

ACCULTURATION AND DENIGRATION OF AFRICAN CULTURE: A CASE FOR RESTORATION IN NUPELAND, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Abiona Lawrence Adekunle, PhD

Catholic Diocese Of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

lorenzomaria421@gmail.com

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Abstract

Africa fell under two tremendous influences: Arab and European. These contacts triggered the Trans-Saharan and Trans-Atlantic trades, socio-cultural exchanges and subsequent colonisation. However, one of the effects of these is the denigration of African cultures. This cultural denigration confers Arab-European socio-cultural superiority over Africa's cultures, and consequently institutionalizes the dual personalities into the Africans. This study adopted the historical and descriptive methods. Data were gathered through participant and non-participant observation and secondary sources. The paper examined the effects of Arab-European encounters on Nupe cultural heritages in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study discovered that in most Nupe communities, Islam had appropriated African Traditional Religion (ATR). Nupe heritages such as Ndakogboya, GuguEyagi, and Gunnuwere being exploited to serve the interest of Muslims during Islamic festivals even though they are usually condemned as paganism, worthless, and things that should be eliminated. Arab-European encounters had resulted in hatred for Nupe cultural heritages and a divided Nupe identity. Thus, Nupe Muslims and Christians alike now reject Nupe mode of dressing for the Islamic and Christian attires. Religious competition between Nupe Muslims and Christians had further reinforced mutual mistrust between them. The paper contends that the socio-cultural interactions between the Africans and the foreigners have created a culture of dependency on Arab-European cultures rather than a partnership that is mutually enriching. The study recommends a Nupe cultural renaissance, preservation and transmission towards the restoration of Nupe culture.

Keywords: Acculturation, African Culture, Tourism, Masquerade, Nupeland

Introduction

Nigeria is made up of 36 political federating units called states. Kwara State is in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, and Nupeland is a significant part of the northern senatorial zone in the state. Nupe-speaking people are the dominant indigenous ethnic group in the area cohabiting with appreciable minority ethnic groups such as the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, Igala, et cetera. Although Nupe ethnic group is predominant in Niger State, which is also part of the north-central geopolitical zone, this study is limited to Nupeland in Kwara State.

It is observed that the phenomenon of acculturation has led to cultural and identity crises in most African societies. Most Africans are yet to accept the worth of their Africanness in the presence of Arabian-European cultures. Although some Africans still believe that their ancestors were living in darkness before the coming of Islam and Christianity to their communities, it is important to state that before the coming of the Arabs and Europeans to Africa, Africans already had institutions which helped them to cope with the realities of those days. If culture is truly a source of identity and the totality of the various ways in which a group of people copes with the challenges of life (Oladipo, 2009, pp. 2, 36), then, traditional African cultures which encompass food, housing, clothing, implements, languages, traditions, values, beliefs, attitudes, worship, music, arts, festivals, customs, music, et cetera had served and have been serving the people in living their lives to the fullest (Adeyemi, 2017, pp. 3-19, Guillain, 2013, p. 4).

Before the advent of Islam and Christianity in Nupeland, African Traditional Religion (ATR) had served Nupe ancestors and it continues to serve their progenies spiritually and socially. Nupe ancestors had an idea of the Supreme Being (God) whom they call Soko. This means that Islam and Christianity did not introduce God to the land. Islam was the first foreign religion to arrive in Nupeland and it succeeded in reducing ATR to a minority religion while Christianity came late when Islam had become a dominant religion (Abiona 2023, p. xi). Being a proselytising religion like Islam, Christianity has made an appreciable presence in the land, even though it is still a minority religion when compared with Islam. Both Nupe Muslims and Christians have appropriated Soko to identify the God that they proclaim in the land.

In terms of religious interaction, both Nupe Muslims and Christians do not believe that Nupe religious practices qualify for attaining “salvation.” Nupe people are required to reject their culture for Islam or Christianity in order to be civilized and to gain paradise after this earthly life. Therefore, this study examines the effects of the encounters between Arabian-European cultures on Nupe cultural heritages in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study was carried out in the following Nupe towns and villages: Matokun, Patigi, Bokungi, Gbadopati, Lafiagi, Lade, Lema, and Zambufu.

