

THE ROLE OF ARABIAN AND WESTERN CIVILIZATIONS IN THE EXTINCTION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION: SOUTH AFRICA, SENEGAL AND NIGERIA AS CASE STUDIES

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Abstract: In the world of competing religions, African Traditional Religion is gradually going extinct. Not because it is lacking in basic tenets of all religions but because of colonialism, imperialism, enslavement and their attendant imposition of 'civilized' religions. Though the damage had been done, Africans are awakening to the fact that their indigenous religions are not inferior to the imposed ones and have therefore begun the process of reversing themselves. How they are going about this is what this paper set out to examine.

Keywords: colonialism, imperialism, civilized, religious

INTRODUCTION

Africans in the pre-foreign religions, colonial and Western civilization were animists with multi tribal and ethnic languages. But today, they are mostly Muslims and Christians. In Senegal, the population of African Traditional Religionists has been reduced by the assault of foreign religion to 9.4% while in Nigeria to 10%. Seventy years ago less than fifty per cent of the Senegalese population was Muslims. However, today, according to a survey, "ninety two per cent are Muslims, or profess to be, six per cent animist and just two per cent Catholics" (Susan, 1984: 1569). In Nigeria alone, there are not

less than 250 ethnic groups and languages not to mention the whole of the entire continent. However, it is to the credit of these foreign religions and the Western civilization in particular, that African cultural developments have been hastened, especially in the areas of African languages and provision of lingua franca – especially Arabic, English and French. Admittedly, African cultures and languages were not stagnant prior to the arrival of these foreign cultures, as Swahili and Hausa languages, for instance, were widely spoken before the advent of these foreign cultures, although the era of slavery and its abolition scattered Africans across not only West Africa but some other parts of the world and in the process assisted in spreading the mustard seeds of African languages and cultures e.g. Liberia where freed slaves from America were dumped, the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria that scattered to Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra Leone, Ghana and even far away Cuba, Brazil and Jamaica. Hausa language also spectacularly spread beyond West Africa to some of the North African countries, particularly Sudan.

Whether the spread of 'good' religion and civilization was genuinely the aim of the agents – Arabs who form one-third of the continent's inhabitants, and the Western missionaries – is another thing altogether. However the main issue is that, since de-colonization,

any relationship between the Black and Arab Africans on one hand and between the two and Europeans on the other hand, has always been held with caution and suspicion. Religion is about morality and it should therefore abhor any form of inhuman treatment of fellow human beings. Whether it was the religion that however encouraged these agents or the agents that encouraged the religions to engage in slavery and use Africa as the breeding ground, is a different matter entirely. Suffice it to say however that Arabs and their religion, Islam, were the first to enslave their black African neighbors.

They were later joined by the colonialists who, hiding under the missionaries, embarked on similar dehumanization of black Africans in addition to corrupting the moral fortitude of the African leaders – what they claimed to have come to strengthen. The colonialists and the missionaries were united in the bribery approach of corrupting African traditional and religious leaders. While the missionaries, preaching good morality in the name of Christianity, were offering African traditional leaders guns, technologies and other economic benefits so that they (missionaries) could be allowed to preach their religion, the colonial powers were similarly offering bribe to religious leaders, especially Muslims, to cooperate with them (Atanda, 1985:90). A clear example of this was the attempt of the French to penetrate predominantly Muslim community of Senegal. In 1895 a Muslim head of Mouride brotherhood, Amadu Bamba, was offered bribe by a colonial governor to come to St. Louis, to profess his loyalty to the colonial governor. His refusal led to his exile from Senegal to Gabon (O'Brien, 1982:1743). Though the issue of bribery was, at that time, morally meaningless to the Mouride Muslim brotherhood holy men, the fact that someone, not an Arab nor European but black African, from neither of the two foreign religions, had come to recognize it as immoral, was a booster to black African standard of morality and religion. African Traditional Religion he had practiced before conversion to any of the foreign ones, does not tolerate any form of bribery.

Apart from this devaluation of African morality that forms the base of any religion at all, Black Africans also underwent two important dehumanizing eras of enslavement and colonialism. Arab Africans and, indeed those outside Africa, also tasted two eras of colonialism: one under the Western powers and the other under the Israelis although that of Israelis was short-lived but nonetheless impactful (O'Brien, 1982:1743). African Arabs might not have felt the need for decolonization if they had not had a bitter experience of it. No wonder why they (Arab Africans and their kith and kin in the Middle East) felt it prudent and, in fact, politically expedient, to identify themselves with Black Africans, as close allies, in the

liberation struggles. Although this political alliance between these two African races might presuppose the removal of all suspicions on the part of Africans and paternalistic attitudes on the part of Arabs, whatever relations existing between them, since the de-colonization period, have always been underlined by the principle of separate identity and equality of rights; ditto for the relationship between the two of them and the European colonial masters. Thus, while the Black Africans have always identified and supported Arab causes especially those against the Israelis, so have Arabs also always identified and supported Black causes in formerly Whites minority-dominated governments in South Africa and Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia).

At this juncture, the important question is, given the understanding of reciprocal protection of each others' interests between Black Africans and their Arab counterparts, why has African traditional religion been declining as against Islam and Christianity in competition and appeal? Why have the two foreign religions come to see African Traditional Religion not only as inferior to them but one that has to be extinguished?

This paper attempts to examine accidental combined efforts of Christian and Islamic religions in keeping African Traditional Religion out of contention. But how the Traditional Religion is resisting this is also the focus of the paper.

CONCEPTS OF RELIGION

Religion is defined by Bolaji Idowu as resulting from "man's spontaneous awareness of, and spontaneous reaction to, his immediate awareness of a living power, 'Wholly order' and infinitely greater than himself; a power mysterious because unseen, yet a present and urgent reality, seeking to bring man into communion with himself" (Idowu, 1973:75) to Biton, however, religion is "a system of belief about the individual's place in the world providing an order to that world and a reason for existence within it" (Nwolise, 1987:846). But there is a negative or radical definition of Religion by Karl Marx and this seems to be the one adopted by civilian politicians, military politicians and other elites. Marx defines religion as "the sign of the oppressed creatures, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of the spiritless conditions; it is the opium of the people" (Nwolise, 1987:846). There is a purpose religion is supposed to serve and this purpose is highlighted by three eminent persons: late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, General Yakubu Gowon and Dr. O.B.C. Nwolise. The views of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and that of Dr. Nwolise is similar. According to Chief Obafemi Awolowo "all great religions and ideologies of the world preach one and only one supreme and imperishable lesson, namely: that love is the

touchstone of all human activities. Any human activity that does not stand the test of love is evil" (Times International, 1987:31). Nwolise extended the lesson which religion teaches from love which Chief Obafemi Awolowo emphasized to "peace, tolerance, consideration for others, justice, brotherhood of man, understanding, unity in one God and other virtues" (Nwolise, 1987:844). Expressing similar notion, General Yakubu Gowon said that the best of one's religion should be put at the service of humanity. Service to humanity is thus the main essence of religion.

