practise in the name of god(?) thereby making a quark, shame and mess, if not a complete nonsense(?), of their so designated god! (Jemiriye, 1998f)

It is noteworthy to say that any wholistic and consistent God or god will not just give the ability and knowledge-competence-in medicine, physics, French, carpentry, mechanics and cooking to just anybody! They need training for competency in these fields. For permission, competence and license in these trades a certificating body must accredit level of competence, hence qualification. Such

bodies are Trade Master Councils (Local or global, e.g. Tailor's Association for sewing, Nigerian Medical Association for medicine, Nursing and Midwifery Council for Nursing, COREN for engineers). But in Religion anyone can wake up and self-license him/herself with fabulous title(s) and overflowing robes! In the complex resultant situation the discordant tune of "tax the Churches" and "You have no jurisdiction over Churches" is only normal, expected and to continue until what the norm for Religion – as a profession – is set. (Jemiriye, 1998d)

Most disturbing is when these self-styled, non-articulate Religionists, start bamboozling people with fraudulent claims like "You are talking from human knowledge" and that "you do not have the Holy Spirit" etc. (Jemiriye, 1989) This lecture is, therefore, a call to basics. It is a call that some fundamental questions be asked. It is a call that asserts that experience of any person is as valid as that of any other person on earth as it is the word of one person against another. It is a call that any deceit, regardless of the covering cloak of "a faith" be refuted. It is a call that the how of Religion be well known, taught, dispensed and embraced. The questions of how and why must be adequately answered in all their ramifications, including the use of emotion, clichés and undeterminable experiences of vague assertions. These are part of the complexities of Religion.

Religious relations must move from "tolerance" to "full acceptance" regardless of self-justification, self-pity, sentiments, self-aggrandizement and

subtle, hidden but unspoken wish of preference for one's version of Religion. These are parts of the complexities in the study of World Religions. (Jemiriye, 2003b)

For achieving the goal of presenting Religion as the complex equation of acceptance between man, God-gods and materials, this lecture first looked into the discipline called Religious Studies where relevant definitions are given. The second examined characteristics and properties of Religion. Here issues of Religion in the affairs of man are treated. Third is the issue of problems within Religion. Recommendations are then given as the fourth part of the lecture. Conclusion and Acknowledgement rounded up the lecture.

I.2   The Discipline called Religious Studies

Some issues that are covered in the study of religion include

- Interpretations, representations, misinterpretations and misrepresentations in Religion (Jemiriye, 1983)

- Choice of words, sacred texts, language study – Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Arabic

- Representation of actions/acts/of others such as *Akara* on grave and flower on tombs – memorial

- Polytheism versus monotheism (Jemiriye, 1983, 1997b)

- African Religion versus Western Religions (Jemiriye, 1991)

- Idols or icons? Deliberate put down! (Renwick, 1958)

- Religion as a means of enslavement

- Many fields of study - Academic, history, sociology, philosophy, textual studies, theology, comparative studies, etc

- People not open to reason versus sentiment and emotionalism

- Issue of civilization, old time till now, and a million other issues. All these show that Religious Studies involve many topics, areas and cover almost all aspects of human life. How the attempt is to be focused? Areas of possible specialization are more than four hundreds within Religious Studies and the number increases at an alarming rate.

II. DEFINITIONS:

1. Religion:

There are many attempts at defining the word Religion the world over. Attempts have been made from the angles of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, humanities, biological sciences and countless other fronts down the ages. (Jemiriye & Eniola, 2005) Idowu in his preamble in the attempt to define Religion wrote:

> By now, everybody who is seriously engaged in the study of Religion has been convinced that to attempt a definition of Religion is an almost impossible, if not altogether impossible task: and every serious scholar is on the verge of giving up the task. (Idowu, 1976).

Idowu went further by writing:

> J. B. Pratt report: Professor Leuba enumerates forty-eight definitions of Religion from as many great men (and elsewhere adds two of his own, apparently to fill out the even half-hundred). But the striking thing about these definitions is that, persuasive as many of them are, each learned doctor seems quite unpersuaded by any but his own. And when doctors disagree what are the rest of us going to do? (Idowu, 1976).

Also, that no consensus of opinion exists among scholars as to what Religion really is has been supported by Professor Erivwo who has aptly pointed out that, "Religion has so far defied any precise definition, a defiance that is perhaps, accounted for by the changing nature of the subject. It has not meant the same thing to all men! (S. U. Erivwo) (Idowu, 1976:)

Erivwo went further to show that more than fifty definitions of Religion are already written by Idowu and the subject was not adequately defined. The attempt here is not to reproduce the many definitions of Idowu or Erivwo, but to summarise that Religion to a large extent is the moment by moment consciousness of any person that is rooted in the belief in a Supreme Being – God – resulting in the totality of that person's action, behaviours and utterances.

Idowu clearly expressed the closeness of Religion and life when he wrote about the Yorùbá thus:

> The keynote to their life is their Religion. In all things they are religious. Religion forms the foundation and the all-governing principle of life for them. As far as they are concerned, the full responsibility of all the affairs of life belongs to the Deity; their own part in the matter is to do as they are ordered through the priests and diviners whom they believe to be the interpreters of the will of the Deity (Idowu, 1962).

With the above, Idowu has clearly demonstrated the inter-relatedness of Religion and the life of the Yorùbá, thus the relatedness to Yorùbá language and Yorùbá culture. In order words Religion as expressed uses language and the result is the life of the people that ultimately condenses to form their culture. (Jemiriye, 2004 & 2005a)

One side-issue to consider here is whether the focus should be "Religion" or "Religions". Can the African Religion (in Nigeria for example) be merged with the foreign ones like Christianity and Islam? (Jemiriye, 2006a) For the purpose of this

writing, all religious experiences of mankind will be regarded as one in the sense that their effect on language and hence culture are closely similar. As Awolalu aptly puts it,

> I deliberately speak of African Religion (and not Religions) even though Africa is a large continent with multitudes of nations, complex cultures, innumerable languages and myriad of dialects. In spite of all these differences there are many basic similarities in the religious systems of the Africans. (Awolalu, 1979).

Thus this lecture will be looking more at "Religion" even though examples for consideration will come from different forms of Religions, but mostly of Yorùbá Traditional Religion (YTR).

These have been quoted so as to show that the attempt to defining Religion is no child's play. That it is difficult should not scare any serious minded person away however. The attempted definition here given is therefore a summation of various ideas as collected and restructured by Jemiriye.

Religion is to some, a system of faith and worship with absolute rights, wrongs, no compromise and totality. (Berry, 1964:). In another, Religion is pretence shrouded in deceit, ignorance, self-desertion, avoidance, relegation and no authentic claims. It is an opium of the people, an infatuated fantasy. In a more simple but general setting, Religion is the human quest for God. It is the search for, or response to God, god, Gods, gods, GOD or GODS by men. The content, form and practice of the quest (called Religion) is designed, directed, delivered, diverted

and derailed by man himself (Jemiriye, 1996:). Religion includes reverence, piety, personal commitment and serving God, god, Gods, gods, GOD or GODS with worshipful devotion. It includes conduct in accord with divine commands especially and believed by individuals. It is a system or systems of faith and worship in its many faces like the spiritual, organisational, financial and hierarchical. It is the professional practice or conviction of the existence of Supreme Being or beings or of supernatural powers or influences controlling man's humanity, nature or destiny. Religion is a cause, principle or system of tenets held with ardour, devotion, conscientiousness and faith. It is a value of supreme importance in life, death and beyond. (Groove 1971).

In examining the attitude of people in rural environments, some can be described as 'Religionary' that is their vocation is Religion while others are 'Religioner' or Religionist. The Religionist is earnestly devoted and attached to Religion. In a sense the Religionist could almost be regarded as a zealot or fanatic. In another sense the attitude of some of the people in the rural environments can be called "religiose" – as excessively, obtrusively or/and sentimentally religious (Adelowo, 1995Inaugural lecture). These form what would be called part of their religious culture.

Other scholars in various disciplines have defined Religion from their perspectives. Some are: Alan Menzies sees Religion "as the worship of higher powers from the sense of need". Schleiermacher sees the essence of Religions "as

the feeling of absolute dependence." Karl Max defines it as "the opium of the people." Max Muller defines Religion "as a mental faculty or disposition which independent of reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and varying guises." (Jemiriye & Eniola, 2005, 3-9, Cohen, 2003 belongs here as well).

In an inclusive statement, the *Marian Webster New International Dictionary* defines Religions "as the outward art or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or of gods having power over their destiny, to whom obedience, service, and honour are due, the feeling or expression of human love, fear or awe of some super human and over-ruling power, whether by profession of belief, by observance of rites and ceremonies or by the conduct of life." (Gove, 1976, Vol. II, 1918)

Taylor (1871) defines Religion "as a belief in spiritual beings." Bellah (1970) sees Religions "as a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence. William James definition of Religion as " … the feelings, acts and expressions of individual men in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine" another outlook. (Jemiriye & Eniola, 2005; other books that belong here are Morris 1964, Morris, 1976, Smart 1963, Smith 1958, Watch, 1990, Lamid 1957 and Trueblood, 1957).

Every definition ultimately implies theories of reality and indicates the place that Religion should hold in the world of life and thought. In general, the definitions are a valuable contribution to man's conception of Religion. In contemporary times, emphasis has been on the functions of Religion. Attempts in this regard have brought about a new range of explanations on Religion. These explanations can better be classified as functional and substantive definitions.

Religion has thus been defined comprehensively above as to cover possible spectrum of religious exposure and experiences that would be needed in assessing Religion – especially in terms of language, function, substance and culture. A careful study of the definition of Religion above, however, shows that there is a pattern within the lots of definitions. I have attempted to sum it up thus: Religion means a three point issue or phenomenon A, B and C, where A is related to C through B. A is a person or being, B is a form of relation like belief, conduct, faith, trust, etc. and C is a super being, God or god.
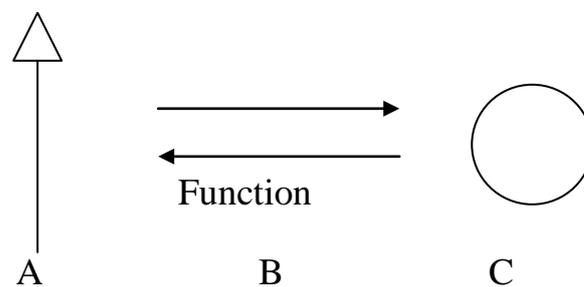

Figure 1: Defining Religion in configuration

In other words Religion is A function B to C. This is Jemiriye's definition that attempts to simplify the many long-winded expressions called definition of Religion. (The signs used are of no full geometric identity.) (Jemiriye, 2003b   )

II.2   The Superlative 'Limitless' God

Paul gave a comprehensive description of God in these words:

> Oh, what a wonderful (marvellous) God we have! How great are his wisdom and knowledge and riches! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! For who among us can know the mind of the Lord? Who knows enough to be his counsellor and guide? And who could offer to the Lord enough to induce him to act? For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by his power and everything is for his glory. To whom be glory evermore. (Romans 11: 33-36, *The Living Bible Paraphrased*. Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1972).

Even when the limits are described in the superlative, with open ends, asymptotes and infinities, they all still form the concepts of particular expression – imposed limits of some peculiar type. Thus, it could be called the "limits" of the "limitless" God.

Psalm 19 declared the awesomeness of God, his Glory, acts, being, purity, comprehensiveness, his indescribability, pedagogical nature, super control, protection and deliverance, but again *all these* concepts are the limits imposed on this God by the Psalmist!

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Discussing properties, attributes, limits of God have been interesting. Four passages about God in Bible are examples, but they often end up with man playing God or composing God or setting the limits of God to himself! From the four passages two additional points can be added.

1. The God of the Decalogue – largely in the Pentateuch or the Hexateuch. He is creator, jealous, warrior God: "No one like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds." (Moses – Exodus 15: 11).

2. The monarchical concept of God – I Kgs 18: 21, 40, 46.

3. The Psalmist God – Psalm 19

4. The Pauline God Rom 11: 33-36.

   God is all-wise v. 33

   God is all-knowing – v. 34

   God is all sufficient – v. 35

   (*Our Daily Bread*, May 30, 2009.)

5. The speechlessness of man in describing God fully shows the ultimate limit of man's ability to describe/play God!

6. The problem of nomenclature for the God-gods – monotheism, polytheism, descriptive names or proper names are understandings – reflections - about God's activities man's interpretation of God's handy works.

God a potentate of time

Again part of the properties of God by some include

- A sovereign, a monarch

- An anointed majesty and

- One who does not seek appointment or run for election

- Ineffably –effable, capable of being expressed

- God ineffably sublime

But these are anthropomorphic language relevant to the declarant only

II.3   Defining the God-gods

The combination of the alphabet G, O, D, and S have given rise to incredible amount of varied concepts, tensions, actions and results in the entire history of man's world. The choices available include six major forms – God, Gods, GOD, GODS, god, gods and a combination like God-gods. The choice for the use of any or all of the variations is a matter of implied meanings put in each word and style. (Jemiriye 1998, 2000a, 2002b, these writings are of interest in this realm of God: Bonhoeffer 1966, Epega 1931, Hick 1977, Jemiriye 1997a, Kavanaugh 1970, Robinson 1965, Robinson & David 1963, Soulon 1976, Wilmore 1979, World Council of Churches 1994, World Bible Publishers, 1926).