This paper is organised into five sections. The introductory section has been stated above. This is followed by Acculturation and denigration of African culture in Nigeria. This examines how acculturation has contributed to the denigration and continual slander of African cultures in Nigeria. Following this is the section on African culture in Nupeland as an object of denigration. This section specifically itemizes elements of Nupe culture that have been ridiculed as a result of acculturation. This is followed by the section on the need for restoration of African culture in Nupeland, Kwara State. This section argues that Nupe culture needs restoration since it has been proved that the culture is needed for the people to express themselves and create their own world. The paper ends with a conclusion where the summary of the paper is located with some significance of the study.

Acculturation and Denigration of African Culture in Nigeria

When people from different cultural backgrounds meet, such contact tends to produce cultural and psychological changes. It is said that collective activities and social institutions become altered at the cultural level while at the psychological level, changes occur in the individual behaviour (Sam & Barry, 2010, pp. 472-481). Therefore, Birman & Addae (2021) submit that acculturation is the cultural change that occurs because of contact with a new culture. They note that such contact brings about changes in attitudes, behaviours, and cultural identities in individuals (pp. 122-141).

The advent of the Arabs and the Europeans to Africa has brought about cultural changes to the continent in all ramifications. While the Arabs introduced Islam to Africa, the Europeans brought Christianity. Significantly in terms of religion, Islam and Christianity have relegated the indigenous religion of Africa and considered it as worthless. Abalaka & Ahmed (2020) reported that the Christian missionaries who planted Christianity in Igalaland, Kogi State, north-central Nigeria, stopped some of the cultural practices of the people and even forbade the use of traditional medicine, traditional musical instruments, polygamy, ancestral veneration, levirate marriage, second burial, and others. The authors submitted that these cultural practices were rejected because they were believed to be associated with paganism. They argued that these practices could have helped to deepen Christianity in Igalaland rather than the syncretism that has taken over the land (pp. 77-83).

The phenomenon of acculturation in Africa has caused a cultural crisis that is yet to be resolved. Islam and Christianity have created changes in cultural attitudes towards ATR among their

adherents such that Muslims and Christians always want to exterminate ATR or if that is impossible, they tend to dominate it wherever it is found. For instance, Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State, Nigeria, is a Yorubaland, but since the land was conquered by the Fulani jihadists, ATR divinities have been banned, and hatred for ATR has been planted in the hearts of most Yoruba Muslims in the town.

Danmole (2012) reports that Emir Zubair was the first to ban 'idol' worship in Ilorin Emirate (p. 12). Abiona (2023) believed that what is called an 'idol' is just an emblem that depicts the presence of the divinity; the emblem is like what is known as a sacrament, a sign of the presence of the divine. He encourages Muslims and Christians to show openness to African Arts rather than the usual disapproval as “idols” because in every religion there is an element of the use of the material to communicate the immaterial in agreement with the biblical passage (Psalm 19:1) that says the whole universe reveals the glory of God (70).

Abiona (2018) noted that in August 2017, the *Ndakogboya* (tall cylindrical Nupe masquerade) emerged from the College of Education, Ilorin in a procession to the Sawmill Area of Ilorin. The Kwara State Muslim Stakeholders (KSMS) raised an eyebrow at the appearance of *Ìgunnu* in Ilorin. *Ìgunnu* is the Yoruba name for the masquerade known as *Ndakogboya* in the Nupe language. KSMS wrote a petition to the erstwhile Governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Abdulfatah Ahmed, and the Secretary of Kwara State Inter-religious Committee on 17th August 2017. In the petition, the KSMS frowned at the celebration of *Ndakogboya* in Ilorin because “it would lay very bad precedence against the existing legacy and religious sanctity which the ancient city of Ilorin is noted” (pp. 73-83). The Muslim community in Ilorin saw the display of the Nupe traditional masquerade in their state capital as a provocation, yet Nigeria is a plural society with a constitution that allows freedom of religion. Nupe people are a significant part of Kwara State and they are predominantly Muslims, but the Muslims in Ilorin cannot accommodate the Nupe masquerade because it is considered as polluting the city. In their conception, ATR that the *Ndakogboya* represents is paganism and idolatry, which will pollute Islam, “the pure religion” of the city.