THE RELATIVITY OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

It is very tempting to see the relationship between Islam and Christianity as emanating from "recent point in history – the founding of Israel perhaps? Or the drawing of lines in Arabia's sands by British and French colonial powers after the World War I" (O'Brien, 1982: 1741 and 1743). But it was a relationship that began almost at the birth of Islam in seventh century AD and that was characterized by mistrust, hatred and conflict between the votaries of Christ and Mohammed. There is another important thing that the birth of Islam, a simply but exigent religion did to those who submitted to it: unifying and bounding together the ever-warring Arab tribes. Islam means "submission". Naturally, Christians existing before the Islamic birth felt threatened by this birth. They interpreted the Muslims and Ishmaelite, offspring of Hagar, condemned by God to hate and be hated by everyone. They saw Muslim incursions as divine chastisement for their own failings. Because they had no conception of the possibility of a "new religion" they saw Islam as either a heretical form of their own faith, or product of the devil.

In its spread to the outside world, Islamic civilization not only absorbed cultures and traditions of other peoples it encountered, it domesticated its own as well to suit the new environment. Noted with Islamic civilization, especially from the Western industrialized point of view, were backward looking, falling behind the scientific and technological advancements and were therefore unprogressive medievalism. But Christianity tolerated or was forced to tolerate secular aspects of life in the west, and its openness to debate, self-questioning and change all of which traditional Islam lacked (Nwolise, 1987:846). As a result, it is in the west, rather than the Islamic world, that technological and industrial progress has occurred. And with this progress have come more flexible forms of social organization, leading (however faithfully) to the evolution of democracy

and human rights. A fitting example of state secularity was demonstrated by French police against Africans immigrants in Paris, France, in 1996. For roughly a month, about 50 African immigrants sought refuge in the church whilst contesting the authorities threats to deport them. When persuasion, negotiation and court adjudication failed to achieve the desired end, the French police stormed the church to forcefully evict the refugees and in the process the door of the church and its decorated interior were desecrated while the priest was rebuked for harboring illegal aliens. Over and above all arguments stands the thesis that a secular state is justified to act the way the French government did in the circumstances and that the kind hearted priest did, in fact, run foul of the law by trying to obstruct the execution of the court order and he was accordingly rebuked. Morality and Law are parallel lines (Times International, 1987:31).

Throughout the world, particularly Africa, where Muslim Christian populations overlapped therefore, everything depends on who is dominant. Where Muslim rules, Christians wear distinctive clothing and suffers civil disabilities to mark their second-class status. Where Christians rule on the other hand, the same strictures apply to Muslims. Thus, Cross-religious socialization not to talk of sex or marriage is visited upon by ostracism, and in extreme cases, death (Nwolise, 1987:844).

Despite these negative aspects of Islam and Christianity they both individually and collectively have their positive sides. The first is the Islamic view of Christianity and Judaism as "Religion of the Book", sharing prophets and a background of monotheism, which ostensibly earn them an honorable if uninvolved place in the Muslim worldview. See Table 1 below. Secondly, is the beauty of Islam's art and poetry, and its role in preserving European's intellectual treasures, with adding mathematical and astronomical advances of it? Above all, both religions have brought political and economic development to Africa (Kukah, 1993:55).

The cat and mouse game between these two most important religions however recently burst into open global flame. The insult on Islamic religion by an American priest resulted in American and, the bastion of Western civilizations', interests all over the world coming under barrage of Islamic siege, destructions and carnage. Never in the history of the global relations of these two most powerful religions, have there being such global monumental outrages against each other.

Table 1: Jesus In The Quaran

TITLES	QUR'AN	BIBLE
1. A word from God, His (God's) word (Kalimah)	3:34/39, 40: 169/171	John 1:1; 14
2. A word of Truth (Qawl Al-haqq)	19:35/34	John 8: 32-36; Ephesians 1:13.
3. The Truth from your Lord (Al-haqq)	3:53/60	John 8:32-36, 14:6.
4. A spirit from God (Ruth)	4: 169/171; 19: 17; 21:91	Matt. 12:28, Luke 1:35.
5. The Messiah (al-Masih)	3:40/45; 4:156/157.	Matt. 16:16; John 1:41.
6. Apostle (Messenger) (Rasul)	2:81/87, 254/243; 3: 43/49.	Hebrews 3:1, Matt. 10:40.
7. Prophet (Nabiyy)	2:130/136; 4:161/163	att. 21:11, Luke 4:24.
8. Servant of God ('Abd Allah).	4:170/172; 19:31/30,	Matt. 12:18, John 4:34.
9. Son of Mary (Ibn Maryam).	3:40/45; 4:157; 171	Luke 2:48.
10. Witness on Resurrection Day (shahid)	4:45/41; 4:157; 171	Luke 2:48.
11. Witness of (over) The people	5:120/117.	John 5:30.
12. Mercy from us (God) (Rahmah).	19:21; Matthew 9:27-30.	
13. Bearer of wisdom (Hikmah).	43:63; Luke 2:40, 52.	
14. Knowledge of the hour (Ilm)	43:61; Matthew 24:36-44; John 4:25.	
15. Sign to all beings (Ayah).	3:44/50; 19:21; 21:91; Matthew 2:2; 29.	
16. Sign of the hour (Judgement Day)	23:50.	Matthew 24:37-38, Acts 1:11.
17. The Miracle Worker.	3:49; Mark 1:34; 5:41-42; 6:53.	
18. Revelation to mankind (Ayah)	19:21.	Luke 2:10; 30-32.
19. The one to be followed	43:61.	John 1:37; John 10:27.
20. The one to be obeyed	3:44/50.	Matt. 17:5; 8:27, Mark 1:27.
21. Giver (Bringer) of good Tidings.	61:6.	Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38.
22. One of the Righteous (min Salihin)	3:40/46/	Matt. 27:19; 2 Tim. 4:8.
23. The Knowledge in Scriptures	3:43/48; 5:109/110.	Matt. 12:25; John 4:25.
24. The Like of ADAM (Mathal al Adam).	3; 52/59.	I Corinthians 15:45-47.
25. The Faultless (Holy, Most Pure) son (Zakiy).	19:19.	Luke 23:1; 14, 41; Acts 2:14.
26. One of the Closest to God (Min at Muqarrabin)	3:40/41; 7:111/114	John 14:9-10, Hebrews 2:9
27. High Honoured (EminentI in this World and Hereafter (Wajih).	3:40/45	Philip. 2:9-10, Ephesians 1:21.
28. The Blessed one (Mubarak)	19:32/31	Matt. 21:9; Luke 1:42.
29. The Favoured one.	43:59.	John 1:18; Mark 1:11.
30. The one confirmed (Strengthened) with the Holy Spirit (Ruh Al-qudsi)	2:81/87, 254/253.	Mark 1:11; Luke 4:14; Acts 2:33.
31. The Noble; Lordly (Sayyid).	3:39.	Matt 21:8-10.
32. The Chaste (Hasuwur)	3:39.	2 Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:22.
33. A man of PEACE (Salam)	19:34/33.	Isaiah 9:6, Daniel 19:25; Acts 5:31.
34. A perfect Man (Sawiy)	19:17.	I Corinthians 13:10;