A theological understanding that will not only make clear the meaning and usages but will be comprehensive and acceptable to all-Religions, human and

discipline is therefore due worldwide. The attempt here therefore, is to examine the God-gods concept within a small setting of the world peoples – The Yorùbá, as an inlet for other people on the God-gods concepts.

The major problem in interpreting Yorùbá concept of God and gods is one of understanding the relations between the God and the gods – how is the God related to the gods? Is the tie of the God-gods one between equals, dependants or unrelated entities? In solving the riddle, considering all aspects of the Yorùbá concept of God and gods becomes unavoidable. The goal is to understand this relationship between the God and gods. This goal calls for efforts to employ the most appropriate terms in describing the God-gods concept and to bridge (where possible) the variance and gaps in the many present divergent terms. The Yorùbá have concept of Supreme God and gods and clarifying the relation is the task. (Jemiriye, 2006a, Jemiriye & Awosusi 2007a).

The gods are functional arms of the God, and having said that one is faced with the problem of defining what exactly is meant by gods, and by functional arm. These will now be looked into in detail. A major problem in this section is getting an agreement on what these objects of consideration are to be called. Should they be "God, *Imale* or *Òrìsà*", gods, intermediaries, intermediary gods, divinities or spirits, deities, ancestors, media, spirits, nature Gods or simple *Òrìsà*? Like in the case of God above, each name leads to different theological position, thus making the choice of name very important, difficult and complex.. Bascom's varied names

used for this group include *Ebora, Ebura, Imole* and *Òrìsà*. (Jemiriye, 1983) It must

be said that these terms are used by different writers to refer to a category of objects

of worship that are not the Supreme God. These objects of worship get religious,

ceremonious or loyal devotion and worship from the Yorùbá. These terms are

generally used interchangeably without much fuss. To the average Yorùbá,

whatever might be the difference in the terms are definitely not the main concern or

obstacle to his understanding of what they mean.

The approach here is to take a performative or functional (role) name that

best describes these objects being considered. This helps to clarify the shades of

interpretations and misunderstanding that have arisen from terminological

confusion, and between whatever might be the roles given to these objects.

(Awolalu 1979)

II.4   Number of gods

An important issue in considering the Yorùbá intermediary gods is the

question asked by Professor Idowu – "How many are the divinities"? (Idowu 1962:

67) Knowing the number may help in relating YTR to a *mono*, *di*, *triads*, or *poly*

theism. Epega addressed the number issues thus: There are 200 and 400 Imales and

not 600. (Epega 1971)

> … Imales known in Yorùbá sacred Religion. We will
> only speak of the 400 or 401 Imales. The 401 Imales or
> *Òrìsà*s called God of the Ancient Yorùbá people. (Epega,
> 1971)

According to Epega, the Imales cannot be summed up in number. This means they have different but unequal entities. It is this unequal entities that made him say there are 200 and 400 Imales and not 600 Imales.

Awolalu, addressing the number issue wrote:

> The actual number of the divinities is not easily determinable; it has variously been estimated to be 200, 201, 400, 401, 460, 600, 601, 1700, or even more, Yorùbá land is very rich in these divine beings. (Awolalu 1979)

Awolalu shows that they are many and the problem of knowing exact numbers is definitely not as easy as it may appear. Oduyoye, approaching this issue from a philological angle asked "…Does this mean one thousand, four hundred and forty-four hundred divinities?" (Oduyoye, 1971). Oduyoye's question is used in an idiomatic form rather than as a simple number expression. Bascom definitely helped in answering the question when he wrote: The Yorùbá believe in many deities (*Ebora, Ebura, Imole*, *Òrìsà*), the full number never having been recorded. Some say there are 500 or 401; others that there are 600 or 601, and some even more; but these numbers are only figurative. (Bascom, 1969: 77).

Professor Idowu's explanation on this seems to be most comprehensive and conclusive however. He wrote:

> We know that the name of the *Òrìsà* is legion, for they are many. The exact census of the pantheon no one is now able to tell. Whatever the original significance of the figures, therefore, they have now come to be no more than

symbolic at the same time of the plurality of the *Òrìsà* and the indefiniteness of their numbers. So to quote any of the figures is now only "a manner of speaking." (Idowu, 1962)

This is important because it makes it clear that the gods are many but the actual number may never be known – 200, 400, 401, 600, 601 or 1700 – are a manner of speaking. This interpretation has been followed by many Yorùbá but some others insist on whatever number suits them. If the numbers are only a manner of speaking, the precise terms like *mono*, *di*, *tri*, *triad* or even poly become difficult in applying to YTR gods. (Jemiriye 1991, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b)

Booth's discussion on polytheism or monotheism makes it clear that, it is whatever focus is put on, that decides whether Yorùbá God-gods is to be called polytheism or monotheism. (Booth 1977: 176f). The emphasis could be on concreteness or ultimacy, on God or *Òrìsà*, on the human level or on the level of God. It seems most of the early Christian interpreters of the Yorùbá God-gods concept were ready to apply any term but monotheism to YTR, while later Yorùbá interpreters seem ready to apply no other term but monotheism to this same concept! Regardless of what is used in qualifying the term monotheism, the debate still stands. (Jemiriye, 1998a)

One is prone to ask why the fuss on monotheism and why the reluctance of the early Christians, or the eagerness of the later Yorùbá interpreters of YTR, to apply the term monotheism to the Yorùbá God-gods concept? Idowu definitely

reflected the high tension of whether it should be polytheism or monotheism when he wrote:

> African Traditional Religion cannot be described as polytheistic. Its appropriate description is monotheistic, however modified this may be, the modification is, however, inevitable because of the presence of other divine beings within the structure of the Religion. (Idowu 1973).

This Idowu's position puts any interpretation of the Yorùbá God-gods concept that makes it polytheistic a misinterpretation and a misrepresentation of the Yorùbá God-gods concept. While this is more of the "half-filled or half-empty glass", it could be said that the trend since 1950 seems to be a deflection from the use of the word polytheism and a more generous application of monotheism (in any modified form) to the Yorùbá God-gods concept. (Jemiriye, 1998a)

It will suffice here to be conscious of the Yorùbá usage of number for the gods as figurative only. Also, this shows the relation of the gods to the God is not in terms of literal number. The issue is what descriptive terms and language choice are acceptable to the Yorùbá?

II.5   DESCRIPTIVE TERMS AND LANGUAGE CHOICE

5.1   Foreign and Old Descriptive Concepts

Most of the writers that fall into this group (mostly foreigners to YTR) tried to be objective and understanding in their evaluation of the God-gods in YTR. Their greatest difficulty is the fact that they had to choose word, terms and even concepts from within their experience and background. Unfortunately, this foreign experience and background had nothing that is like YTR thus words and terms were drawn by these foreigners to describe YTR from backgrounds that had nothing describing it. It is not surprising, therefore, that different words and terms which gave rise to many different interpretations and different theology were used. The impossibility of the attempt to translate the Yoruba word, *Pele* to English is illustrative of the problem encountered (Jemiriye, 1988).

The old words, which have been reacted against by many native scholars include: Primitive, Savage, Native, Tribe, Paganism, Idolatry, Fetishism and Animism. Under the title, "Errors of terminology", Idowu discussed these terms at length. Idowu's main concern is that these terms were employed by foreigners in order to describe the ATR (including YTR) in derogatory manner. Idowu, in presenting his case wrote:

> The fact is that to her and by and large, to the peoples of the Western world, the word 'native' has acquired a derogatory nuance and has become one that is reserved for the 'unfortunate', backward', non-Western peoples of the world. This is so, thanks to the anthropologist and

> missionaries, and the stay-at-home investigators who must always find terms of unmistakable distinction between them and "those others". 'Prayers for native Christians' are still being offered not for Christians who are born and are living in Europe and America; but Christians of Africa and Asia and those other 'benighted climes.' This defines the western mind on the issue beyond doubt … (Idowu, 1973)

Idowu's list of people who have used these old terms include Charles Williams, M.I. Boss, J.B. Pratt, and E.B. Taylor. Parrinder's list of Old Bosmas, James Frazer and Mary Kingsley fall here too. Parrinder was definitely aware of the problems of terminology when he wrote about fetishism that "The fact is that it is a thoroughly unsatisfactory word and it gives a distorted and unfair picture of the Religion of the African peoples." (Idowu, 1973) It must be noted, however, that the word "Heathen" substituted by Parrinder for "Fetishism" was not accepted either in many quarters. 'Heathen' as a word carried what was later referred to as Christian hang-up of conversion or mission zeal and reflects foreign background and experience.

Benjamin Ray's terms also illustrate the many interpretations that can result. Ray's description of *Sango's* character as violent, anti-social and sexually unbalanced is a conclusion drawn more from psychoanalytical rather than a religious point of view. (Ray, 1976) This leads to giving Sango cult a 'modern psychodrama; group therapy' or 'therapeutic' interpretation. This interpretation is

still being questioned by some Yorùbá scholars whether it should be regarded as positive or negative, that is truly *found or absent in* YTR.

Other terms that have been used in describing YTR, hence reflecting different interpretations, *include "totemism, primitive spiritism* and *"polytheism."* The attempt here is to reveal that these old terms implied different interpretations of the God-gods relation. Most of these old terms have been corrected with time, but they best illustrate the change in the interpretation of Yorùbá God and gods as a whole. Since the main focus of this lecture is on the Yorùbá view itself, these old concepts have not been treated further, in any great detail. It must be said, however, that credit has been given to some writers for the terms used. Idowu credited P.A. Talbot and E.G. Parrinder for confronting the problem of terms and for right description of the language. (Idowu, 1973: 135) Parrinder showed the need to derive more appropriate terms for YTR although, he did not come up with any major one. (Parrinder, 1974) Talbot used omnipotent, omniscience and supreme in describing God in relation to gods. (Jemiriye, 1998g): 32). These are very positive terms and language choice from the foreign backgrounds. However, they should be appreciated and kept.

II.5.2 Native Descriptive Concept and Recent Language Choice

Native is used here to refer to Yorùbá writing on YTR. This clarification is necessary because, as Idowu pointed out, the word native is not restricted to any particular people. The fact that the word is used, in a wrong or derogatory sense in some quarters should not scare us off its use, where necessary. Therefore, the concern in this section is to show how the concepts used by the natives present a different set of interpretations.

Since 1950, a new range of radical projections have been put up by many Yorùbá Scholars. The most comprehensive works within this time are those of Idowu and Awolalu. Other sources are specialized works on different areas of YTR. These works will include Oduyoye, Babalola, Epega, Fadipe, Fabunmi, Biobaku, Ojo and Abimbola. Idowu rejected the concepts in pantheism and paganism and used "diffused monotheism" and "implicit monotheism". Awolalu changed the concept by abandoning non-Yorùbá terms in describing Yorùbá concept. Awolalu, thus used the Yorùbá words directly in presenting the relations between the God and gods. Awolalu's approach changed the interpretation of the YTR from an approximation to expressing it in situ. While this may pose some initial difficulty to readers that are foreign to YTR, it definitely preserved the uniqueness and accuracy of the concept. Thus, Awolalu used *Olódùmarè, Ọlórun, Eleda, Alaaye, Elemi, Olojo-oni* and *Òrìsà* directly without squeezing them into any borrowed concept words like monotheism or polytheism, whatever they may mean

to the originators of such words and to the concept they may stand for. To Awolalu, it is this expression of the concepts in Yorùbá language that does justice to the concepts. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 33) Oduyoye used the phrase "folk theology" to replace mythology while talking of YTR. Oduyoye's etymological and philological approach to YTR made his language choice almost impossible to get suitable words in Western languages, to translate the YTR concepts. Thus, like Awolalu, Oduyoye ended up using the Yorùbá terms directly.

This thus presents the two different approaches used in the description of YTR. The main difference is in the language. One reflects concepts and relations foreign to the God-gods context while the other uses the same language as that in the context of the God-gods. This has resulted in the main difference in interpretations, misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the relationship in the Yorùbá God and gods. The attempt here is to look for solutions to this dilemma. What has been done here is to show that different languages base on different context, and experience have been used in expressing the relation of the God-gods, which has contributed to the many interpretations, complications and complexity.

II.6   Nature, Deification and Date of the gods

The relations of the gods to the Supreme God may be better understood if the connection between them in terms of deification and date of the gods can be ascertained.   The process or method of deification of the Yorùbá gods is neither formalized nor consistent.   The study of the popular gods shows three main patterns in the trend of deification.   Awolalu presented these three main patterns by dividing the gods into three classifications. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 34; Abimbola, 1968, 1977a, 1977b; Adegbola, 1983; Coulander, 1973; Daramola & Jeje, 1968; Dopamu 1986; Epega, 1931; Beier, 1980; Johnson, 1921; Lijadu 1972, Lucas, 1970, Prince 1964 are all informative here).   However, the uncertainty of the nature/origin of some of the gods makes it possible for some of the gods to be put in more than one classification.