Likewise, Sulaimon (2023) stated that Yeye AjesikemiOlokun Omolara, an Osun priestess publicized her ATR festival scheduled to hold from July 22 to July 24, 2023, at Secondary School Road, Oke Andi in Ilorin. Reports indicated that some members of a Muslim group known as *MajlisuShabad-i- Ulahah* Society who claimed to have been sent by the Emir of Ilorin, Dr Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, visited the priestess and warned her against holding the festival in Ilorin. They claimed that Ilorin is a Muslim society and therefore would not permit the celebration of the ATR festival. (Alabi, 2023) noted that because the life of the Osun priestess was threatened, she canceled the festival. The age-long cultural contest between Islam and ATR has refused to die even though Nigeria is not a theocracy. Muslims consider ATR as a culture that has to be eradicated. They do not care to trample upon the religious rights of any citizen wherever they are the majority. Because Muslims are the majority in Ilorin and in Kwara State in general, they dominate other religious adherents using state power if possible.

The Nigerian Constitution (1999) as amended recognises religious diversity in the nation and it captures how Nigerians ought to live with one another in such a multi-religious society. Chapter IV article 38 of the Constitution states,

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance.

The constitution foresees conflicts in religious propagation and it takes care of it. Thus, Chapter

1, Articles 1 and 2 of the Nigerian Constitution emphasises the supremacy of the Constitution and the Republican nature of Nigeria; hence, Nigeria is not a theocratic state. Therefore, no one is permitted to persecute anyone because of religious observance. Someone can decide to be multi-religious or change religion and no one has the right to persecute them for their religious choices.

Even though the Nigerian 1999 Constitution upholds freedom of thought, conscience, and religion as noted above, no media reported that the governor of Kwara State defended the constitutional right of Yeye Ajesikemi. Therefore, one can posit that because the governor, the foremost law enforcement officer of the state, is a Muslim, he was caught between defending Islam and upholding the constitution he had sworn to protect in the case of the ATR adherent. For political reasons, he chose to align with Islam and refused to enforce the fundamental human right of his citizen, an ATR adherent, when her right was trampled upon by the custodian of Islam. It is obvious that Muslims and ATR adherents are not equal religiously before the law in Kwara State.

Acculturation is a complex process; however, it can happen as a subtle influence and a deliberate process of transmitting or imposing a cultural system on others for adoption. Psychologically, the deliberate teaching of Islam and Christianity has brought changes in the attitudes and behaviours of most African Christians and Muslims toward ATR and African culture generally through the creation of “self-hate,” a conscious hatred for Africaness, African identity, and African religious heritage as noted from the experiences discussed above.

One often hears some Nigerians describing ATR as devil worship and diabolical. Some Nigerian Muslims for instance have adopted the Arabian mode of dressing imposed through Islam while the African mode of dressing is considered irreligious. Africans have been made to denigrate ATR but they celebrate Islamic culture. They prefer the wearing of the '*hijab*,' a form of Islamic identity. They keep beards like the Arabs. They celebrate Islamic festivals and erect mosques at every corner of the city. They recognise the mountains in Arabia as holy while those in Africa are disregarded. While Muslims and Christians spend millions of Naira to travel to Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem, their respective holy lands, they look down on their own sacred spaces such as the Òṣun Shrine in Òṣogbo or Ìdànrè Hill in Ondo State with disdain.

Venerating the stone at Mecca is considered a holy worship of Allah, but doing the same in Nigeria is considered idol worship. Most Africans have been culturally colonised through acculturation. Hatred for fellow Africans has been planted into the hearts of some who have become religious fanatics. They do not blink when they kill fellow Africans whom they regard as infidels because they do not share the same Islamic faith with them. Such “infidels” are treated as second-class citizens in their own country and denied their constitutional rights in the name of differences in religious adherence.

Furthermore, Birman and Addae (2021) identify assimilation and biculturalism as some of the outcomes of acculturation. Acculturation often produces a dominant culture and a subordinate culture. In assimilation, the subordinate culture is absorbed into the dominant culture. Biculturalism is a situation in which one belongs to two cultures at the same time. An ATR adherent may become a Christian without severing his ties with ATR. Such “bireligionism” is a new normal in the Nigerian religious environment. An ATR adherent can be “bi-religious” because he considers himself spiritually fulfilled in ATR while he uses Christianity or Islam as a social ladder since it is socially, economically, and politically beneficial to belong to Christianity or Islam in Nigeria. The Nigerian situation can warrant people to be “Chrislam” (practicing Christianity and Islam simultaneously) and retaining ATR's beliefs.

Mbiti (1990) proffered the reason for this when he described the African faith as 'utilitarian.'

