

# Ogun Laye: The Yoruba Response To Ontological And Cosmological Warfare And The Use Of Violent Prayer

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## **ABSTRACT**

*In the traditional Yoruba, it is believed that immediately a child is conceived, he is plunged into primaeval darkness of war. The parents on his behalf start fighting the battle for him in the womb, and continue to fight immediately after birth till he gets to puberty stage and then adulthood when he will be able to fight for himself. The general belief is that the pregnancy could be incinerated or pulverised by the evil men of the world hence the unborn baby needs some violent prayers to ward off the evil that could befall him and thereafter takes up the challenge when he grows old. The aim of the paper, however, is to see how the Yoruba respond to spiritual and physical war using violent prayer. Available studies on the subject matter have focused mainly on how violent prayer is used by Christians thereby ignoring the role played by the former among the Yoruba. The methodology consisted of a critical analysis of data collected from the series of interviews conducted among the people who are proficient and versed in the Yoruba traditions. Negative and aggressive prayer by Elizabeth McAllister which states that most people associate prayer with moral good, yet in some cases, people deliberately pray against others in the form of “aggressive prayer” served as our theoretical framework. Some agents such as divinities, ancestors, spirits, magic and medicine were used as machineries for spiritual warfare. If the perceived enemies are throwing spiritual arrows that could lead to disequilibrium in society, using violent prayer to protect oneself is not a bad enterprise and the paper reached its abridged version that if the so called aggressive prayer is appropriately and properly employed to safeguard human existence then there is no need to efface it, it could be rather sustained by a pantagruelian horde of some individuals in the society.*

**Key words:** *Ogunlaye, ontology, cosmology, warfare, divinities, ancestors, spirits, magic and medicine*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Africans are aware of the nature of the volatility of the environment they live in. they also know that physical combat cannot solve spiritual issues hence they engage in aggressive prayers towards destroying their enemies and since Africans do not generally make distinctions between the sacred and the mundane, prayers are importantly directed to God through the divinities, ancestors and other spiritual forces that are considered sacred. All these spiritual forces have their functions in the theocratic government of the world and majority of them do not like injustice.

To a typical African man, God is a merciful God and he does not want anyone who genuinely worships him to suffer. Therefore, adversary and situations of danger caused by one's perceived enemies must have necessitated aggressive prayer for protection. Having discovered the aforementioned, it is important to note that warfare prayers are not only believed to have been said by an individual, they can appear in form of corporate practices.

## **METHODOLOGY**

It is expedient to note that, in carrying out this research, the people under investigation are expected to be engaged. Therefore, to have in-depth information on how violent prayer is used to fight both spiritual and physical battles, several methods of data collection were used. These include oral interviews [structured and unstructured interviews], Focused Group Discussions [FGD]. As a technique needed for this study, the researcher made use of indepth interviews to elicit vital information from a selected group of people. The interviewees were carefully selected across the communities in Ibadan. The use of phone calls was helped reach out to some experts in other states. Five [5] Sango worshippers, five [5] Esu worshippers, and two [2] Ayelala priests were interviewed. The researcher engaged ten [10] PhD students and ten [10] mature Master students in Focused Group Discussion. The use of a tape recorder made it easy for the researcher to objectively present the information in a clear chronological order.

## **VIOLENT PRAYER AMONG THE YORUBA**

Violent prayer among the Yoruba seeks to avenge the evil done by sorcerers, witches, wizards and the evil people of the world. The Yoruba know that without aggressive prayer, they are endangering their lives since it is generally believed that even unborn babies have