Source: Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun-State, Nigeria.



Figure 1:

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN RELIGIONS IN AFRICAN POLITICS

Islamic or Christian religion in Africa has moved far away from purely social and indeed moral control to political and economic control, and this explains why it has form part and parcel of Africa's politics to the extent that their involvement in politics, government and governance had become a subject of debate in at least three most important African countries: South Africa, Senegal and Nigeria. For economic reasons,

some African countries decided to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel but Arabs felt betrayed by this. Similarly, Africans felt betrayed by the Arabs who had promised to help in their economic problems after African states severed diplomatic relations with Israel, as consequence of Israeli-Arab war (Aliu, 1986:2058). The oil boom of the early seventies in many Arab countries never trickled back to Africa. Rather, Africa's import bill sky-rocketed. Thus, Arabs insensitivity to Africa's

economic woes triggered off their rebellion against Arab-Africa relation (Aliu, 1986:2058).

SOUTH AFRICA

Care should be taken here not to see African Arabs as the only culprit in instigating and fomenting religious crisis in the rest of Africa. There is the presence of African Jews too. Though very tiny and located in landlocked Ethiopian country in East Africa, their interest in Africa has always been protected by Israel especially in South Africa and Ethiopia where some years back some Ethiopian Jew were secretly airlifted to Israel. Their presence in Nigeria in a tiny community known as Oke-Eri among Ijebu (note the similarity between Ijebu and Jebusite in the Old Testament) tribe is already recognized by Ogun state government but national and global attentions are yet to focus on them even though persistent calls for these are made whenever there are opportunities to do so. Zoom on the write up above.

In any case it is in South Africa the Israelis activities in the politics of the country were most profound. South Africa thus serves as effective counterweight to Senegal and Nigeria that are predominantly Muslim. Just as Islam had upper hand, which it continued to maintain up till today, over and above Christianity in coming to most of West African countries, so did Christianity had upper hand over and above Islam in getting to Southern African countries especially, South Africa and Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). The use of religion in politics, and in South Africa especially, was however prominent during the apartheid days but yet to manifest under the new black majority rule currently in place. During the apartheid days, Church services became political rallies in South Africa after the apartheid regime had banned political rallies (WestAfrica, 1982:594). The religious politicians who addressed the rallies and got arrested were Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Allen Boesak and their campaign centers were Cape Town and Durban. During these series of religious-politico rallies, not less than 200 women that included the wives of Desmond Tutu, Leah, Rev. Allan Boesak, Dorothy and Mrs. Dorothy Zihlagu, the 67 year-old chair of the Federation of South African Women were arrested and detained (WestAfrica, 1982:550). In South Africa, just as in West Africa where Islam that was imposed on Africans enslaved them, the Christianity that was imposed on South Africa embarked on actions that were not tangentially different from slavery. The imposer of Christianity on South Africa mercilessly and repeatedly killed defenseless African who wanted to be human beings. They were exploited and dispossessed (WestAfrica, 1989:1598).

The spread of Islam, by Arabs, into South Africa however did not have the type of potency which Christianity, assisted by the colonial powers, had and so could not effectively challenge Christianity in that country as the latter did in West Africa. However, the cause of Islam in South Africa was soon picked up by the Arab countries. Before most African countries became independent, they had ensured that no diplomatic relation existed between them and the Zionist state of Israel that was a very powerful and influential country. The tempo of this isolationist policy increased with strengthening of undeclared oil embargo on both South Africa and Israel that have been in existence prior to the African diplomatic sanction. Though racism and Christian religious colonialism in South Africa appeared to be major reasons for this isolationist policy, behind these might also be the desire to find strong foothold for Islam too in that country (WestAfrica, 1989:1598).

The leaders of African Traditional Religion (ATR) are not lying low either. In countries where they (practitioner of ATR) are predominant like Benin Republic and Equatorial Guinea, foreign religions are given effective challenge not only in political and economic spaces but also in socials as well. In Benin Republic with a population of 3.47 million (in 1992) and where Christian Catholics and Muslim are 15% each, the Protestants 3% and African Traditional Religion 67% of the population, African Traditional religionists and their supporters have also been persecuting followers of foreign religions in the last forty years. It climaxed in detaining a Catholic priest in 1976 for being subversive of the state. Not even the visit of the Pope to the country in 1982 was able to set him free (West Africa, 1982: 549). The ascension into power of a sympathizer of African Traditional Religion, Francisco Macias, who was baptized a Catholic, in Equatorial Guinea, made life uncomfortable for the Christians who constitute 80% of the country's population. On getting to power, two bishops, one African and the other Spanish, were sent into exile in 1974 (Richard, 1982:550). He followed this up in 1976 with the expulsion of a large number of missionaries and other foreign religious organizations. In 1978, Francisco Macias who proclaimed Equatorial Guinea as first African atheist state banned Catholic and protestant communities. Until he was over thrown, not less than six Spanish priests were held in prison (Richard, 1982:550). It is important to note here that rather than genuine mission of promoting African Traditional Religion, the fear of the Church, seen locally as a power base that was antagonistic to Francisco Macias, was responsible for his renunciation of Christianity and promotion of ATR.