According to him, Africans search for God as a solution to their human needs; they do not search for God as the final reward or satisfaction of the human soul or spirit in the context of Augustine's, "Our soul is restless until it rests in God" (67). Mbiti's submission is obvious in Nigeria where the religious space is littered with churches and mosques competing for the "souls" of people, yet observation reveals that most people visit these places for utilitarian reasons. The prayer points of most Nigerians in the churches are for the provision of money, safe delivery for pregnant women, business success, good health, healing for the sick, protection from wicked people, career promotion, et cetera, and some even pray that 'their enemies should die' without specifically identifying who the enemies are. It is important to state that some of these prayer points can be provided by good governance, but since religion has been politicized in the nation, religious competition has increased with its negative effects such as domination, persecution, syncretism, et cetera.

Furthermore, acculturation can lead to conflict. Berry (2005) opined that cultural contact has a potential for conflict and there is a need for negotiation between the groups of people who engage in intercultural contact so that both parties can achieve acceptable outcomes (697-712). However, conflicts occur in acculturation because of cultural dominance and subjugation. For instance, the tendencies of Christian and Islamic missionaries to subjugate, denigrate, and ridicule each other and ATR in particular had led and often lead to conflicts in most communities in Nigeria.

Ayobami (2021) reported that there was a violent clash between some Muslims and Masquerade adherents on June 29, 2021, at Òşogbo, the capital of Oşun State, Nigeria, and the conflict led to the death of a Muslim and many of them sustained injuries. Reports indicated that the Muslims denigrated the masqueraders as "*àwọn elébò*" (a pejorative term meaning those who offer and eat sacrifices). Pejorative terms are often used to ridicule ATR adherents and to denigrate their religion as barbaric. Meanwhile, the mouthpiece for the masqueraders submitted that the Muslims attempted to remove the mask on the masquerade as it was passing by the road along the mosque and they threw stones at the masqueraders. Idowu (1973) mentioned the pejorative terms that early Europeans used for ATR and these include primitive, savage, native, paganism, heathenism, idolatry, fetishism, and animism (p.109). Unfortunately, Islam as well as Christianity considers ATR as idolatry that must be exterminated and that only Allah alone must be worshipped. By instilling hatred for ATR in Muslims and Christians, it is obvious that such hatred will lead to conflict.

Moreover, acculturation has influenced Christian religious scholars to use terms such as "intermediary" as they try to explain the relationship of divinities, spirits, and ancestors to the Supreme Being (God). Christians conceive God as "Wholly Other"- different from the profane. Omoregbe (2007) reported that Rudolf Otto expresses the manifestation of the Supreme Being as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a tremendous and fascinating mystery (p. 15). Such a Being is supra mundane and awe-inspiring and human beings cannot approach it directly. There is therefore a logical necessity for an intermediary.

Opinions may differ on whether divinities can be called intermediaries or regarded as ministers or agents of God. Oguntola-laguda (2022) submitted that *Olódùmarè* (God in ATR in Yoruba context) is often worshipped through the divinities. He noted that the divinities in the African worship system are means to an end and not end in themselves. He declared that worship in ATR could be formal, informal, direct, indirect, organised, or otherwise. Therefore, his submission suggests that the term intermediary can be used appropriately.

However, within the same ATR in the Yoruba context, Elebuibon (2014) stated that Èşù is the divinity designated as the law enforcement agent and the gatekeeper of heaven. While red palm

oil is one of the items used to venerate this divinity, it is said that one of its taboos is palm kernel oil (*Àdì*) (pp.112-113, 120-121). Hence, Adeoye (1985) believed that anyone who touches the emblem of Èṣù with *Àdì* would incur his wrath (pp. 126-127). Therefore, it can be inferred that those who need the intervention of Èṣù go directly to the divinity, rather than ask the divinity to implore God on their behalf, and *Èṣù* performs the portfolio assigned to him by God once his requirements have been met. In this instance, divinities can be appropriately called agents or ministers of God.

It can be submitted that wrong conception or misinterpretation of African cultural expressions or religious expressions often contributes to the denigration of African cultures. This is because it is natural to condemn and denigrate what one intends to eradicate and supplant. If African culture was seen as good comparable to Arabian or European cultures, there would not have been any justifications for its relegation to exterminate it and there would not have been any need for Islam and Christianity to be propagated in Africa.