II.6.1 Primordial Divinities

It must be noted that to the Yorùbá, the Supreme God is the ground of all things, hence his pre-date and the deification is therefore a starting point rather than a case for proving or ratification.   The first group of deified divinities Awolalu called "Primordial Divinities". Primordial divinities are "believed to have been with the Supreme God long before the creation of the earth and human beings". Awolalu grouped *Òrìsà-Nla, Orunmila* (in conjunction with *Ifa*), *Òdùduwà, Èsù and Ogun* in primordial divinities.   (Jemiriye, 1998g: 35; Awolalu 1979) But of these, (even

according to Awolalu's account), it seems only *Èsù* is unconditionally in this class, depending on which Yorùbá tradition of creation is followed, all others would either be primordial divinity or deified ancestors.   This is why it becomes crucial to explore the theological implications of the stories of creation in which these gods, *Òdùduwà, Ọbàtálá* and *Orunmila* do occur.   The popular stories of origin of the Yorùbá (apart from the migration theories) hold that at the start, (whenever this was, no specific time allotted) *Olódùmarè,* the Supreme God, gave *Ọbàtálá* a commission to create the world.   The follow up to this story differs from community to community.   A version says *Ọbàtálá* got drunk with wine and failed to do the creation so another being, *Òdùduwà,* did the creation while *Ọbàtálá* moulded human figures after recovering from his drunken state.   Another follow-up says, it was *Òdùduwà*, who was commissioned directly at the beginning to do creation.   For this *Òdùduwà*, as claimed, was given a hen, and a pot containing soil. This version said *Òdùduwà* left the hen and pot of soil.   On what they were left is not identified.   The hen broke the pot and the hen scattered the soil; hence earth was created.   These theories (stories) and others like them say *Òdùduwà, Ọbàtálá,* hen and soil were from heaven.   These stories canonize Ile-Ife (ground that enlarges or expands) as "*Ile*" – ground "*fe*" – expand. (Jemiriye, 1998e; 1998g: 35-37; Adekanmbi, 1956; Atanda, 1980, Beier 1975; 1980; Biobaku 1973; Courlander, 1973 and Awolalu 1979: 19-27, 31-33 are relevant here).

It must be noted that these stories of origin are in no way conclusive; right or wrong. There are no evidences to use in rejecting or accepting their validity. The stories have been passed down the ages mostly by words of mouth called oral history. If the theory that Ile-Ife is the centre of creation is accepted, then all these divinities came from the Supreme God; hence their creation precedes the creation of the earth. This will imply that the oldest date to the earliest Yorùbá God is much before the earth was created. However, if the theory of migration is accepted, then the accounts that present *Òdùduwà* and others as old ancestors or important king or clan leaders become the main lead for dating them. Since most scholars agree with the later theory of migration from Mecca, this puts the god *Òdùduwà* (offspring of Lamurudu) to be the oldest or first deified ancestor. This depends on the relationship that is believed to exist between *Ọbàtálá (Òrìsà-Nla), Orunmila* and *Òdùduwà.* The least that can be said, is that this relationship may never be really known today. As Awolalu puts it, it is nothing but "controversial". The controversy is on, whether *Òdùduwà* is a man or woman, whether he lived as a contemporary; man or as a woman, and wife of *Ọbàtálá*, or whether *Òdùduwà* and *Ọbàtálá* are fierce rivals. Each position is based on at least a tradition.

This argument on whether *Òdùduwà* was a man or woman, is now very important because with the current mad search for justification for almost any kind of theological position, for *Òdùduwà* the progenitor of the Yorùbá who is later deified to be female or male produces different theological and cultural society.

(Jemiriye 1998g: 52, Awolalu, 1979: 22, 25 and others like Bramly 1977, Canadian Women, 1972, Russell, 1974; McCracken, 1972, Marcuse, 1969).

Whatever tradition is finally taken, it is almost the same conclusion that, whenever it was, *Òdùduwà* and *Ọbàtálá* will definitely be the oldest deified gods. Their theological significance is more of historical glorification than current popular acclamation either in role or prominence, although there are still worship cults to them. As for *Orunmila* and *Èsù*, the evidence seems to be less clear, even as regarding the oral traditions. Many Yorùbá hold that *Èsù* and *Orunmila* are more of the primordial gods, however. *Ogun* has more support in its favour as a deified ancestor.

Ogun was a son of *Òdùduwà* and he lived and reigned at Ire in Ekitiland. The theology on which Ogun is deified varies greatly with each oral tradition considered. Generally, *Ogun* is deified as "divinity of iron and war", pre-eminently the tutelary divinity of all workers in iron and steel. *Ogun* stands for absolute justice, and is seen as a "symbol of the superior and the conquering one." The theological uniqueness of Ogun is almost as in maintaining a good ethical relationship particularly in professional relationship as in general contacts. This is important because of the social function of public swearing to truth which Ogun is notably used for. Also, it is a popular view that Ogun is current, and enjoys a large popularity, thus putting its deification and significance at a more recent date. Thus,

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Ogun became the next generation or deified ancestor after *Òdùduwà*. (Jemiriye, 1998e, 1998g: 38, Biobaku 1973: 11-21).

Allocating dates to these primordial gods is almost impossible and could only be based on particular traditions. An agreement with Biobaku that "The dates will be a considerable time well after the advent of Islam" (since the real date of the Yorùbá exodus is unknown) may be the best bet in this respect. If, as Biobaku proposed, "It is almost certain therefore that the Yorùbá migrations from the Near-East occurred between 600 and 1000 A.D" then 600-1000 A.D becomes earliest date the Yorùbá primordial gods like *Òdùduwà*, *Ọbàtálá* and Ogun can be put. (Jemriye, 1998g: 38) Also, this gives the set of gods closest to the Supreme God in time and deification procedure among all the Yorùbá gods.

II.6.2 Deified Ancestors

Awolalu titled the second classification "Deified Ancestors". (Jemiriye, 1998e) These are clear historical figures that lived at particular places and time and they were deified either before or after their death. Their being deified was often an acknowledgement of their outstanding features while they were alive. These outstanding features could be good or bad. The ones that were deified for their good features are worshipped in order to seek their favour and in order to recall their good works. *Òrìsà Oko* belongs to this group. The ones that were deified for bad features are worshiped by friends and close persons to such an ancestor

immediately or shortly after the ancestor's death. These friends do this in order to present a positive view for the bad ancestor. Often, such ancestor comes to be regarded as powerful. *Sango* belongs to this group. (Johnson, 1921: 150-151)

The concern here is not to present how these gods are worshipped. But to look into their nature that led to their pattern and process of deification and when the deification was done.

Generally, divinities that are in this second group include *Sango, Òrìsà-Oko, Ayelala, Oranmiyan, Yemaja, Oya, Obalufon, Osohusi,* and *Oba-Nla*. (Epega, 1971: 24, 25). Apart from *Sango* and *Òrìsà-Oko,* (who grew to more general acceptance among most of the Yorùbá) these gods are mostly local community heroes or heroines who were later deified. Usually, the functions performed by the gods in this group are similar in many respects from community to community. The similarities between *Sango* and *Jakuta cults; Òrìsà-Oko* and *Eje of Ijebu Manuwa; IjÈsù* in *Ilara* and *Owe* in *Oro Olofin* (Awolalu, 1979: 30, 35, 40) illustrate this local community patronage. Since the gods in this group actually lived as historical figures, the possibility of a more accurate dating is enhanced. The major difficulty here is that the Yorùbá rely largely on oral history. This therefore makes precise dating still difficult. Since most of these are local heroes and heroines, they are dated only by event in their community. Sango could be used to illustrate this.

A popular legend asserts that *Sango* was a human being who reigned as the fourth Alaafin of Oyo, and that he was husband to *Oya, Osun and Oba.* This legend

helps to date *Sango, Oya, Osun* and *Oba* if the legend is reliable. The major problem, however, is that the date of first Oyo kingdom or first Oyo kings is not certain. Also the length of the reign of the first three kings before Sango are unknown. Thus dating *Sango* still poses to be a pretty difficult task. However, by dating the founding of Oyo as 600 – 1000 A.D and by allowing reasonable time of migration from Ife to Oyo, and for three kings to reign, *Sango* could be dated 1450-1500 A.D. Thus the deification of *Sango* after his death would be around 1500 A.D. (Osae and Nwagbara, 1968: 94-97; Johnson 1921: 34).

Knowing this date becomes helpful in making a comparison of theological developments and similarities between YTR and other existing faiths of the time. In the context of this study, this other existing faith is Christianity. This helps to project the possibility of whether Christian ideas really influenced the deification process or nature of the gods either directly or indirectly. (kalu, 1978; Shorter, 1973; Jemiriye & Gerald, 1985, Peel, 1968 are of interest here). This influence, if it existed, is particularly important when it is observed that many scholars now equate or compare some Yorùbá gods with Roman or Greek gods and even Christian saints. Examples will be Ogun who is compared with the Roman Mars and Greek Apollo, Oluorogbo who is known by some as the saviour of the world; and Moremi who has been equated to the cult of Mary or Lady of Apostle. (Fabunmi, 1969: 9)

II.6.2 Personified Forces

Awolalu called this third group "Personification of natural forces and phenomena". This basically is an association of spirits with natural objects like earth, rivers, mountains, wind, sea, trees, noise, illness, and such like. The degree to which these could be called gods or divinities is really very low. The degree is not of any substantial amount when compared to the first two groups discussed above. Hence, these have been seen by some as objects that remind the worshippers of the spirits behind them. The treatment of some of these is almost similar to "Icon Controversy" in church history, in the sense that some objects are deified at one time only to be rejected at another and re-deified later. (Renwick, 1958: 82f, walker, 1970: 140-150, 157, 189).

The main objects grouped here include Earth, *Oya, Yemoja, Osun, Ogbese, Elemi-Igede-Ekiti, Olokun, Orosun-Idanre, Olumo-Abeokuta, Olosunta-Ikere-Ekiti, Iroko, Igi-Omo, Obi, Oro* (in wind), *Ajija* (in whirlwind), *Sonponna, Òrìsà-Ibeji,* and many others. These are really local, and taken for granted in local community and the date for such were never known or seriously considered.

As a rule, the story is – it has been since the time of our forefathers. Thus, it could be said in summary that the deification of Yorùbá gods-divinities – in general took informal form, mainly in local communities over a long period of time. As to date, the earliest will be about 600 A.D to 1000 A.D as discussed above, and the latest deified objects may be as recent as the community canonizing such a divinity!

Such deification will, of course, lack popularity or universal recognition among the Yorùbá. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 42)

II.7 *WORSHIP AND OBJECTS OF VENERATION*

Much has been written on worship and objects of veneration in YTR by many writers. The attempt here is not to reproduce the many detailed descriptions; rather the attempt is to see how the worship and the objects relate to the God and gods. Parrinder and Farrow are often quoted as saying that "No cult is offered to *Olorun*, and there are no temples or priest of *Ọlórun",* Idowu (1962: 107-139), Awolalu (1979: 7-8) and some others have corrected this view of Parrinder and Farrow.

Since 1950, the worship of *Olorun* has been re-established as the pillar for the gods. This is seen in the coming together of worshippers of the different gods to worship Ọlórun jointly in a common place of worship. This place is often called 'worship centre'. This coming together is a great reinforcement to the view that all worshippers in YTR worship the Supreme God and that the gods are only different functional intermediaries. The worship of *Olorun-Olódùmarè at Orule-Òrìsà* by rotational worship of the gods is a prominent example of this new unification trend. (*Orule Òrìsà* was the sacred worship ground of YTR at the University of Ife, Nigeria in 1975-1978).

The results from this re-organized YTR worship are many. Taking the *Orule-Òrìsà* as an illustration, the re-organization becomes very significant because its worship affect people in a different form and at a different level that YTR has never done before now. University students associate with the worship centre. While the goal here is not to say that this is good or bad, but the fact that YTR is now challenging old interpretations and at the same time improving, expanding, and presenting its doctrine through this new worship and cannot be neglected as insignificant. Also, this worship reaffirms the claim that some Yorùbá still believe in the God-gods relationship and worship the God through the gods.

Objects used in worship are many. These are materials involved in Religion. Many of these object materials employed in worship have been venerated over the years. Based on this new worship of God through worship of individual god within the gods on a rotational basis, it could be said that in a special sense, the gods are venerated symbols for the Supreme God. The gods, sacrifices, place of worship, special items, colour, natural objects (like rivers, trees, falls), some people and place have been venerated. Other venerated objects include a variety of foods (*like Akara* for some *egungun, Isu for Òrìsà-Oko, Iyan for Òrìsà-Nla),* drinks (like *Emu* for *Ogun*), some animals (like *Igbin* for *Òrìsà, Aja* for *Ogun, Agbo* for *Òrìsà)* and sometimes, special human beings (like *Aro, Afin, Abuke* – called *Eni-Òrìsà*). (Awolalu, 1979: 108-114) Apart from *Eni-Òrìsà,* some other people are often venerated because of their peculiar or special birth or death. Examples here will

include *Dada, Oke, Talabi, Aina, Lisabi* and *Egbeji*. (Epega, 1971: 23) This veneration of people is still present within many traditions even today. Man is the operator of Religion and materials are part of the instruments, objects of worship, objects of manipulation that are used to assert, express, picture and represent the relationship.