Similarly, in Nigeria, during the regime of the late General Abacha, the governor of Oyo State

threatened to depose one of the most powerful traditional rulers in the country, Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi III, for failing to unify traditional religions. Again, the reason for this threat, rather than being for promotion of ATR, was that, according to Professor Wole Soyinka, the powerful monarch was “a detrimental influence to the solidarity of Islam in the country (The Guardian, 2002:18)”. The interplay of these different religions has occasioned series of sectarian clashes. Other forms of rebellion against foreign religion going on in other African countries include conversion from foreign religion to ATR by countering amateur anthropologists, pseudo intellectuals, religious imperialists, fanatics, ethno centrists, religious bigots, missionaries and even the African enemies of ATR (The Guardian, 2002:18). Renunciation of foreign religion by those who were previously their carriers is another means of renunciation and denunciation. A good example here was the resignation of a Ghanaian Rev. (Dr.) Dumah from Catholic Church, citing hypocrisy of the Church in “preaching democracy but it is more dogmatic, authoritarian, paternalistic and doctrinaire than any other worldwide institution” as reason for doing so. The claim of the Church as the sole custodian of revealed religious truth also came under the hammer of former Rev. Dumuah. It is a claim, according to him, “that tantamount to spiritual imperialism that keeps many in outmoded religious bondage... which includes celibacy for religious orders and the condemnation of birth control”. Contrasted with African Traditional Religion, which he preferred to call Africanian, Dr. Dumuah said Africanian is a belief in one God who is life, the Mystery of Mysteries, perfect in Himself, without beginning and without end. Unlike the Catholic Church, Christianity in general (and Islam), in their blanket condemnation of the gods about which they know very little or nothing, Africanian, according to him, believes in the climax of African community worship in which they pray to God directly, and also through their ancestors, the gods and other intermediaries which God created for their benefit (WestAfrica, 1998:550).

It is important to note here that African Traditional Religion and Islam share common belief in the intermediary between God and His people. While ATR recognizes three approaches (sorts of intermediaries) to God: direct, ancestors and gods, Islam recognizes one, (Mohammed) which it, in fact, regards as messenger of God. Christianity, and its colonial and Western backers, differs here because of its belief in not only the trinity of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit but more importantly that Christ is God (WestAfrica, 1982:594).

In Nigeria, resistance to the excesses of the two foreign religions has not only come from the holders of ATR but even from the objective members of

these foreign religions. However, the one that has attracted severest criticisms was pulling down of Ifa groof in Offa, Kwara State. Among those that reacted to this intolerance of votaries of foreign religion of were retired General Olusegun Obasanjo, then President of the country; Pa Abraham Adesanya, the leader of Yorubas in Nigeria and diaspora; Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate and many other notable people and organizations. However, the most trenchant criticisms of the attitude of the supporters of foreign religions came from not just only a practitioner and leader of Traditional religion but a teacher of it, the Awise Agbaya (institutional spokesman of the Yoruba on tradition and culture) and also the world President, international congress of Orisa, Professor Wande Abimbola. In adding his voice to the controversy, he questions the secularity of Nigeria in a situation where adherents of African religion are scorned, laughed at, their shrines violated and burnt (The Guardian, 2002:19). According to him “I teach indigenous Religion of West Africa and Traditional African Religion in the Diaspora at University of Boston, Massachusetts United States. I also teach Africa Today for the African Studies centre also in the United States. For me, it gives me a sense of fulfillment that I am propagating our religion to our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora”.

SENEGAL

In Senegal, where Muslims form 92% of the population they are carved into four brotherhoods: Mourides, Tijaniyya, Qadiriyya, and Niassene. Under Senghor, a Christian, the percentage of the Christians population (mostly Roman Catholic) was 2%. Yet in the governance of Senegal they had been dominating Muslims and the indigenous beliefs that constitute 92% and 6% respectively. However, under him, there was a high reduction of the role of religion in politics as the first attempt by Muslim religious leaders to set up a political party in the early days of Independence was rebuffed (Mark, 1989:144). He was able to maintain a delicate political balance among them. While denying them the establishment of Islamic party or state, he regularly consulted their leaders in all matters concerning the citizens. A good example was the 1972 introduction of radical family code, which gave women a larger say in decisions affecting their lives, in marriage in particular. Although the code is still being attacked today for being too “modern” and “western”, to his credit, it is still in force (Amadou, 1988:205). Senghor’s excellent relationship with the brotherhoods especially the Tijaniyya and the Mourides paid off when in 1979, Abdullah “Khalifa” Niasse proclaimed Senegal an Islamic republic, from France. Not only was the family of Niasse, one of the three major families of the Senegalese Tijaniyya, disavowed him, his “party of god” was discredited by official revelations (Le

Soleil, in January 1981) that its sponsor had left Senegal having misappropriated funds collected to pay air fares for the pilgrimage to Makkah (O'Brien, 1982:1741). Therefore, throughout the reign of Senghor, a minority Christian, he enjoyed the support of the marabouts (Islamic religious leaders). In fact and indeed, whenever a religious leader openly challenged the state, political and other religious leaders had always shouted down such recalcitrant religious leader.

Under Abdou Diouf, a Muslim, it was thought, especially among Muslims, that the role of Islam would be activated. Rather, the new president reaffirmed the secularity of the state though tangential reference was often made to Islamic religion to the exclusion of other religions. To demonstrate his commitment to the secularity of the state, Iranian embassy in the country was closed down while its diplomats were expelled for interference in the national affair of the country (WestAfrica, 1988:205). Again, cashing upon a Muslim head of state, when Ahmed Niasse, an exiled rebel, returned to the country in the wake of 1988 Presidential and Legislative elections, he was promptly arrested at Yoff airport. Arrested with him were two Libyans whom it was alleged by the government of plotting subversion. Although he was released shortly afterwards, it was after he had made undertaken to the government that he would maintain peace in the country (WestAfrica, 1988:205). However, Iranian embassy had done the damage before it was closed down.