African culture in Nupeland as an object of denigration

In Nupeland, elements of African culture including religion, traditional names, traditional mode of dressing, language, and others have been negatively affected no thanks to Islam and Christianity that naturally intend to dominate the whole world. Abiona (2020) discovered that religious festivals of *Ketsa*, *Gunnu* (an unmasked divinity clad in loincloth holding palm fronds), *Ndakógbòyá* (the tall cylindrical masquerade divinity), *Sokogba* or *Ladi* (Thunder and Lightning divinity), *Ndaduma* (river divinity), *Kuti Vuguvugu* (divinity whose emblem women must not see), *Kutilaci* (spirit worship divinity), *GuguEyagi* (masquerade divinity of Yorùbá origin), *Duwa* (strong medicine turned divinity), *Tsoede* (Iron Chain divinity), and ATR divination were in existence before Islam or Christianity came to Nupeland (pp. 444-460). Each of the divinities has its roles in the socio-spiritual lives of the people.

Gunnu (unmasked divinity with palm fronds) is believed to be the most important divinity because it allegedly “harbours the strongest force of *kuti*” that brings solutions to the problems of the people when performed (Nadel, 1942, pp. 72-73). *Gunnu* is an ancestral veneration, the worship or propitiation of the soul (*kuci*) of the dead that is believed to be alive. As Abioje (2014) noted, ancestral veneration is an essential aspect of ATR (p. 9) in African societies.



Fig. 1. *Gunnu* on display at Matokun (Fieldwork, 2019)

In Nupeland, *Ndakógbòyá* (cylindrical masquerade) is very prominent. It is a secret society that

performs the functions of anti-witchcraft and cleanses the village. It discourages those who may be attracted to witchcraft, which is considered an antisocial mystical power, and the masquerade is believed to weaken the evil powers of witches. It is also a means of ancestral worship, and Nupe consider it as *kuti* (divinity) that can be invoked for good health for the town, conception for women, and prosperity. Imasogie (1985) is apt when he said that ancestral worship shows the continuity between the dead and the living because ancestral spirits form an order of intermediaries that present prayers and concerns of the family or the community to God who is the bestowal of blessings (p. 35).



Fig. 2. Ndakogboya entertainment at Lade during the *Sallah* festival (Fieldwork, 2018)
GuguEyagi (masquerade of Yoruba origin) is very prominent in Nupeland. It is a means of ancestral veneration.



Fig. 3. Celebration of *Kuti Eyagi* during *Sallah* at Matokun (Fieldwork, 2019)

What obtains in Nupeland is that Islam has appropriated ATR divinities as objects to entertain Muslims during their festivals. As shown in the pictures above, the *Ndakogboya* masquerade, *Guunu*, and *GuguEyagi* masquerades have become instruments to entertain Muslims during their *Eid-el-Kabir* festival. Since ATR adherents are being derided in the land as idol worshippers, most of them became bi-religious to avoid ridicule. Hence, they use the avenue provided by Islam to venerate their ancestors publicly under the garb of celebrating *Eid-el-Kabir* (*Sallah*) (Abiona, 2023, p. 177).

Most ATR devotees in Nupeland profess Islam. They hide their identity to avoid ridicule. Most of the shrines of ATR are hidden in the land, and visitors might think that the religion is no longer available in the land. For instance, at *Gbadopati*, the shrine of *Tsoede* is situated adjacent to the only mosque in the village, though it is not labeled. Non-indigenes can never know that such divinity exists in the village (Abiona, 2023, p. 90). At Patigi, *GuguEyagi* is restricted to the field of play (filiedzo). Because of the Muslim environment, the masquerade is not allowed to parade in the town as it is found in Yorubaland (Abiona, 2023, p. 83). Most of the adherents of these divinities have embraced Islam as a means of survival. Therefore, acculturation has produced an identity crisis in ATR adherents in Nupeland. They have to be bicultural to live and be allowed to practice ATR in the village. Hence, ATR adherents usually claim to be Muslims even when they venerate the divinities because it is socially profitable to be Muslims in the land.

The emirs and village heads in Nupeland are mostly Muslims. They consider their first duty as the protection and promotion of Islam over other religions in the land. Therefore, the ATR festival is highly regulated such that adherents have to adopt syncretism as the only viable option for survival on their ancestral land. This confirms the submission of Oladipo (2009) that since the change in Africa is not deliberate or self-initiated; Africans cannot develop self-identity that brings about the self-esteem and the self-confidence needed to solve their problems. The absence of such self-identity makes Africa weak in cultural interactions, and the outcome of such weakness is the cultural syncretism that is generating a cultural crisis through the foisting of Islam and Christianity on Africans (p. 14-15).