In the pantheon of the gods, the objects venerated are those that are either abhorred or really liked by each god. *Òrìsà Nla* for example, does not drink *emu*, whereas *Ogun's* favourite drink is *emu*. Similarly, *Ayelala* would not touch palm oil, whereas Oba Oluwaiye's favourite drink is palm oil. (Awolalu 1979: 43) Thus, things that have been venerated for a particular god are those things that are either taboos to the other god or they are the things the particular god is fond of. From the foregoing, it has been shown that worship is another manifestation of the connection of the god to the gods and that the venerated objects (including the gods) are more of symbols than absolute gods in themselves. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 45)

II.8   Roles and Power of the God-gods

The roles played by the gods in relation to human being are many, and those roles vary from god to god. This relationship between the god and man has been presented in many descriptive works. The approach of the presentations includes identifying particular god with a particular task as in *Ogun,* god of iron and war;

Sango, god of thunder, justice and such like. The roles vary also in relations to human beings from encouraging human beings to be honest – as in *Ayelala*, to attributing success in work to divine beings – as farm work is to *Òrìsà-Oko.* (Awolalu 1979: 39-41)

The particular interest at this stage is in the relationship between the Supreme God and the gods. Are these God-gods equal, dependent, independent or what? Here the relationship between the God and gods, and from the gods to the worshippers will be considered.

Idowu spelt out the relationship of the gods to the Supreme God in four steps. He wrote:

> The question of relationship between Deity and the divinities defines the place of the latter within the whole system. First, from the point of view of the theology of African Traditional Religion, it will not be correct to say that the divinities were created. It will be correct to say that they were brought into being, or that they came into being in the nature of things with regard to the divine ordering of the universe. (Idowu, 1973: 169)

The divinities are derivatives for Deity

> … it is not always that the fact of the derivation can be proved from the linguistic connections between the names of Deity and the genetic names of the divinities. It is generally theological provable that the divinities have no absolute existence… Because the divinities derive from Deity, their powers and authorities they are meaningless apart from him. Each divinity has his own local name in the local language, which is descriptive either of his

allotted function or the natural phenomenon a manifestation or emblem of his being. (Idowu, 1979: 169)

Fourthly, the divinities were brought into being as functionaries in the theocratic government of the universe. (Awolalu, 1979: 170) Although Idowu was writing on ATR, the illustration he used to prove the points were taken mostly from the YTR. This makes the four principles very suitable for illustrating the role, relations and power of the gods to the Supreme God. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 47)

The role of the Supreme God in YTR has often been presented by many writers as remote, aloof and unseen. This does not describe the role of the Supreme God in YTR correctly. Benjamin Ray gave an example of this in his presentation when he wrote "In this respect, *Olorun* has remained aloof from the course of his history after originally delegating the care of the world to the *Òrìsà*." (ray, 1976: 55) Idowu and Awolalu disproved this role given to the Supreme at length. Idowu and Awolalu (Awolalu, 1979: 50) emphasize that the Supreme God is not aloof and that the Supreme God is the life-giver and maintainer of both the gods and the whole universe. The Supreme God's delegation of the more physically conspicuous role to the gods does not imply that the Supreme God is aloof.

Awolalu pointed out that in a truly polytheistic Religion, all the divinities are of equal rank and there is no unifying and transcending ultimate. (Awolalu, 1979: 50) It is this inequality between the God and gods in Role and Power that makes "Polytheism" inappropriate in describing the YTR. In YTR, the gods act as functionaries of, and mediators to the Supreme God. This is shown in their

distinctive roles. The gods act only on God's order. Awolalu in presenting these ideas wrote:

> The divinities act only as permitted by Him and they give an account of their activities to Him from time to time. They only act as His functionaries and as mediator between Him and His people. Thus they exist for the purpose of bringing the Supreme Being closer to His creatures. In other words, divinities and spirits do not and cannot occupy the place of the Supreme Being. They constitute a means to an end, not an end themselves. This is to suggest that all worship, which is channeled through the divinities and spirits, goes on to the one Supreme Being who is the sole controller and has the final say. (Awolalu, 1979: 50 and similar ideas in Idowu, 1962: 71-106)

Thus, Awolalu's description defines the roles of the gods with regard to the Supreme God. This description shows that whatever power any god might have is given to the god by the Supreme God. In these sense, it means the powers of the gods are never working against that of the Supreme God who gave the god the power in the first place. This is essential especially in connection with *Èsù*, and the duality (Douglas 1974: 314) that is sometimes presented between the Supreme God and *Èsù*. *Èsù* within YTR is a good god and this explains names like *Èsù*biyi, *Èsù*dara, *Èsù*sanmi and others. In other words, *Èsù* in YTR is not the same as in Christianity or Islam. (Dopamu, 1986).

The manifestation of power of these gods on man is however very different from that of the relations of God and gods. The first response of most Yorùbá to the power of the God is fear in some form of restricted awe. This is reflected by

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Yorùbá people giving money to allow an *Èsù* worshipper to pass. This does not manifest any main concern or affinity for the god by the person showing/giving this response to the particular worshipper.

To those who believe in a particular god, the power of the god is real and more dominating on such as individual. Allegiance to the god is manifested by the fear of punishment from the god if a worshipper should deflect. A unique form of the manifestation of the power of the god on a particular worshipper is what is called "possession". In different varieties, from one god to another god, the spirit of the god infests a special or just any worshipper of its cult in a unique way.

Elegun Sango (Awolalu, 1979: 37-39)*, Elegun Egungun* are examples of special sole possession, while in *Oya* the possessions are more open to participants. The devotees usually possessed by *Òrìsà-Oko* are called *Agegun – Òrìsà Oko*, and they are mostly women. The extent of who could be possessed varies from one god to another. While in Sango and *Egungun*, possession is limited to rotary, in Ogun or some other gods; possession could be from a large number in the group and from the audience. This possession is very important in reflecting how the gods dwell and reflect power through their worship and their worshippers. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 49)

Thus, by defining the role of the gods, it is seen that the gods are not equal to the Supreme God. Rather, the gods are dependent solely on the Supreme God. Also, it is seen that the gods play only functional roles for the Supreme God. They

are not independent from the Supreme God in any functional sense. With respect to human beings, the gods protect and possess human beings. The gods also present human beings to the Supreme God. Thus, the gods are purely intermediaries for human being to the Supreme God. This calls for a look at what then are really the role models of the God and gods. (Abimbola 1975; Abogunrin 1986; Jemiriye, 2002b)

III. MODELS OF THE GOD AND GODS

Relational Models of God-gods Functional Pattern

Putting theological views in graphical model is not very common. This, however, has the advantage of presenting at a glance summary of what may be long-winded essays. Peter Morton-William's "model of Yorùbá cosmology" (Africa, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1964: 248) in which he presented the Yorùbá God-gods is a good lead for the attempt in this study. The attempt here is to derive relational model or models that will best present the God-gods functional pattern. The models are to be based on the theological connections between the God-gods. The greatest problem to this attempt, is that no one sketch can be comprehensive enough as to do justice to all the different connections of the God-gods in their roles, importance, and relevance to human beings. This problem, however, should not scare the attempt away; rather, it should call for many sketches, each sketch expressing a phase of the relations.

III.1 Peter Morton-William's Model

Peter Morton William's model, fig.2 is a very good presentation of some of the relations between the God-gods, especially from the creation mythology stories standpoint. This is why it is possible for Morton-William to fix the Yorùbá the God-gods into the cosmological sketch, Morton-Williams pointed out that the older model given to Yorùbá Traditional Religion by many writers was hierarchy of God

model. This model he rejected as inadequate. He said the older models of Yorùbá

religious system

> Place the various spiritual powers in a hierarchy at the top,
> the High God, *Olorun*, without a cult; next in order of
> rank, the *Òrìsà*, usually including *Ifa* and *Èsù* and
> sometimes arbitrarily graded into two orders of greater or
> lesser deities; then the ancestors; and last, minor ghosts,
> tree spirits, fairies and so on. (Africa, Vol. 34 No. 3: 248)

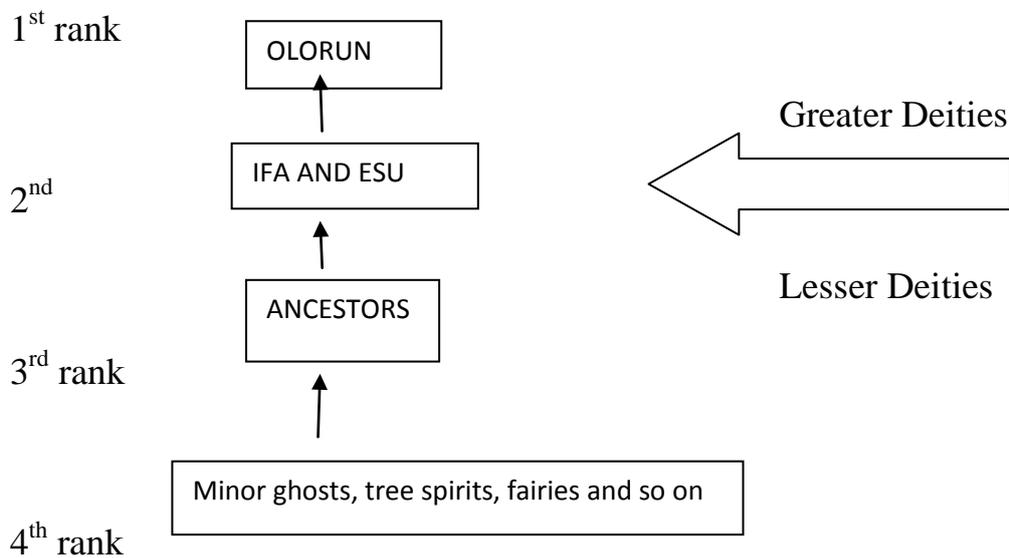The sketch will look like Fig. 2:

1st rank

2nd

3rd rank

4th rank

Fig. 2

Fig.2 is a sketch of what Peter Morton-William presented as the older model of

Yorùbá Traditional Religion (YTR).

OLORUN
THE GOD

ARA ORUN

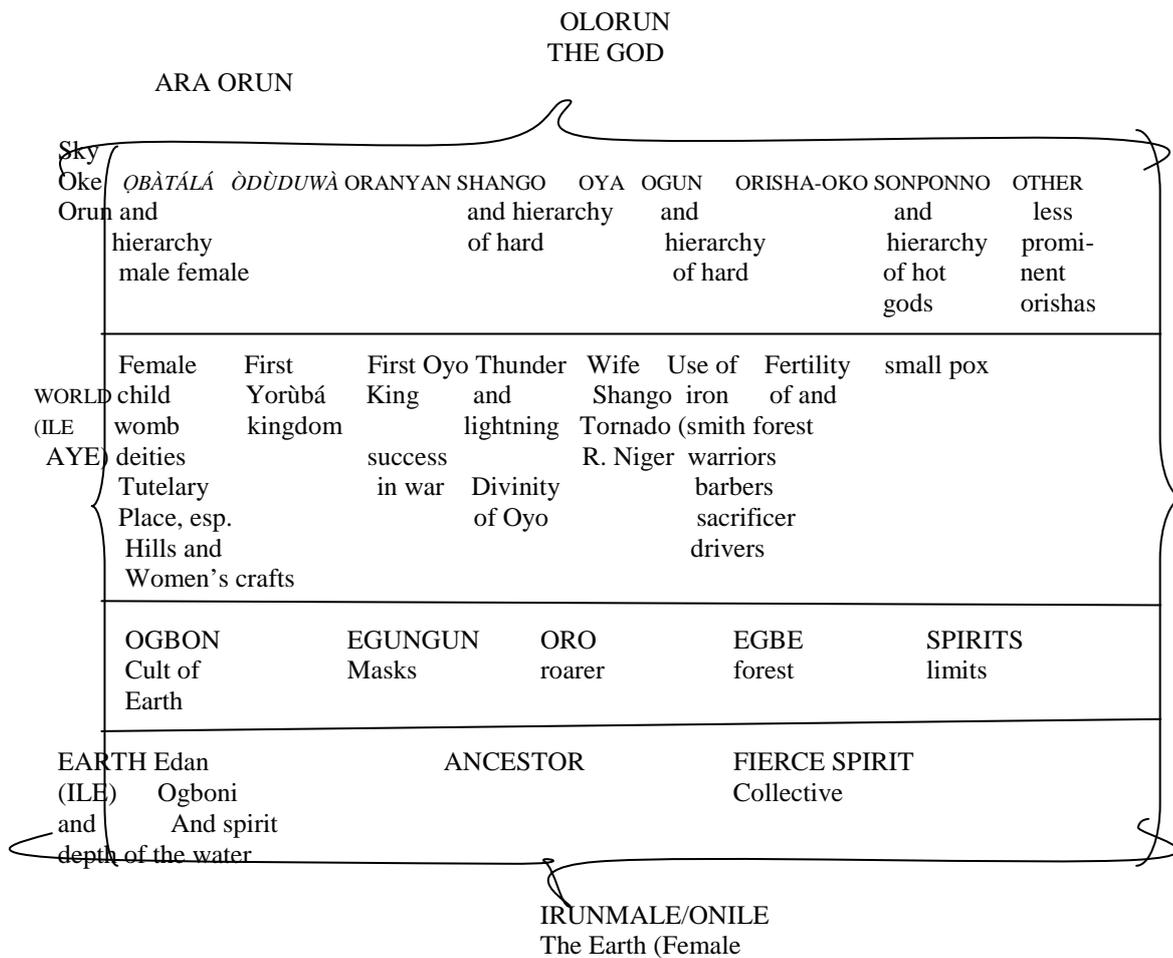|	ȮBÀTÁLÁ ÒDÙDUWÀ	ORANYAN	SHANGO	OYA	OGUN	ORISHA-OKO	SONPONNO	OTHER
Sky Oke Orun	and hierarchy male female		and hierarchy of hard		and hierarchy of hard		and hierarchy of hot gods	less promi-nent orishas
WORLD (ILE AYE)	Female child womb deities Tutelary Place, esp. Hills and Women's crafts	First Yorùbá kingdom	First Oyo King success in war	Thunder and lightning Divinity of Oyo	Wife Shango Tornado R. Niger	Use of iron (smith warriors barbers sacrificer drivers	Fertility of and forest	small pox
	OGBON Cult of Earth	EGUNGUN Masks	ORO roarer		EGBE forest	SPIRITS limits		
EARTH (ILE) and depth of the water	Edan Ogboni And spirit		ANCESTOR		FIERCE SPIRIT Collective			

IRUNMALE/ONILE
The Earth (Female

Fig. 3 Peter Morton-William's Model. This is presenting the God-gods along the Yorùbá cosmology hierarchy line.