Radical Islamic thinking began to develop under Diouf with formation of many Islamic religious groups around lay and religious leaders. Many publications had been created to cater exclusively for Islamic revivalism and militancy. Even national association of Islamic intellectual was created and named Cercle d'Etudes et de Recherches islamique et Développement (CERID), (Islam and Development Study and Research Group) which edits a quarterly entitled *Islam et Développement*. Thus, within the first five years of Diouf in government as the President, more overt religious groups had sprung up. As his re-election approaches, Diouf began to drift towards brotherhood leaders especially that of Mourides. At a rally in Diourbel province, a few miles away from the headquarters of Mourides, Touba, President Diouf was said to have described the leader of Mourides brotherhood, Mbacke, as his "new father". This was interpreted to mean that he had "vowed to submit himself in a child-parent relationship with Mbacke and thus accept the constraints within that said relationship" (WestAfrica, 1989:1722). With this singular statement of identification with one of the brotherhood, Diouf broke the balancing act and had since then depended on them for vote catching.

If Diouf, a Muslim majority prime minister was a stooge under Senghor, a minority Christian black colonial governor, now comes Abdoulaye Wade. Wade, as the President of the country, is not only a Muslim but also one with complete break not only from neo-colonial government in Senegal but also from Senghor and Diouf. When Diouf came to power in 1982, his rival, Wade, then President of the country, also emerged as opposition leader. Since both Diouf and Wade were Muslims and claiming to have Mouride leader as their marabout, the stage appeared set for religious politics and government. Marabout (religious leaders) had also become politically functional thus setting the stage for conflict of religion and politics in the state already divided by ethnicity and tribalism. The control of the brotherhoods became the concern of Diouf and Wade during this period as against Senghor era where, as Christian head of State, enjoyed both Muslim majority and Christian minority supports. As Senegal's parliamentary opposition leader, Wade made it known though subtly, that, the then new Mouride leader was "his marabout" (Mark, 1989:144). For the support which the marabouts gave Diouf during electioneering campaign and on getting to power, they (marabouts) got many things and received many favors. Sometimes the state saw it to give them money, sometimes a lot of money, including, according to O'Brien, "job outlets by the government". The President has what we call a 'Black Budget', which is designed to answer political questions. Sometimes he has to help certain religious leaders with facilities to import goods tax free, or perhaps he will introduce them to bankers for loan" (Mark, 1989:144). This way, religion began to creep into party politics as party politics also began to make inroad into religion. Since Diouf and Wade became President and opposition leader respectively in 1982 therefore, Senegal's Muslims that did not pose threat to established authority under Senghor were getting militant under Full blown Muslim political leaders. Since Diouf came to power therefore, there had been unwritten governing accord between the governing politicians and the leaders of brotherhoods to the exclusion of Christianity and Traditional religions, which they not only relegated to the background but recklessly ignored as well.

NIGERIA

In the case of Nigeria, retired General Olusegun Obasanjo (former civilian President) set the debate on involvement of religion in politics rolling. His advocacy is that the Chief executive and his deputy, be it at the national, state or local level should not only reflect geographic diversity but religious plurality as well (WestAfrica, 1987:2390). Incidentally, it was his regime, as a military head of state, that promulgated a decree that gave backing to

Federal character principle (with its variant local level application known as “geographical spread”). The federal character and geographical spreads principles at the national and local levels respectively emphasize evidence of balance, justice, fairness and sensitivity to the ethnic, sectional and religious diversity of Nigeria in political and other appointments. However, this was not only desecrated ethnically and sectionally but, more importantly, religiously too (Sunday Times, 2003:6). To checkmate this, a prominent national politician, Chief Obafemi Awolowo argued that the existing association between the state and the church or mosque should be completely severed. “It is an old British or Arab Custom which is apish, unreflecting and discriminatory for us to preserve. Why should there be state services at all? Why, even if they are necessary, should they be confined to the churches or mosques and not held in shrines of other confessions? Why should the clergy or Imam participate in the opening of Parliament? (Awolowo, 1966:150). And that reminds us: why should the judges also participate in such an opening, which is a purely political function? Why should there be any religious services at all in connection with the opening of the assizes? And why, if such services are necessary, are not held in the places of worship of African Traditional religion rather than the Church and the Mosque? The whole thing is ridiculous! God is everywhere; and His ever-ready responsiveness to our supplication is not confined to any church, mosques and other religious gatherings, to pray, from time to time, for the success of the government of the day, if they are convinced that its plans and programs are good and promotive of the welfare and happiness of the people. But it would be wrong, and of course futile, for them to pray, as they did in recent years, for the success of a manifestly satanic administration” (Awolowo, 1966:150).

Incidentally, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and retired General Obasanjo are Christian southerners. A Muslim northerner, who was, like Obasanjo, also a former head of state, retired General Babangida, soon joined this debate. According to him “most of these problems about religion are problems that we elite created. I will give an example. In a Yoruba (an ethnic group in the south western part of the country) home, you’ll find a Muslim, a Christian and non-believers, may be a Sango worshipper. They live together there is no problem” (NewsWatch, 1988:16). The religious tolerance of Yorubas as an ethnic group among many ethnic groups in Nigeria was further attested to by Nwolise when he said that “most families in Yoruba land have admixture of two or the three major religions in Nigeria – Islam, Christianity, and the Traditional religions” (Nwolise, 1987:849).

In contrast to the South, and the West in particular, is the rampant incidence of religious conflict, in the North which Margaret Peil, a Sociologist, explained as being due to the fact that “Islam was and is certainly an important pan-ethnic unifying force which Christianity never became in the south” (Margaret, 1976:75). Surprisingly, it was under Babangida who held a liberal view of religion that accentuation of religion in Nigeria’s politics heightened to unimaginable proportion. He advanced the causes of Islam and Christianity not just over and above African Traditional Religion but did not recognize it at all. While he supported the construction of national Mosque and Church for these two foreign religions he ignored ATR. When retired General Obasanjo also became civilian head of state in 1999, one of his first major duties was to construct a Church in the state house to balance up with state house mosque that has been there since the country became independent. He also ignored ATR. Surprisingly and interestingly enough, whenever the interests of the political leaders are at stake whatever serious disagreements between members of the same or rival religions, religious nuances that they have always widened are often ignored for their political expediency.