In some African societies, acculturation has made some people to lose confidence in their lineage. For instance, in Nupeland, some Nupe now combine European and Arabian names with their Nupe name. Some Nupe people can be found bearing such name as Raphael Mohammed Saba, Ibrahim Michael Ndako, et cetera. It is difficult to identify if such Nupe are Muslims or Christians. However, it was discovered that Christians who include Muslim names to their names do so as a strategy against religious discrimination where competence is sacrificed on the altar of religion.

Moreover, the new trend that incurred the lamentation of Raphael (2023) is that Nupe parents now prefer to register their newborn babies in Arabic or English/Christian names rather than indigenous Nupe names. Therefore, Nupe newborn children are registered with names such as Ahmed Mohammed, Victoria Peter, Ibrahim Abdullahi, or Moses Paul as a sign of their new-found religious affiliation in Islam or Christianity, rather than Tsado, Kada, Saba, Kolo, Ndace, Ketswa, or Nnakgi that portray their Nupeness.

Denigration of African culture has created an identity crisis in these individuals who prefer Arabic and European names to Nupe names. In Africa, names are means of identity. They reveal our family lineage. For instance, in Yorubaland, someone from a royal family bears names like Adegbola, Oyerinde, Adebawale, et cetera while someone from a hunter's family bears names like Oderinde, Odebola, et cetera. Children from a lineage of drummers bear Ayandoja, Ayanbiyi, Ayangbola, et cetera. Having exchanged African names for European and Arabic names, those Nupe are neither here nor there. They are neither Nupe nor European, and they are neither Nupe nor Arabian. They have lost their family root in public discussion and it will be difficult for their

unborn children to trace their lineage.

Psychologically, one can argue that a Nupe who prefers foreign names to Nupe names is suffering from self-hate. Their new religions have made them prefer Arabic or Christian names, which they think can make them acceptable to God or open an economic door for them in the Nigeria political space where opportunities are gotten according to one's "connections." The effect of this is devastating and Raphael (2023) succinctly posits that Nupe people could lose their identity in the nearest future if care is not taken.

The need for restoration of African Culture in Nupeland, Kwara State

Personal observations have revealed that most of the African Indigenous Churches have incorporated some elements of ATR in their religious expressions and practices. A positive effect of this is that it inculturates the gospel and repositions the indigenous religion. Even Muslims that denigrate African culture revert to the traditionalists when they are at crossroads. Therefore, what they hitherto said that Islam or Christianity forbids is now useful. Even the move towards indigenisation and inculturation by the Roman Catholic Church points to the appreciation of ATR and African culture. In addition to this, ATR has become a global religion through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as seen in the Voodoo of Haiti, Santería of Cuba (Idowu, 1973, p. 207), Candomblé (Ogunbiyi, 2016, p. 36) of Bahia in Brazil, et cetera. Observation revealed that there is continual patronise of ATR diviners and festivals by some Christians and Muslims in Kwara State and most especially in Nupeland.

Contrary to the expectation of the Euro-American Christian and Arab missionaries, ATR has not fizzled out. Most African students have continued to show increased interest in African heritages and they have discovered that Africa is blessed with vital spiritual and material treasures (Idowu, 1973, p. 205). There is an awakening of ATR among educated African youths especially in Yorùbáland as seen in the "Èṣù is not Satan" awareness group that stages a walk for Èṣù divinity on December 24. The group submits that Samuel Ajayi Crowther made a costly mistake by translating Èṣù as Satan in the Bible and the group decided it was time to correct such a mistake and to situate Èṣù divinity in his rightful place of honour as a friendly divinity that "serves as an intermediary between humans and other deities in Yorùbáland" (Alámòjá 2024). However, this submission is open to debate and a future research area for Yorùbá Christian theologians/religious scholars.

In Nigeria, the Oṣun Òṣogbo festival is an annual traditional religious event of the Yorùbá people that attracts thousands of worshippers and spectators worldwide. Okedare (2019) noted that UNESCO has named the Oṣun Òṣogbo Grove a World Heritage Site since 2003. In Nigeria, former Governor of Osun State, Rauf Aregbesola is credited as the first public official who in 2014 officially declared 20th August as a public holiday to celebrate *Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* (Traditional Religion) Day for the Traditional Worshippers in contrast to the many public holidays enjoyed by Muslims and Christians. The *Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* Day culminates the Oṣun Òṣogbo two-week long festival, which attracts tourists and worshippers worldwide and provides sale opportunities for traders (Officeholidays, 2023). Nigeria can harness the economic fortunes that ATR sites can generate through tourism rather than solely depend on crude oil as the source of foreign exchange. It is suggested that the Kwara State Government should declare support for ATR and allow its adherents to celebrate their festivals without being molested.