According to Morton-William,

> The hierarchical model, more or less developed, is to be found in the work of Crowther (1852), Bowen (1857-Burton's original), Burton (1863), Baudin (1884), Ellis (1894), Frobenius (1912), Talbot (1926), Epega (1931), Bascom (1944) and Idowu (1962). Its fullest expression is to be found in three doctoral theses on Yorùbá Religion: S.S. Farrow (PhD Edinburgh, published in 1924), E.G. Parrinder (PhD London, published in 1924) and J.O. Lucas (D.D. Durham, published in 1950). (Africa, Vol. 34 No. 3: 250)

It must be said that while Fig. 2 is inadequate as said by Morton-William, Fig. 3 is equally inadequate as this does not represent all the relations that the writers he listed treated. For example, Idowu could be seen to reflect a slightly different model than that in Fig. 3.

III.2 Idowu in Model

Idowu's emphasis on monotheism as against pantheism and /or pluralistic God (Idowu, 1973: 140-150) would give an interesting sketch as shown in Fig. 4.
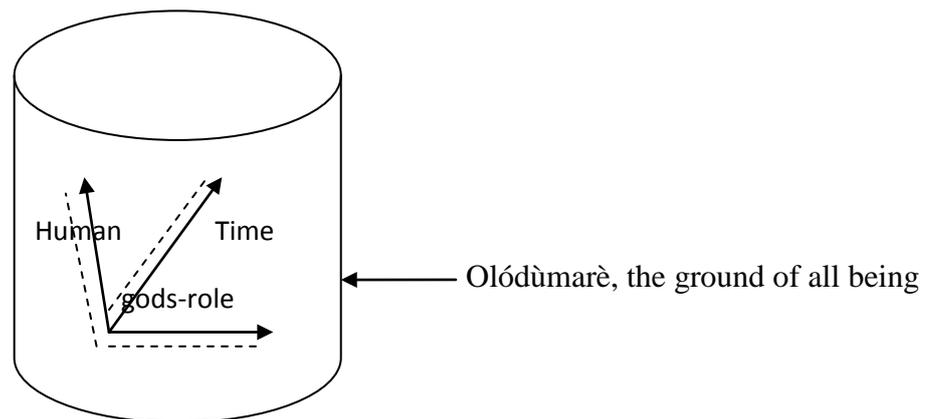

Fig. 4. Olódùmarè – the ground of all being. A three dimensional involvement.

In Fig. 4, the broken lines illustrate that the role of the gods increased as the number of gods, the number of human beings, number of human devotion to the gods and time increased. Also in Fig. 4, everything is within the framework of Olódùmarè, the ground of all being, human beings and gods. (Idowu, 1973) In Fig. 4, the time-gods plane reflects the different gods and their deification; the human beings-gods

plane represents the role of the gods in relation to human; and the human being-time plane represents human understanding, possession and worship devotion. All the three axes, and all lines would have broken lines to show increases that are not necessarily uniform. A line could thus be drawn to represent each god. A decline or increase could thus be shown. This could be gotten from Idowu's description and this makes Fig. 3 not as comprehensive on the list of writers given by Morton-William. Also, this Idowu's representation, Fig. 4, is important because, it is more accommodating. The accommodation allows for all the gods to be fitted in separately by lines, and by summing up the best lines that could put the gods in order of magnitude and importance.

III.3 Awolalu in Model

Also, a further consideration of Peter Morton-William's sketch, Fig.3 reveals that many aspects of the God-gods relations are not well taken care of. Applying Awolalu's three classifications - primordial divinities, deified ancestors and personification of natural forces and phenomena (Awolalu, 1979: 21-51)- to Morton-William's model, Fig. 3, present the model as not being accommodating enough. Awolalu put into a sketch, based on his description would look as shown in Fig. 5.
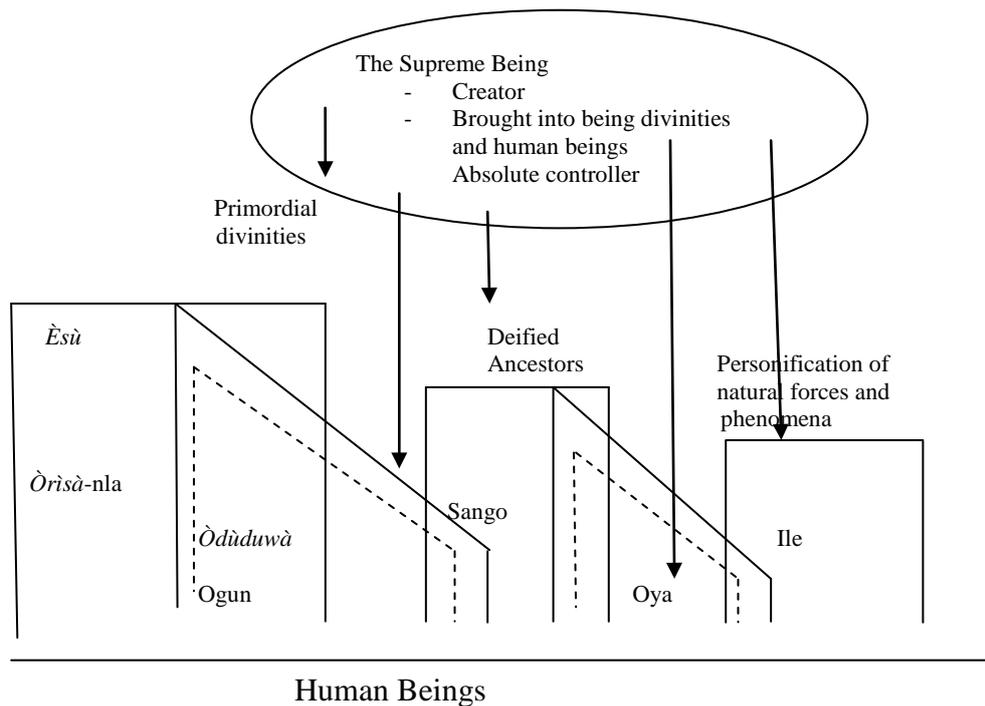
Awolalu in Model

Fig. 5: Awolalu's three classifications –Primordial divinities, deified ancestors and personified forces as illustrated by T.F. Jemiriye.

The gods in broken enclosure (*Òdùduwà*, Ogun, Oya) illustrates the controversial position they belong, depending on which theory is followed. The height of the unbroken enclosure of the gods represents their importance in nearness to the Supreme Being. The more broken the arrow, the weaker the delegatory role and mediatory function. It must be said that Awolalu's sketch, Fig. 5 represents only another part of the relation between the God-gods relation. This Fig. 5 misses out completely the element of time (deification). It shows, however, the importance and mode of deification of the gods. Also, there is a way in which Fig. 5 could still be constructed as hierarchical thereby giving it a relation to Fig. 3, which has been rejected. It seems, however, that Fig. 5 best explains the deification in terms of

superior grouping hence the three classifications of the gods in relation to God. (Jemiriye, 1989g: 62)

III.4   Benjamin Ray's Sketch of Morphology

Benjamin Ray's description of the Yorùbá Religion from 'morphology and history' (Ray, 1976: 61-62, 64) standpoint makes another interesting sketch. Ray presented Ọlórun as diminishing in property and role with time, while *Òdùduwà* and *Ọbàtálá* are gaining in accreditation at an advantage of Ọlórun's lost. A sketch of Ray's presentation of Ọlórun-*Òdùduwà-Ọbàtálá* relation would be as shown in Fig. 6.
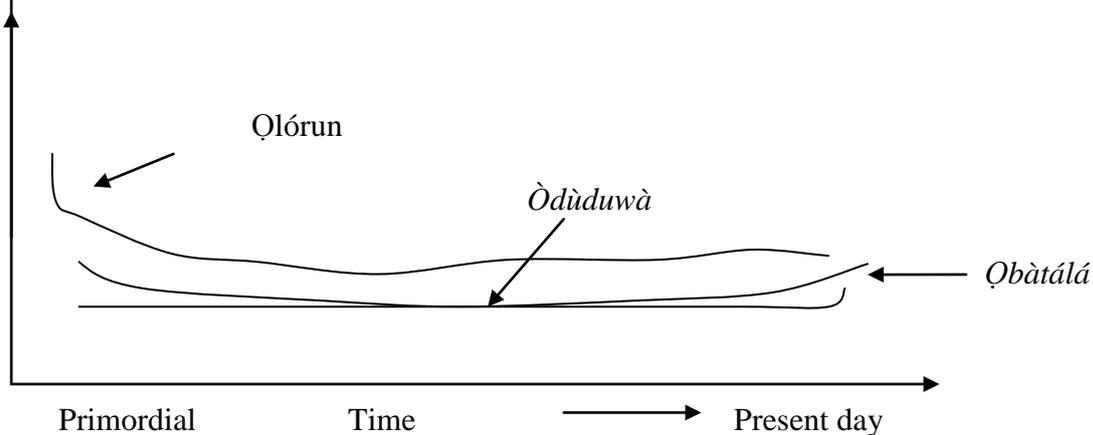

Fig. 6: Ray's Olorun-*Òdùduwà-Ọbàtálá* connection

Ray's sketch, Fig.6, shows that with time the preeminent role of Ọlórun was forfeited gradually first to *Ọbàtálá* and later to *Òdùduwà*. The crossing of the curves shows there are overlaps in the devotions given them. These overlaps may signify common properties of those gods also. Ray's sketch, Fig. 6, does not account for many of the gods at all. Also, Fig. 6 does not show the role-power

relation of the gods to the Supreme God. Sketch Fig. 6 is therefore not comprehensive at all, but it shows how a particular god could be compared to another – in this case, *Òdùduwà* and *Ọbàtálá*. Ray's treatment could therefore be regarded as being too narrow in the discussion of the God-gods as *Òdùduwà* and *Ọbàtálá* do not present the other gods adequately in their relation to Ọlórun.

It has been seen in this section that there are many models of God-gods functional pattern that can be drawn, depending on what each is concentrating upon. In Fig. 2 – Fig 6, each one did justice in some sense, to some part of the YTR. It seems the combination of Peter Morton-William's Fig.3, Idowu's Fig. 4 and Awolalu's Fig. 5 in some distinct areas provide the real comprehensive dimension that represent the relational model of God-gods functional pattern. With this, attempt can now look at the future of the God and gods. (Jemiriye 1998g: 63)

III.5 The Future of the God and gods

Part of the goals of this lecture has been to interpret the Yorùbá God and gods in order to correct some misrepresentations and misinterpretations. This has been done by defining the concept of God and briefly by examining the Supreme God, attributes, names, relations, language concept, nature, deification, date of the gods and some other things.

What really are the options to the God and gods? Are they likely to continue to exist or are they likely to grow into oblivion some day? Thus far, the God and

gods have been addressed as males. Are there goddesses? What terms are acceptable to the Yorùbá in describing the God and gods? Can there be modification, integration and or preservation of anything or all things in the Yorùbá concept of God and gods. What are the bottom lines or hard realities that should be faced by the Yorùbá in relation to their God and gods and by ambitious outside people that are trying to convert the Yorùbá? All these questions should be addressed.

III.5.1 The Options: Continuity or Discontinuity

To assert that there is a future existence of the Yorùbá God and god is to believe in continuity. If it is the view that there will be no future existence for the Yorùbá God and gods then it is discontinuity that is upheld.

If history is anything to go by (and it surely is), it would be expected that many years of the bombardment of the Yorùbá concept of God and gods by foreign Religions, especially Christianity and Islam should have wiped it out. That the concept is still strongly upheld by the Yorùbá shows that continuity has taken place no matter how it is evaluated.