Such were the contrasting cases of Awolowo and Abiola, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (a devout Christian) and the Kaduna Mafia (essentially Muslim and a dynamo of Nigerian politics) negotiated and signed a pact just before the 1983 general election (WestAfrica, 1987:2390). It was a pact that forebode Chief Awolowo from restoring diplomatic relation broken with Israel over the latter’s colonization of part of Egypt, a sister Muslim and African country; should he, as a result of the pact, win the 1983 presidential election. Other conditionalities of the pact were the chosen of a Muslim running mate for him (Alhaji Muhammadu Kura) and a strong identification with Muslim course. To fulfil this latter conditionality, Chief Awolowo, in his campaign tour of the North that year, took along with him, his immediate junior sister, Alhaja Anotu Awofewo. This was to demonstrate to the northern electorates that, though he was a Christian, he was tolerant of other religions as example of her sister who was married to a Muslim was enough evidence for them to see (Times International, 1987:3). He lost this election in spite of the pact.

Chief MKO Abiola on the other hand contested the 1993 presidential election on Muslim-Muslim ticket instead of Christian-Muslim ticket. He won the election under a Muslim head of State. But the Muslim heads of state, Generals Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha and other Muslim leaders like the Sultan of Sokoto formed the nucleus of those who annulled the election. Surprisingly, Christian political leaders

and clergymen were those that clamored for the de-annulment.

Similar to Nigeria's experience was that of Algeria where the military intervened in the presidential election of 1992 and annulled it. Front Islamique de Salut (FIS) was on the verge of winning the election when the military tore it by cancelling it and forcing the doors of political competition, previously exclusive to Muslim, open. Algeria is a predominantly Muslim country and those who annulled the election that would perhaps have taken Iranian path of political exclusion, were Muslims as well. But they did not share the view of FIS on Islamic state of Algeria (WestAfrica, 1988:205).

To date, between 1980 and 1997, Nigeria has witnessed a total of eight major religious disturbances two under civilian administration while the remaining ones were under the military. The intra-Muslim sectarian disturbances in Kano (December, 1980, October, 1982) and Maiduguri (October, 1982) happened under the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari. Under the military, there were those of Kaduna, Maiduguri and Yola (February - March, 1984), the Kaduna, Kafanchan, Zaria and elsewhere, Muslim - Christian clash of March 1987. In September 30 1996, there was another sectarian conflict in which thousands of the followers of El Zak-Zaky trooped out in protest of the arrest and detention of their leader (Olasupo, 2001:169). The storming of praying grounds in Kano on Eid-el-Fitri day, 10th February 1997 was by the Islamic fundamentalist (WestAfrica, 1989:1598). In year 2000, there were inter-religious disturbances between Muslims and Christians in the city of Kaduna and another one in Jos, Plateau State in 2001. This incessant confrontation of some religions with the state has led to challenging the state on monopoly of police and leading to establishments of religious police by some religions in some countries.

INSTRUMENTS OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE STATES AND RELIGIONS

Principal state's agent for maintenance of law and order within a particular country is the police but foreign religions especially Islamic religion in most countries in Africa has had cause to establish its own religious police. It is assumed, especially by Muslims, that modern African states and Christians are one and the same thing and that African states have thus always protected the interests of the

Christian religion over and above other ones. Other religions, especially Islam that provides effective counterweight to Christianity, are thus left to find means of protecting and enforcing their own doctrines too, hence the setting up of religious police. African Traditional religions are not left out of this device. However, only in Uganda, apart from Equatorial Guinea, had Followers of ATR, in confronting the state, not just rely on creation of religious police but a guerrilla army as well, although these were made of illiterate village men, women and children (WestAfrica, 1989:1598). Their weapons were stones, sticks and "holy oil". The guerrilla was made up of 6,000 strong troops called the "Holy Spirit Battalion" and led by a woman called Alice Lakewena.

This policing device is well developed in Senegal and Nigeria. For instance in Senegal, there exist a religious police based in Touba, the headquarters of Mounride brotherhood. This is seen as a state within a state because neither police nor gendarme station exists there but an Islamic police called Baye Fall. Baye Fall provides security for the area most of the year. This Baye Fall Islamic police are young men with rasta-style haircuts and colorful patchwork tunics who are the foot soldiers. Their policing role in Touba often overlaps to Senegal's towns and villages collecting charity money for the brotherhood coffers (Olasupo, 2011:64). In Ghana, the government ordered a freeze on the activities of the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah (sic) Witnesses. Their offence was that "They have continued, despite repeated warnings, to undermine the sovereignty of Ghana, and also that their conduct was not conducive to public order" (Alex, 1989:1264). A situation that prompted Ghana Education Service (GEC) to threaten to "suspend or dismiss any pupil or student who stubbornly and unpatriotically refuses to salute our national flag and to recite the national pledge and anthem" (Salifu, 1987: 2351). Nigeria's case, however, is the most spectacular, not only did a Christian sect, known as Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to salute the National Flag, sings National anthem and recite the National pledge (Nigerian Tribune, 2001:9) but more fundamentally because Muslims states in the Northern parts of the country declared their various states or provinces as Islamic. A move that led the Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, to describe the whole exercise of some of these northern states as "virtual secession".

Table 2: State or Established Religion

S/NO	RELIGION	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	COUNTRIES
1.	Islam	25	Afghanistan, Algeria Bahrain, Bangladesh, The Comoros, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Oman Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Emirates, Yemen Republic.
2.	Roman Catholic	11	Argentina, Colombia*, Costa Rican Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama*, Paraguay +, Peru, Seychelles*, Venezuela*,
3.	Evangelical Lutheran Church	4	Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden
4.	Buddhish	3	Bhutan, Cambodia (Kampuchea), Thailand
5.	Greek Orthodox Church	1	Greece
6.	Judaism	1	Israel
7.	Hinduism	1	Nepal
8.	Church of England	1	United Kingdom
9.	Presbyte-rianism	1	United Kingdom (Scotland)
10.	Pancasila	1	+ Indonesia +

* Quasi – state religion

+ Roman Catholicism is the official religion, although the constitution guarantees religious freedom.

+ A national secular state ideology, stressing unity and social justice, which is a compulsory belief for all social organizations.