Bolaji and Olatunji (2023) reported that the Ogun State House of Assembly in Nigeria passed a resolution in which August 20 was declared as the annual *Ìṣẹ̀ṣe* Cultural Day. The resolution was said to have been passed on Tuesday 11th July 2023. It is noted that the declaration is aimed at projecting and preserving the rich culture and traditions of Ogun State. In addition, it is to boost tourism and contribute to the economy of the state. Now that Osun, Oyo, Ogun, and Lagos States

have declared August 20 as *Ìṣèṣe* Cultural Day and thereby voted for the cultural emancipation of Yorùbá and equality of all religions, the appeal is directed to the Kwara State Government to follow the trend and restore African culture in Kwara State and Nupeland in particular to its proper place.

According to Olodipo (2009), the problems of Africa in post-colonial times are based on the culture of belief. This culture of belief is said to be an obstacle that prevents Africans from making deliberate choices to change what is causing their retrogressions, but makes them stick to familiar ways of doing things. He, therefore, advocates for the culture of inquiry as the solution to African problems. It is believed that the culture of inquiry helps Africans to ask questions and intentionally make choices that promote their wellbeing (p. 25).

In the light of the above, the restoration of African culture in Nupeland, Kwara State cannot be achieved by the Arabs or the Europeans whose aim is to dominate and continue to colonise Africans to serve their respective interests. Arabs and Europeans will not promote the cultural liberation of Nupeland. Nupe people must make a deliberate choice of cultural liberation. They need to make a culture of inquiry into the benefits of their cultural heritages and scientifically explore them for the benefit of humanity. They can initiate the study of ATR and use the Nupe language as a means of instruction in all schools in Nupeland to boost Nupe culture and make ATR equal in status with Islam and Christianity. Such a culture of inquiry will promote self-initiated development in Nupeland and restore the lost self-esteem in most African Muslims and Christians.

In line with the culture of inquiry, Nupe people can work through their political representatives to demand that the Kwara State Government declare Cultural Day for the Traditional Worshipers in Kwara State. This is a step towards the restoration of the status of ATR that has been devalued by Islam and Christianity and put a stop to the persecution of traditional worshippers. Eventually, syncretism or biculturalism can be reduced when people have the freedom to practice a religion of their choice and change religious affiliation or remain without religion.

Conclusion

This study submits that cultural encounters of African culture with European and Arabian cultures put African culture into problems because African culture was weak but resilient in such cultural competition. The study examined how acculturation led to the denigration of African culture most especially in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria. It discovered that while the Arabian and European cultures prevail in dressing and worship, African culture exists most visibly in ATR. Divinities such as *Ndakogboya*, *GuguEyagi*, *Gunnu*, and ATR divination exist in the land even though they are exploited by the Muslims for entertainment and reprobated whenever their imbibed foreign religion demands. However, ATR adherents have adopted cultural syncretism as an option for survival in the face of the menace of acculturation. Nevertheless, a deliberate choice is needed to liberate ATR through the culture of inquiry.

Such culture of inquiry calls for the use of the Nupe language as a medium of instruction in schools, the study of ATR from the primary school, and the deliberate demand by Nupe people for the declaration of Cultural Day celebration in their land. This is geared towards the restoration of the status of ATR which has been devalued by Islam and Christianity in the land. The paper submits that it is only through such deliberate choice to reject cultural colonialism that Africa and Nupeland in particular can develop.

The paper has directed the attention of the world to the existing cultural domination in Nupeland. This study is significant because it argues for the culture of inquiry for people who find themselves as oppressed and culturally dominated especially as it exists in Nupeland. It argues

that such people need to emancipate themselves by making a conscious choice to promote their own wellbeing. The paper is relevant in tourism policy formulation especially in Kwara State and Nigeria as a whole. It promotes African culture and mentions some explored tourist areas in Nigeria that are yet to be explored. Investors will find the paper useful when making plans for investments in tourism. The paper has contributed to the literature on Nupeland and is relevant to researchers on African cultures worldwide.

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