Awolalu (*Orita*, 1981: 9) analysed three elements of continuity, discontinuity and fusion. Aptly, he said that, "It is very difficult to say with certainty what elements of the Yorùbá Religion are completely discontinued or continued or what

elements have been fused with other cultures". Elements of continuity of the Yorùbá traditional Religion, especially belief in God and gods manifest everywhere despite intense Christian missionary efforts and a thousand years of Muslim proselytising. This is strongly seen in the Yorùbá worship of the God and gods, in the homage paid to the ancestors in social and cultic setting and in the recourse to the gods through divination, magic and other cultic rituals.

Awolalu quoted from Bascom and Herkorists to prove continuity when he wrote:

> African Religion is a Religion that has been there for ages. It has no propaganda machinery, no membership roll, no paid priests, yet the traditional belief in the Supreme Being as the author of all things and preserver of heaven and earth has not changed. The names by which the Supreme Being is known have not changed. The missionaries who came to Africa borrowed the names and continued to use them in Christian worship. (*Orita* 1981: 10).

Olódùmarè or Ọlórun is the name of Yorùbá worship as borrowed by Christians. (Barrett, 1961; berkhof, 1978; Bonhoeffer, 1966; Boer, 1981; Booth, 1977; Hammond, 1936; Herder and Herder, 1972; Hick, 1977; Jemiriye, 1984, 1988, 1997a, 1998a, 2003a, 2003c, 2003d, 2004b and Jemiriye and Awosusi, 2007b are all involved in this principle). Attributes of the God and gods show continuity on a large scale. Worships, prayers and offerings still practised show continuity. The fact that generations after generations have passed away, and the Yorùbá festival of God and gods have not reduced in number, enthusiasm and celebration

confirms continuity of the Yorùbá God and gods. The worship of God and gods that have persisted include: Oke-badan (festival at Ibadan), Ogun (at Ondo), Osun (at Osogbo), Agemo (at Ijebu), Iromo (at Igede-Ekiti), Ifa (across Yorùbáland) and many others. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 66).

It cannot be denied that there is continuity in the traditional magic and medicine. Also, beliefs in witchcraft, *Oso, Aje, emere, ofo, ohun,* evil forces, *ori* and African investigative cure proves continuity.

However, there are some indisputable indicators pointing at discontinuity in some areas of traditional Yorùbá life. It must be admitted that some practices within the indigenous Religion in respect of the God-and gods have become weakened or moribund. These are due to effects of alien influences. An example of such practices that have become rare or uncommon is the worship of the Supreme Being among the Yorùbá. In pristine time, worshipper would make a circle of ashes of white chalk and within the circle, he would pour libation of cold water and placed a white kolanut (*Obi ifin)* on a white cotton wool (*Orita* 1981: 14). Now this particular form of worship is not common.

Another example relates to the birth of twins (*Ibeji*) by a woman. This was regarded as evil in some parts of Yorùbá land in the olden days, hence the punitive rites and ceremonies that are required of women that have twin children. The ceremonies usually include dancing round with the children, getting some food

items such as *akara* (bean cake), *ekuru* (a special bean food), *ireke* (sugarcane), *agbon* (coconut), *epo* (palm oil) and singing. The singing tale-tell her mission as a directive from God and gods. An example of such song is:

Tayelolu lo ni nki gbogbo yin o
Ngo si ki gbogbo yin lookan.

Translated: It is Tayelolu (one of the twins) that has compelled me to greet you all and I will greet you all one by one. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 68).

The song used to be followed by a freewill donation in cash and kind to the twins. It must be noted that with the infiltration of western science and way of life, the belief in relation to twins changed drastically to a level of near discontinuity. It is done recently, in these days of hard economic crunch for survival strategy rather than a commitment to religious practice. Thus, there are elements of discontinuity in intent, practice and evaluation of this religious event. Some other events that show discontinuity include attributing now medically explainable situations to the God and gods, as in the case of *sonponno* (small pox) or *olode* (measles), and authority ascribed to religious functionaries, societies and shrines as in *aworo* (priest), *ogboni* and *oro* (secret societies) and *ojubo* (worship groves). (*Orita*, 1981: 16)

On continuity or discontinuity, it will be adequate to agree with Awolalu's conclusion that

Whether Africans like it or not (and Yorùbá in this case), some aspects of their Religion will change through modern education, technological know-how, contact with other world Religions and partly because of the people's movement to live in cities and other parts of the world. But … even if certain aspects of the Religion die, other aspects will survive, and some of them will be changed or transformed to meet the needs of the changing times (*Orita* 1981: 19).

III.5.2   God and Goddesses

One of the issues in the changing times, relevant to this lecture is the God or godess(es) that has been raised by some feminine conscious enquirers. In these days of women liberation, operation for better women, women family support campaigns of all kinds, asking whether there are goddesses become very apt and relevant. It must be said very clearly that the women liberation hang over of the western world has no place in Yorùbá God and gods. The term God and gods encompasses goddesses as well. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 69)

Yemoja, Osun and *Oya* are prominent female gods. They are not necessarily referred to as goddesses. Male or female, they are within the God and gods system. It will suffice to say that the Yorùbá have both male and female gods within the God-gods system, and there is no fuss on whether a particularly god is male or female.

Of relevance here is the gender of *Ọbàtálá*. Many Yorùbá believe *Ọbàtálá* to be a woman while others hold him to be a man. Whether male or female, it does

not belittle the role, function, worship or influence of *Ọbàtálá* with his adherents. It could therefore be said that the issue of feminism to the Yorùbá God-gods system is of little or no significance. If then, the God-goddesses issues are just a matter of terms, what should be regarded as acceptable terms to use for Yorùbá God and gods?

III.5.3   Acceptable Terms

Acceptable terms to the Yorùbá Religion in general, and to the God and gods in particular are the actual words used by the Yorùbá in their Religion and for the God and gods. Any other word, except the words used by the Yorùbá becomes unacceptable. This is because words are cultural and have their fullest meaning within their context of origin. Using the exact words used by the Yorùbá for their Religion and God-gods makes the discussion full, very rich and unbiased. It makes the Yorba experience of his Religion and God-gods valid, true and genuine to the Yorùbá. Others using the terms also confirm that they accept the claim that the Yorùbá has a right to his experience, religious expressions and God-gods. The option now is, what is in the future of the Yorùbá God and gods?

III.5.4　　Modification, Integration and Preservation

In evaluating the final option for the future of the God and gods, the resultant principles hinge on modifications, integration and preservation. Some aspects of the Yorùbá God and gods must be modified in the light of the modern day civilization. (Jemiriye 1998g: 71)

Among the issues for modification are the recognition, training and functioning of the priesthood in God and gods system. Others include need for better documentation of the many aspects like worship, theology and persons of the God and gods. Making the God and gods meaningful to the non-Yorùbá and relevant to the present day are areas of modification as well.

Apart from modification, integration is a major area that must be focussed as relevant to this discussion. Looking down on many things that are non-western or that are African is a bane that has permeated many people's attitude in viewing concepts of which the god-gods is included. The Yorùbá God and gods concept must be integrated into present day happenings within the global village called world. The integration is to be a double way – injecting the God-gods culture with concepts from outside thought as to serve as a check on the God-gods value and at the same time, administering the God-gods value on other God concepts in other religious settings, as to cross enrich outside positions are parts of the suggested needed integration. Examples of issues for integration are the use of the media in

propaganda, development of evangelism, evangelization machinery, involvement in mass mobilization such as revivals, testimonies and such likes. The spirit of right of domination or intimidation as projected in the use of language, especially on the issue of salvation, heaven, hell, power of ownership and outright condemnation of the other person especially from foreign Religions toward Yorùbá God-gods, are all issues of integration. (Jemiriye, 1998g: 72)

Preservation is the third lap that needs a visit in this dimension. There are some aspects of the Yorùbá God and gods that must be preserved and taught to the outside world. First is the spirit of holistic worship of the God-gods regardless of the approaching line. As far as the Yorùbá God-gods are concerned, whether you worship *Egungun, Oro, Iroma* or whatever or through a combination of gods, it is permitted and within the same concept. (*Orita*, 1984: 111-118) It is not pantheism. There is full freedom in the choice of line of worship within the Yorùbá Godgods.

There is tolerance and acceptance within the practice of God and gods religious worship. These qualities should be preserved.

The last issue mentioned here is the link of theoretical ideals of Religion with practical day-to-day living. The Yorùbá God and gods presence and effect are as intense in the grove with the priest as it is within the market place. An okro seller in the market will call on *Ogun* as a witness in the market just as if in the shrine. This is a super contrast to many foreign Religions that preach lofty ideals of love on

Sunday and practise maximized profit on Monday to Saturday. This is what Idowu (1975: 5) refers to as "in all things they are religious". The practice in which there is no separation in way of life from the God-gods belief regardless of time and place should be preserved and sold to other Religions.

There are many other principles from the Yorùbá God and gods that should be preserved. The attempt here is just an opening up of the areas. More works could and should be done in this area. It will suffice here just to mention the principles as done. The goal is to bring to a full consciousness the fact the in the Yorùbá God and gods there issues for modification, integration and preservation.

III.5.5   The Hard Reality

This work has explored the Yorùbá God-gods. Over the years, there have been modification and integration in the people's understanding of the concepts. The God-gods have been preserved in the face of all odds and challenges to this time. The hard reality for all to bear is that, Yorùbá God-gods are reality in existence and experience, which the Yorùbá treasure, of which the outside world can learn much from. But what function do they really perform? (Jemiriye, 1998g: 73)

III.5.6   Functions of God-gods

It has been agreed upon and without any iota of doubt that the divinities were brought into being to perform certain functions. This fact has been supported by scholars (Idowu, Awolalu, Dopamu, Adewale) and devotees of the African Traditional Religion. Therefore, the following are some of the functions of the God-gods:

1. Divinities protect their devotees against misfortunes.

2. They bring peace and prosperity to people.

3. They are called upon to bring victory during wars or national crisis.

4. They are approached through oracle diviners to find out what could be done to ward-off calamities and dangers.

5. Divinities give barren women children.

6. Divinities are ministers and intermediaries. They also act as guardians and policemen of public morality.

7. They punish those who disobey the norms of the society with sickness and misfortunes and rewards with prosperity those who conform to the rules and regulations of the society.

8. Prayers and sacrifices are offered to the Supreme Being through the divinities.

9. Divinities occasionally warn individual human being and family heads of impending calamities.

10. They serve as intermediaries between God-gods and man.

11. They serve as benefactors and as comforters to the worshippers.

12. They serve as land providence, e.g. *Òrìsà oko* is a benefactor to the farmers.

13. They provide employment, food and meaningful life for the worshippers and the priests.

14. They regulate the male/female functions in the community e.g. a woman cannot be *Olori awo*.

15. They moderate and dictate fashion value for worshippers. These functions are found scattered in many books on YTR including (Adewale 1988, Beier 1975, Fagunwa 1962, Mbiti, 1969, Simpson, 1980)

Apart from the listed and other unlisted functions of the divinities, what are the attributes of the God-gods.

III.6 Attributes of God-gods

There are some specific and standard attributes that make any object of worship a divinity. The divinities are not just referred to as divinities or part of the God-gods or within the God-gods except there are some distinguished characteristics they are associated with as attributes. Among the attributes they must possess are:

1. They should display or have spiritual dimensions.

2. Divinities should have some remarkable character, attribute or quality.

3. Divinities, in case of deified ancestors must have lived well, died well, attained an enviable age before dying, and must have left behind good children.

4. Divinities are known to have been worshipped by others than their families but there are always recognized mythological stories or legends around them. Divinities must have left behind some indelible impact and have a cult to serve in memories of such spectacular happenings.

5. They must have spiritual power that is above normal power. The spiritual powers are not necessarily physical that can be exacted by human being.

6. Divinities must be able to mediate or liaise on behalf of the people.

All these explain parts of the why worship and why some objects are venerated within the God-gods system. A critical look into the Yorùbá community reveals that the practical living of the people with the God-gods is centred in the *Àkòdì* (Jemiriye, 2001a) and the *Àkòdì* concept is the exemplification of the complexity in religion. *Àkòdì* represents the problems and practical solutions of living together. *Àkòdì* is a life practice of acceptance, hence the *in-situ* setting of the equation of religion as acceptance.

IV.   *Àkòdì*

Within the *Àkòdì* truth, justices, love and good works are some of the universal religious maxims that are subscribed to and also by most of the Religions of the world. (Frankl, 1959) This section of this lecture wants to focus on just an aspect of love – acceptance, from whatever possible list could be put out as religious maxims, in YTR or in other religions of the world.

There are many operative words that depict one aspect of love or the other. Such include, care, forgiveness, tolerance, concern and acceptance. It is the view of this writer that the actual practical operative word for love is acceptance. This is why acceptance becomes the operative word in the attempt to find a role model for Religion in the global village.