Source: J. Denis Derbyshire and Ian. Derbyshire, *Spotlight on world Political System*, Edinburgh: W & R Chambers Ltd., 1991, p. 27.



Figure 2: Olasupo and his research assistant in group photograph with female kind of Kumbada in Niger State



Figure 3: The researcher paying homage to Magajia, Hadiza Mohammed, the Magajia of Kumbada in Niger State.

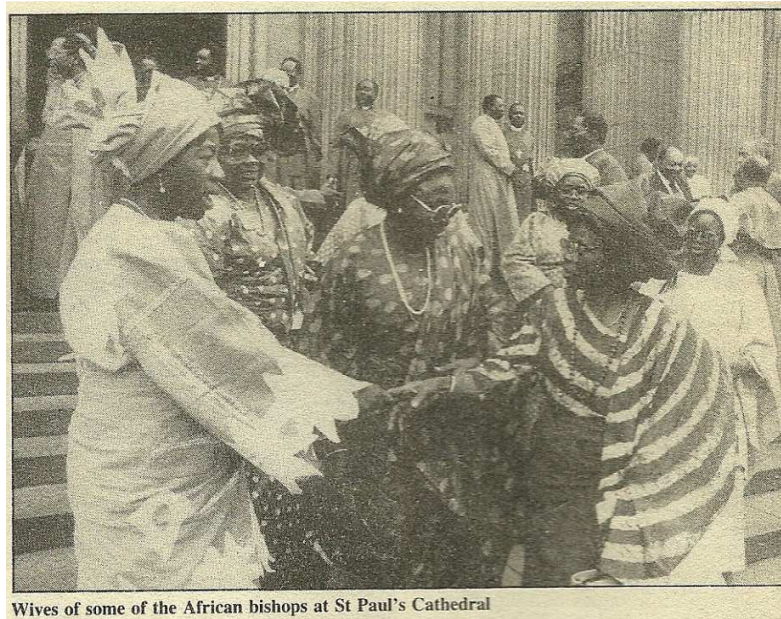


Figure 4: Brave wives of bishops who challenged their spouses for parity in Church hierarchy.

Source: West Africa Magazine of August 15, 1988. In the background are the bishops. In front are their rebellious wives demanding for parity in Church – hierarchy.



Figure 5: Culture of gender balance in governance and religion

Source: Guardian newspaper, P43. Standing by the left is F.A Olasupo, the researcher, immediately after him is Her Royal Majesty, Eyelofi, (Female king) of Ilawe-Ekiti, Madam Elizabeth Odeyemi; next is Onimaya of Maya, Oba Iyiola Olayinka (Successor to Female king of Maya in Ogbomosho land, Oyo State) last but not the least is the Oba Esther Ajayi of Ogotun Ekiti, during a courtesy visit to B.C.O.S, Ile Akade, Orita Basorun, Ibadan, Oyo State recently..

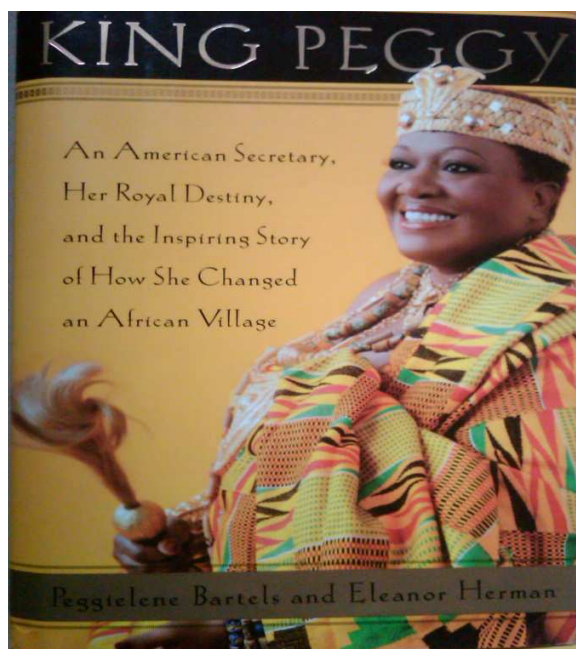


Figure 6: The first female king of Otuum, a small community of 7,000 people where the former President of Ghana, Professor Attah Mill, came from. According to female king Peggy, “We have two female kings in Ghana, I read about them on the Ghana news website. Now I am the third” (Peggstelene and Eleanor, 2012:46)

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR DUMPING FOREIGN RELIGIONS

On religion Africans are gradually returning back to their religious roots. A lot of factors are responsible for the gradual jettisoning of foreign religion by Africans but the most important one is racism – racism against the people of Africa and against their culture. While most bishops in Africa are Africans, it is estimated that some 70% of the 16,000 Catholic priests come from none African states and that makes African Catholic communities depend financially on outside help. This is seen as financial imperialism of African Catholic communities, if not the entire people of Africa (Nigerian Tribune, 2001:9). Similarly, in United State of America, a black church that has been functioning since 1958 with a population of 5000 members has no single white member. This prompted the minister of the church, Bishop Fred Caldwell, to offer payment of \$5 an hour for any white who come to Greenwood Acres Full Gospel Baptist church in Shreveport Louisiana on Sundays and \$10 an hour on Thursday. Even in the Churches where the blacks are in the majority, such as New Orleans, Mississippi and Atlanta that are the hearts of US black Catholicism, blacks are not making progress in Church's hierarchy. It was only after the only black bishop to head to head the Mississippi diocese, the Most Reverend John Howze, protested to the Pope that the number was increased to two. And that was the appointment of Eugene Antonio Marino as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Atlanta (West Africa, 1988:904).

Besides the peoples, nothing in African cultures, especially African Traditional Religion, has any appeal to the backers of foreign religions. In 1982 for instance, there was international religious conference in Moscow. It was opened to all major religions of the world except the African Traditional Religion (WestAfrica, 1989:1723). See Table 2.

Refusal to adapt foreign religion to African need is another important factor. While Christian religion, for instance, frowns on polygamy that forms part of African culture, Islam on the other hand object to women leadership in a Muslim male dominated society even though pockets of female traditional leaders exist there. One of them is Hajia Hadisa Mohammed, the Magajia of Kumbada, Niger state, Nigeria. See figure 2.