In other words, the role of Religion is to provide acceptance for humanity. Religion must work relentlessly to remove the inhumanity of man to man under any guise; be it piety, playing god to another person or free visa lottery which is the modernized slavery without the option or possibility of reparation. It is this acceptance that is here claimed to have existed in *Àkòdì* long before the twenty-first century. It is the acceptance that the twenty-first century may unwillingly and unwittingly destroy if care is not taken. It is the call to the *Àkòdì* consciousness that is now to be explored. (Jemiriye & Eniola, 2005, 73-82)

IV.1 *Àkòdì* in Yorùbá Community

Background

Àkòdì is a Yorùbá word that depicts a people's practical living of total acceptance. The word in itself does not seem to be much until the concept it stands for is adequately examined and exposed. This is therefore an attempt to show the

concepts embedded within the *Àkòdì* system and to recommend the principle of total acceptance that it stands for as a necessary and possible in-road to world peace. In order to reveal the deep concept that *Àkòdì* contains the word is here discussed in stages. The first stage defines the word, exposes the architectural configuration and the physical structure of the *Àkòdì*. The second stage looks at the sociology of the people living in the *Àkòdì*. Here the composition of the people, their political setting, the economic setting, and the religious setting are examined. The third stage evaluates the *Àkòdì* crisis management principle and establishes the relationship-equation between the survival of one and the survival of all. Stage four on the *Àkòdì* consideration shows that survival stands for acceptance, for peace and for continuity.

IV.2 Definition of *Àkòdì*

Àkòdì is a Yorùbá word that has etymological definition as well as a concept representation definition. Etymologically, *Àkòdì* is a combination of five alphabets – three vowels A, O, I, and two consonants K and D. the word *Àkòdì* could be broken into "*Àkò*" and "*òdì*". *Àkò* means "hard" or "male" and *òdì* means wall or boundary. *Odi* could also mean "deaf" – a deaf person. *Àkòdì* as a combination of *Àkò* and *òdì* is possible and explainable in the sense that the coming together of o – o in *Àkò -òdì* to give o alone in *Àkòdì* is a contraction. The vowel contraction at the coming together of two vowels into one is a common phenomenon in Yorùbá language. It is noted that there is no single word in English that can serve as a near equivalent – not even to convene up to ten percent of its concept.

From the concept representation point of view, the meanings portrayed by *Àkò* and *Odi* are all contained in what *Àkòdì* stands for. The physical structure of *Àkòdì* and the architectural configuration of *Àkòdì* show that the concepts represented by the component words *Àkò* and *Odi* are well grounded in *Àkòdì*. The conceptual definition of *Àkòdì* is shown in the following to one degree or the other. (Jemiriye, 2001a)
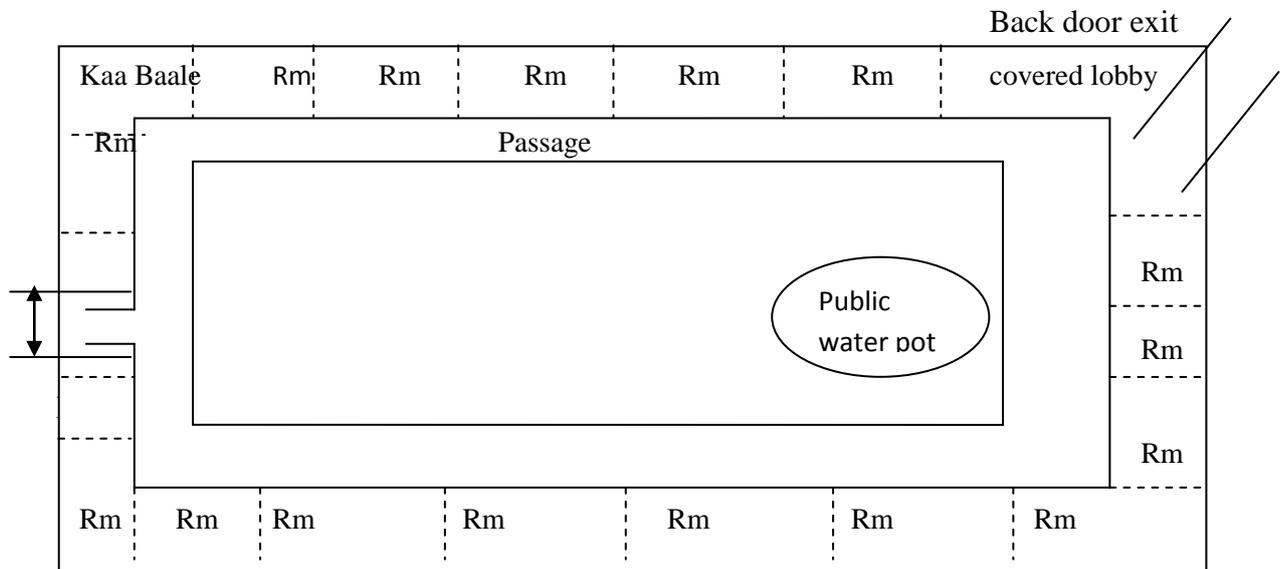
IV.3 Physical Structure of *Àkòdì*

The physical structure of *Àkòdì* is a building of a special type. Like most buildings (if not all buildings), it is made of natural objects. The walls are often built from moulded earth and the roof is often of thatch leaves or, recently, pans with woods as rafter. All the materials are hard and in a sense could be regarded as "*Àkò nkan*"- translated "Hard materials". There is the view that *"A kì í fi nkan yẹpẹrẹ k'ólé; Ohun tí ó le ni a fi n kó ilé".* Translated:- People do not use soft or cheap things in building. Rather people use hard, tough and lasting things – objects in building. Thus *Àkòdì* as a building must be tough, and sturdy as to be able to stand the strain of weather and the test of time. (Jemiriye, 2001a)

B2 Architectural Configuration or *Àkòdì*

A Study of the ground plan drawing of the *Àkòdì* shows the first concept of oneness. The *Àkòdì* is usually a large concentric rectangular setting as shown in the

66

diagram. At the corner is the head of the setting and the apartment is called "*Káà Baálé*", translated "The court of the head Father":

Back door exit

| Kaa Baale | Rm | Rm | Rm | Rm | Rm | covered lobby |

Rm

Passage

Public water pot

Rm

Rm

Rm

| Rm | Rm | Rm | Rm | Rm | Rm | Rm |

Kaa Baale kekere   Fig. 7

Ground plan of an *Àkòdì*

There is usually another smaller court called "*Káà Baálé kékeré*," translated as the "Court of the second in command" or "of the small father". There is usually a main door as entrance and a smaller back door passage in the compound. There is always a veranda-passage that runs round the inner side of the rectangle. The open court is for evening social gatherings especially by all in age groups. The children are usually in a corner having moonlight plays and stories, (adesina, 1978) while the women are busy with usual domestic core. (Babajamu, 1964) The young men are often relaxing over palm wine while the elders are usually busy with issues and decisions affecting the *Àkòdì* as a whole.

The configuration of the *Àkòdì* is usually on a flat terrain that allows the compound to be assessable to all. Expansion of the compound is always made in such a way as to keep the rectangular shape of the *Àkòdì*. Modern or Western patterns of buildings – be it flats, face to face or condominium are very different from the unique, simple, yet fully functionally comprehensive structure called *Àkòdì*. Of more particular highlight is the composition of people in the *Àkòdì* however.

IV.3.2 Composition of People in the *Àkòdì*.

One *Àkòdì* normally occupies all the members in a family clan. The good, the bad, the ugly, the beautiful, the lazy, the hard working, the super lazy drone and the workaholic all live together in the same *Àkòdì*. Even the mad – insane, lunatic– person is accommodated in the *Àkòdì*. This possibly explains the existence of the saying in Yorùbá: *"T'orí wèrè ìta ni a se ní wèrè ilé"*, translated, "It is because of the mad man (or bad man) outside that you keep or have mad man (bad man) inside"

Thus in the *Àkòdì* all kinds of people are fully accommodated, known, noted and accepted for whatever the individual is and encouraged to fulfil his/herself as best in the common interest of all within the *Àkòdì*. The lazy man, while often rebuked is still accommodated in the *Àkòdì*. The saying *"Ọgbón inú olè ni olè ńje"*, translated "It is the cleverness or cunningness of the lazy man that he is eating

– living on" shows the level of acceptance or at the least toleration given to even the lazy person. The only person that is not tolerated in the *Àkòdì* is the thief. Stealing is abhorred within the *Àkòdì.*   Within children, pilfering is punished and discouraged in many ways. By the time a young person becomes a full professional thief such a person is either killed or exiled from the *Àkòdì* for life. (Jemiriye, 2001a)

In the *Àkòdì,* the aged, the just born babe and all in the different age grades and levels of life live together. The organization is such that there is a family clan head – usually a man, and all men in the *Àkòdì* are responsible to him. There is equally a head mother – an old woman to whom all the women are responsible. Duties like filling the water-pot in the quadrangle with water is the responsibility of the young women and girls in the *Àkòdì* under the monitoring of the head woman.

Within the *Àkòdì* there are all sorts of family relationships that include father, mother, children, uncles, cousins, half brothers, half sisters and such like. All the relationships in the male domain could be summed up as "*Ègbón*" or "*Àbúrò*" meaning "Senior brother" or "Junior brother" as the whole clan is regarded as just a family. In the female domain, it is '*Egbon*' or '*Aburo*' and '*Oko mi*' or '*Iyawo mi*' meaning 'Senior sister' or 'Junior sister' and 'my husband' or 'my wife'. This is a unique relationship that has no parallel in the English language and culture (Jemiriye, 1995,McKnight, 1946; Middleton, 1970; Oduyoye, 1969 are of contributive interest here.

In essence, the composition within the *Àkòdì* is based on acceptance by all for all, as well as of the individual by the individual. Even when strangers have to live in the *Àkòdì*, such persons are integrated and accepted into the *Àkòdì* by the one and by the all. Apart from the composition of the people in the *Àkòdì* the economic and religious setting within the *Àkòdì* equally point to the philosophy of acceptance as the principle of survival of all.

IV.3.3   Economic and Religious Setting within the *Àkòdì*

The economic principle of the ancient *Àkòdì* is based on practical survival principles. Selfishness is abhorred while hard work is encouraged, praised, commended and recommended. Economic interests include full gainful employment, mainly farming. This is supplemented by the clan's needs hence jobs like "*Àgbède*" - the smith, "*Àyàn*" the drummers, "*Ọjà*" market and such like are in the *Àkòdì*. Ostentatious life styles are not common in the *Àkòdì* as the survival of all is the survival of the individual. (Jemiriye, 2005b)

The religious setting in the *Àkòdì* is totally absorbed in the entire activity of the *Àkòdì*. As rightly put by Idowu about the Yorùbá –" In all things, they are religious. Religion forms the foundation and the all-governing principle of life for them." (Idowu, 1975 P. 5). Thus in the *Àkòdì* Religion penetrates all of the people's live – economic or otherwise.

There are periodic religious festive celebrations like *"Ọdún Ìjẹsu"* – new yam eating festival, *"Ìkórè"* – harvest, and such others. There are also local prescribed religious celebrations or sacrifice given to individuals often by the *Baba awo* – the Chief priest. All such festivals and celebrations are done in the spirit of survival for the all and the one in the *Àkòdì*. This then leads to the need to evaluate the *Àkòdì* crisis management principle and hence establish the survival of all as the survival of one. (Jemiriye, 2001a)

IV.4 Evaluation of *Àkòdì* crisis management principles

The *Àkòdì* has its crises. The crises include defending the clan against outside aggressions as well as solving internal misunderstandings and problems. The main management principle used in the *Àkòdì* is that of acceptance, thereby, making maximum use of the one and the all. The *Àkòdì* depends on everyone in the system to contribute his/her best to the survival of the system. The *Àkòdì* accepts the best of each person. The single water pot illustrates in very clear terms that "we either all survive together or we all die together". In the days of old, the identity of the one was the identity of the *Àkòdì* and clan. What one has is what all have. Individual possessiveness was not the practice. This was properly illustrated in the days of the redifusion – an old one band radio speaker in the old Western State of Nigeria in the 1960s. Only one was in the *Àkòdì*, and the one was put in the open

square under the tree. No one stole it. Crisis of information, up-dating, projection and decision in direction, were all solved collectively – often by the elders.

The principles thus called into play include:

(i)   Knowing that the survival of all is the survival of the one (Jemiriye & Awosusi, 2007b)

(ii)   Knowing that if the *Àkòdì* or community does not survive no individual in the *Àkòdì* or community will survive (Jemiriye, 2001b, 2002c, 2006b)

(iii)   Acceptance is the clue to solving all problems in the *Àkòdì*

This is illustrated in the saying *"Baba tí kò b'ínú ni omo rè ńpò"* meaning "It is the father that is not angry that has many children" – in other words, it is the father that is tolerant, that accepts all that has a large *Àkòdì*. In this sense many children or large *Àkòdì* implies strength, confidence and unity. These are the crises management principles involved in the life of the *Àkòdì*.

IV.2 Conclusion of the *Àkòdì* in Yorùbá Community:

It can now be said that *Àkòdì* is a comprehensive concept that illustrates acceptance as the main survival strategy. It is the acceptance that generates peace. It also guarantees continuity of the community.

The import here is that in all Religions there are maxims. The maxims must have included love in one form or the other hence acceptance, which has been shown as the main operative word for love. The Yorùbá have demonstrated the acceptance in practical terms in what is called *Àkòdì*.