They (women) must always queue behind men. Although this tallies with African culture of ascribing second fiddle role to women, it offends global trend of gender equality. Christendom has been trying for centuries to promote gender equality by its advocacy of one-man one-wife, as well as gender balance in governance but has not been practically reflected enough. Wives of African bishops at the 1988

Anglican Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England, almost secured parity with their male counterparts. At the conference, a hot debate ensued on the ordination of women as bishops. While this received a lot of support from the Bishops from America, New Zealand and Canada where many women were already ordained as priest, "bishops from Africa were not obsessed by the idea" (Nkechi, 1988:1483). Although overwhelming resolution of 423 votes was passed to that effect, unfortunately, provinces have the final say on the matter. Thus, up till today (as at 1988) there were only 55 deacons and two priests in the whole of Africa who were women. Figure 4 shows brave wives of bishops who challenged their spouses for parity in Church hierarchy.

However, most traditional Christian communities in Africa have the culture of gender balance in governance and religion i.e. male kings and female kings, male priest and female priestess. Find a Nigerian as well as Ghanaian examples in Figure 5.

Celibacy is another issue that is putting off some Africans from Christian religion. Not only do some Bishops who have taken the oath of celibacy secretly break it, even those who are married engage in illicit sexual relationship as well. A confirmation of this was the inappropriate relationship that former leader of the only superpower in the world, Bill Clinton, had with a White house intern, Monesca Lewinsky. But gender equality without endangering African and Islamic polygamous life would have, perhaps, been more acceptable to African votaries of Christianity, as it would not have contradicted African and Islamic traditions and customs. Although the African Anglicans were close to achieving this when they gathered in Canterbury, England, from July 16 – August 7 for the 1988 Lambert Conference but were short of hitting the nail on the head. At the conference, they resolved that "in cultures where polygamy is practiced and socially acceptable, a polygamist who responds to the Gospel and wishes to join the Anglican Church may be baptized and confirmed with his believing wives and children" (Nkechi, 1988:1483). But a caveat was added, "The polygamist shall promise not to marry again as long as any of his wives at that time of the conversion are alive". And that "the local Anglican community consents to receiving such a polygamist" (Nkechi, 1988:1483). However, while a polygamist may become a Christian, the reverse is not acceptable.

The third factor is the relationship of the religion with the state. This is common among the Anglicans and the Catholics but other religions have started copying this. In Gabon for instance, President Bongo who was brought up in missionaries schools, converted to Islam in 1973 after becoming head of state of his

country. In Nigeria since independence, where Muslims have been controlling the lever of power, they have ensured that Mosques were built in public institutions such as the state house, airports and even in the military barracks. When a Christian, retired General Obasanjo, became the first civilian Christian head of state, his first major concern was erection of Church at the state house. Although the idea of mixing state matter with religion started with Christians, but other religions have also been copying it. African Traditional Religion is not left out. Francisco Macias of Equatorial Guinea provided the only example of a country converting from Christian country to atheist one, though briefly (1974-1979). He was overthrown and executed in 1979 by Teodoro Nguema. Closely related to this in Nigeria were some state or provincial governors that refused to take oath of office using either Bible or Quran but preferred to do it the way of African Traditional Religion. Again, for the first time in Nigeria, a traditional religionist, Professor Wande Abimbola was made special adviser to the President on culture and tradition. In taking his oath of office, he also rejected the use of Bible and Quran but rather chose to swear by using miniature elephant tusk (The Punch, 2003:5, The Guardian, 2003:1).

The fourth and the most important of all is the total loss of focus and excessiveness on the part of the two prominent foreign religions. While Christianity is loosing focus, Islamic religion is refusing to modernize in the way it continues to uphold the moral sanctity as prescribed by the Holy Quran. Sound moral footing that is the hallmark of religions is under siege with the recognition of gay marriages in most Western countries of the world. Some Western countries, most of who were once colonial powers that have recognized same-sex unions include Netherlands, Belgium and two provinces in Canada. Other countries such as France, Germany and Argentina, allow homosexual couples to register their partnership with the local civil authorities and to obtain some of the social benefits available to heterosexual couples. But the most damning of all was the appointment recently in U.S. of gay bishop that led other angry bishops in the same country to boycott Episcopal Church meeting. Islam on the other hand, in uphold the sanctity of morality as prescribed by the Quran go to the extent of amputating a thief's hand and, in extreme cases, of stoning and beheading adulterers and hardened criminals respectively.

In Nigeria, during the first term of retired General Obasanjo as civilian President, two women, Sefinat and Aminat were sentenced to death by stoning for committing adultery in Sokoto and Katsina respectively. As soon as the sentences were passed, women's right groups sprang into action, condemning and protesting the discriminatory nature

of the Sharia code. They could not understand why the male counterpart had to be set free since the crime committed was impossible without the collaboration of the opposite sex. More frightening was the manner in which the penalty was to be carried out – stoning to death. The protest was so loud as to attract the international community. The pressure from the international community later forced the courts trying these women to drop the cases. One of these victims, Aminat, was later invited by the Vatican for award, for her struggle against, what they considered to be, oppressive religion and government. Unlike Nigeria however, on Thursday, 25/10/2012, Al-Shabaab religious group in Somalia, ordered a woman stoned to death for sex offence and the victim was indeed stoned to death at Jamama town, 425 km south of Mogadishu (News Review, 2012:10).

Extra-judicial judgments are also noted with some theocratic states. This is referred to as Fatwa and it was passed on Salman Rushdai sometime ago by Iranian government. A Deputy-Governor of Sokoto state in Nigeria also passed one on a female reporter and an editor of ThisDay newspaper over their considered blasphemous comments during Miss Beauty pageant in year 2003. What is more, a common thief, Jengede, had his left arm amputated for stealing cow in Sokoto state in 2002.

SOLUTIONS AND CONCLUSION

To confront these incessant intra and inter religious problems in Africa and most African countries and indeed third World countries, especially Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia and Senegal have set up national religious bodies. The general aims of these religious bodies are to help the people to work together to solve the nations' moral problems, to help the people to practice a true African conception of God and break with religious fanaticism. The bodies would also aim at helping to remove the misconceptions between traditional healing and the western medical practices and the orthodox priests so that Africans would be able to utilize more of the healing herbs around them (West Africa, 1982:1788). But some of these aims have been faulted, especially in Nigeria, for none inclusion of members of African Traditional Religion. Why should they decide for them in the forum they (African Traditional leaders) have been excluded?

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