The western consciousness that every individual can live alone, thereby struggling to possess the whole world until he dies in egocentric futility is not within the *Àkòdì* concepts. The dehumanising economic mirage that one should buy television for every room rather than make the children accept themselves and share a television is a full negation of the *Àkòdì* concept. The Yorùbá have demonstrated the theory of acceptance in the *Àkòdì*. It is for the man of the global village to learn and apply the concept of acceptance as best for the improvement of humanity in all aspects of life. (Jemiriye, 1998b, 2001b)

IV.6 Acceptance or Tolerance: The Challenge from Traditional Religion for Leaders and Society

Acceptance and tolerance are closely related words that sum up attitudes of many leaders and of interactions within the society, especially at contacts or overlaps of Religion. The claim is that there is always a serious discrepancy between what is held as theoretical ideals by many prominent leaders, societies and even world Religions and the day-to-day living relationships of these entities. It is noted that tolerance is often advocated but it has always broken down with time especially within the Nigerian society. This lecture therefore advocates acceptance

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as a better alternative to tolerance. This acceptance, it is again noted, is found in Traditional Religion, hence other religious leaders in general and the society at large must just come, with humility, to learn this lesson from Traditional Religion. (Jemiriye, 2003b)

The Concepts within Acceptance

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, acceptance is to be treated with favour, to be given favourable reception. It is the quality or state of being received with approval. It is an agreement either expressly, or by conduct, to the act or offer of another so that a contract is concluded and the parties become legally bound. Acceptance, to a point, is meeting of minds. (Gove, 1976: 10-11)

In other words, the concepts within acceptance include receiving something with consent, giving assent to receipt, and giving admittance to the other person or view. Acceptance includes taking without protest the other person's position or view, enduring and tolerating with patience a different position, regarding as proper, suitable or normal to them the position of others and giving acknowledgement, recognition as appropriate, permissible or inevitable the personal claims and beliefs of others. Acceptance is to agree to, to regard and hold as true, and to grant a position of belief that is claimed to the claimant. It is to make an affirmative response to a different belief position. Acceptance is to undertake the responsibility of the other person honestly as the person's responsibility. (Jemiriye, 2003b)

In technical parlance, acceptance is to allow on to a particular section of a line under local control. Even as in sexual terms, acceptance is to be sexually responsible as to allow mounting and copulating as in female domestic mammals. Acceptance could thus be said to be the receiving of something offered favourably. The leadership within any society must be ready to recognise and accept these concepts of acceptance as working ideals, goals and wanted relationship. (Jemiriye, 2003b)

IV.8   Tolerance

Tolerance is a relational situation where one body is just putting up with another body. It is just a fair, moderate, bearable habitation. It is not that one is really happy with the other. No one is inclined to interfere with the other. It is a trial of forbearing and broad-mindedness. (Jemiriye, 2003b)

Tolerance has a very short limit however. Tolerance is not deep rooted in the heart of the relational operators, be it leaders, whoever or whatever in any society where it is the operative model. What tolerance really says is that if I have my way, I would rather do without you. Since I do not, and may not or really cannot have my way, then, I have to bear you. This is an unfortunate, unpleasant, but often the unavoidable reality of the relationship within many societies. This is so because it is the situation between rival parties where both are competing for the same object.

In religious parlance, it is the relationship between many denominational Christians to other denominational Christians and mainly between Muslims and Christians in general. This is equally but sadly the operational reality within most leaders in many societies the world over.

Tolerance, it must be noted, is not agreement. It is largely a forced co-existence. Tolerance is not love; rather it is some kind of vague recognition and co-habitation. This is why it breaks down, many times, very violently, on virtually very insignificant issues, and at the slightest opportunity.

The Nigerian experiences of religious crises exemplify the fragile nature of tolerance as a relational model. The many crises in the Northern Nigeria over religious matters are demonstrations of the breaking points of tolerance as a relational principle. The crises also demonstrate the true position of the leaders within the societies where the crises are potent. The crises within the Muslim sectors-Maitasines and other Muslims versus Christians, as witnessed in many recent years are lingering and hunting realities that show the permissive scope of tolerance as a relational ideology. (Jemiriye, 2004c)

That tolerance breaks down completely at the point of theological particularity of salvation, evangelism and judgement must be an issue for the leaders of the society. Any Religion that believes in its theological core that his/hers is the only one saved, others are surely condemned and possibly going to

some kind of destruction – be it hell fire or Hades - can not really tolerate others. Any tolerance subscribed to by such a body is only a lip service. The lip-service attitude explains the lack of peace within the religious domain of most of our present world and within most of the leadership of the world societies. Tracing the failure of tolerance as a relational ideology in our world is like attempting to sum up the entire world's religious encounters in a word - intolerance. (Jemiriye, 2004c)

It will suffice to say here that tolerance is sadly enough what most of the world leaders and societies subscribe to. In other word, it is religious tolerance that is proclaimed across the world today even though it is much of lip service. The many religious wars in the world today nailed the coffin of failure of tolerance as adequate ideology for religious relationship, and this should be seen as the challenge to the leaders of the space ship earth or of the global village society world.

IV WORKING THE EQUATION OUT

Roots, in Religions are key words that could/should be regarded as operative, performative and core to such Religions. Such will include revelation, love, charity, salvation, law, right, obedience, righteousness, holiness, sin, sanctification, inspiration, piety, prayer, fasting, sacrifice, atonement, forgiveness and a host of others. While the list could be endless, each word expresses a small part in the relational equation of God-gods, man and materials.

All Religions acknowledge a supreme entity of some sort or kind, regardless of the choice of language. All Religions are constituted, composed of and operated by man. All Religions use materials – sacred or profane – as may be accepted in the particular Religion. Such material, regardless of the theological/doctrinal hermeneutics/interpretation could be money, food, cloth, colour, objects, writing, books, drink and others. While all the listed are factors in the pool of sets in Religion, the commonest factor is acceptance.

The equation relating man to God through material must be acceptable to the men and to the God–gods. Any Religion in which the God-gods do not accept man becomes relationally impossible. Since the God-gods is the upper dominant end of the equation, if the equation is not acceptable to the God-gods, then there is no equation. The onus of acceptability rests with the God-gods in most Religions, be it revealed Religion or otherwise. In other word, the God-gods accept man through

materials and man accepts the God-gods through materials! It could still be put thus: Materials is the medium of acceptance of God by man and of man by God.

Thus, the test of any Religion in all relational operations is acceptance rather than dependence, superiority or any other! The corollaries are thus:

1. Any Religion that is operated by any man and does not accept other Religions is not true to God-gods, man or material since all Religions are related through the God-gods, man and materials.

2. The test for all Religions is full acceptance in operative relations one for the other. Hidden superiority, tolerance or deceit breaks down with time.

3. The boundary of operative interaction in Religion is acceptance if true peace is to be the relational limit.

4. All Religions must be rated and appreciated by the amount of acceptance they radiate within the God-gods, man and materials operative level.
   If energy could be written as
   $E=mc^2$ (according to Einstein), maybe someday Religion will soon have formulae of

the mathematical shorthand type that must relate acceptance, the God-gods, man and materials since these are the comprehensive share holders in any Religion and in all Religions.

Religion is, therefore, total summation of acceptance in the operative relations of God-gods, man and materials.

- Rel = $\sum\limits_{0-\infty}^{\text{Acceptance}}$ God-gods, man and materials.

- Rel = $\sum\limits_{0-\infty}^{\text{Acceptance}}$ God-gods +Man + Materials.

Attempted equation in Mathematical symbols

- Rel = $\sum\limits_{0-\infty}^{A}$ G-g + M$_1$ + M$_2$

- Rel = $A\sum\limits_{0}^{\infty} \left\{ \sum\limits_{g}^{G} \text{G-g} + \sum\limits_{\infty}^{1} M + \sum\limits_{\infty}^{1} m \right\}$

Where Rel – Religion

A – Acceptance

G-g - God-gods

M$_1$ - Man

m - materials

0-∞ - limits of zero to infinity

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NOTES

1. Intolerance in Religion must be fought against by law, love, teaching of all and by massive vigorous campaign by all religious bodies and by the Government if the future of the country and world is to survive.

2. Quacks in Religion are worse than drug and food criminals as the quacks in Religion kill and bury their followers (be it by intimidation or otherwise) to slavery, de-humanization and gross irrationality as the people can no longer think for their reality.

3. Religion should be taught from academic perspective at all levels of education - from kindergarten to postgraduate, regardless of field of interest of Nigerians, not for indoctrination and local faith kingdom expansion, but for knowledge, reality, acceptance of others and true survival of sustenance of the future – locally or globally.

4. Acceptance, not tolerance, is the relational factor that must be canvassed as any other will never bring peace. (Jemiriye, 2006b)

5. The *Àkòdì* acceptance is recommended strongly for the global village as survival for all human and as a way forward in the complex religious world relations.

Some things are here noted:

1. Anthropomorphic language in one Religion is not superior to anthropomorphic language in another Religion. (Cairns, 1968) They are all expressions of religious experiences and feeling within the limits of language, culture and knowledge of the individual people concerned.

2. When God-gods are presented in anthropomorphic language, such language reflects not the limits of the God-gods but the limit of the men giving the expression.

3. Practice of Religion is ridiculously growing prominence in Nigeria but most people do not really want the academic study of Religion. If the true academic study of Religion is not grown, there will not be the seed of future religious growth. Rather, emotionalism, fanaticism, sectarianism, segregation and particularity which are often negative and destructive grow.

4. Reflecting on acceptance, negative acceptance leads challenges that often bring bitterness, destruction and many fight backs.

5. *Adani loro, agbara ni o fi ko ni.* Any war from break down of tolerance leads to creation of sorrow and to a regrouping for a fight back in another day.

    It is noted in *Nigerian Compass* Vol. 2 No. 378 (www.compassnews.com Sunday, June 7, 2009) that Nigeria promotes religious intolerance. (Pages 1 and 9). Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) made the grading. The USCIRF is an independent

Commission whose commissioners are appointed by the United States' president, the Senate and House of Representatives (page 9) The USCIRF, in its report blamed the Nigerian government for allowing religious killing during the religious crisis in Jos, the Plateau State capital, late last year.

"The government has allowed these killing as well as other violence and destruction of Churches and Mosques to occur with impunity, which is ample ground for designation any country a country of particular concern – (CPC). "Now Nigeria has been on the commission's watch list for seven years but for the first time after travelling to the country in March-April 2009, has decided to designate Nigeria as a country of particular concern …" The report claimed that "There have been years of inaction by the Nigerian government to bring the perpetrators of religious violence to justice while several hundred to 3000 deaths in the city of Jos last year, numerous killings in Kaduna, Kano, Yelwa, over 10, 000 people and at least 10, 000 people displaced over the past several years." Now grouped along CPC is Nigeria 2009 and Iraq, 2009. Other countries listed are Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Korea, China and Iran - countries that have severe egregious and ongoing violence of religious freedom. This depicts the complexity of the relation in the entity called Religion.

VII. CONCLUSION

That religious tenet, dogmas and practices are diversed and varied put the true scenario of religious plurality within Nigeria and the world in a very beautiful description. The Yorùbá Traditional Religion has been used to highlight many principles, religious performatives and operational relationship with the *Àkòdì* as a remote illustration. The reality is that inhumanity of man to man, as depicted by the mode of practice of the various religious positions, are the real sources of religious conflict. Peace, however, should just not been seen as absence of war. Peace should go beyond mere co-existence. Religion should be able to bring genuine cordiality, love and progressive harmonious living in performative operative interactions.

Nigeria, as a case study and the world at large, have witnessed the repeated failure of the policy of tolerance as a viable survival strategy for harmonious living within her religiously pluralistic people. It is therefore the proposition of this lecture that a better alternative to tolerance should be advocated in Nigeria and the world over. Acceptance of the right of others to their Religion in terms of tenets, faith and practice is therefore advocated, as long as no one's right of acceptance disturbs the others right in **any** way.

The acceptance now advocated is not in terms of words only, nor as an article in a book – called constitution, hidden on a shelve in some high named but unknown library. It should be enforced in practical day by day implementation from the grassroot to the most sophisticated.

The lecture emphasises, demands and therefore concludes that acceptance of mankind by mankind, is the only possible solution to the problem of conflict in Religion and otherwise. The acceptance, it is recommended, must now be re-taught at all human levels and with practical day to day reality. This will remove the

notions of particularity, ego, superiority and playing God to other people that have characterized religious conflict and operative interactions hitherto.

Finally, I would like to conclude this lecture by ringing the alarm bell that would make people be better informed that the greatest problem facing humanity is inhumanity of man to man which is amply demonstrated through religious manipulations and refusal to accept the other person as godly, human, of worth and of right to worship. (Egunjobi, Inaugural lecture, 1994: 23). The handlings of problems of war, diseases, natural disasters, hunger, population, pollution are all indication of the people's religious acceptance policies.

The book titled, *God must be having Fun or pain* will be out of press soon. It is an X ray of lack of acceptance of man for his fellow man! The complexity of religion is therefore global and related to all human regardless of country or continent! The equation is that of relating the inhumanity in any setting – be it religious, political, economic or otherwise – to acceptance and it can only be reflected in the living relations of the God-gods, man and Material in the context.

Thanks you immensely for the participation in the acceptance that has made this lecture interaction possible.

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