started having enemies because some persons might have found out about their glory even before they are giving birth to. Also, if one manages to be successful in life, violent prayer is needed to remain at the top, when one is looking for a good job, barren women, marital stability, success in elections etc. The belief is that, it is only a madman who does not have enemies. The Yoruba proverb *ojunialakon fi n sori* simply means that one should be vigilant in everything if the fellow wants to enjoy life to the fullest. The abbreviated summary of the proverb is that we should be careful as no one is to be trusted in life. While being extremely careful, aggressive prayers which will brush aside the activities of the enemies, are always said so they could have their way. Awolalu and Dopamu confirm our view on the issue of unborn babies in the wombs of their mothers having enemies let alone the ones that are already giving birth to. They aver that "the expectant mother is put under the care of a medicine man, who constantly prays and prepares concoction of herbs and medicated soap for her from time to time in order to ward off evil spirits and the attack of evil ones like the witches and sorcerers".<sup>1</sup> It is instructive to note that, there wouldn't be any need for violent prayers among the Yoruba if there were no activities of witches and sorcerers. Among the Yoruba, witches and sorcerers are fiercely feared because they could wreak havoc any time they like hence people are always praying against their existence. To our dismay, some Western scholars have had different views on the existence of witches in Africa. While some believe that witches and sorcerers should be categorised under one umbrella, many believe that witches only exist in the imagination of Africans. The major reason why witches and sorcerers deserve our attention here is because they are the ones who wittingly and unwittingly push people into involving themselves in violent prayer.

M.J. Field in her study of the Ga of Ghana posits that "witchcraft is a bad medicine directed destructively against other people, but its distinctive feature is that there is no palpable apparatus connected with it., no rites, ceremonies, incantations or invocations that the witch has to perform. It is simply projected at will from the mind of the witch". She explains further that "for clarity's sake I may state early that...the central solid reality of witchcraft is, from the European point of view, a medical one. Witches are people mentally afflicted with the obsession that they have the power to harm others by thinking them harm."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, she

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<sup>1</sup>J.O.Awolalu and Dopamu,2005.West African Traditional Religion,Lagos:Foludex Press Limited,197

<sup>2</sup>M.J.Field,1937.Religion and Medicine of the Ga People, Oxford University Press,London,135-136

points out that, “witchcraft exists only in fantasy, in the minds of mentally sick people and is a bewilderment to others.”<sup>3</sup>

The first part of the above definition can be accepted with a reservation because it refers to witchcraft as a bad medicine, medicine has palpable apparatus and others mentioned in the definition, but witchcraft has nothing close to that. The other two parts of the definition cannot be traced to the Yoruba. Field addresses witchcraft as an illusion, she, thereafter, attributes it to a mental disorder or sickness. But in fairness to her, she is not mendacious as she graciously agrees that she looks at the whole subject from the European point of view which betrays her inability to cogitate and have an in-depth understanding of African thinking. No Yoruba man [not even a pastor who has abundantly accepted foreign religion] can wave out the existence of witchcraft. The issue is not only limited to the Yoruba. It is a social problem in Africa. It could be difficult for foreign scholars to have a full grasp of the concept because it is enveloped in secrecy. The issue of secrecy has made the concept complicated because Western scholars only depend on the scanty information given to them by their interviewees. Idowu as a celebrated indigenous scholar has rightly described what witchcraft means having carefully studied the people with scholastic aptitude.

He affirms that when I speak of witchcraft, I refer to that which is real, and affects the life of Africans in every walk of life. By Africans I mean not only the so-called ‘primitive’ Africans, but also Africans who are in the civil service, well-known politicians, university undergraduates and graduates, lecturers and professors, trained nurses and doctors, prominent Muslims, Christians and to a good number of Africans within each of these categories, witchcraft is urgent and very harassing reality. This means that whatever may be our own theories or preconceived notions about witchcraft, we can only help the African if we ‘sit where he sits’ try and see the thing in his own light and get to the root of his belief in such a diabolic soul-enslaving influence.<sup>4</sup>

Some writers are confused when they discuss witchcraft and sorcery; a majority of these scholars believe that the phenomena are the same since their major aim is to disrupt the existing peace of the society, separating them therefore, would be an exercise in futility. On this subject, an African scholar of great renown, Professor J.S. Mbiti’s view is expositional.

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<sup>3</sup>M.J.Field,1937.Religion and Medicine of the Ga People.Oxford University Press,London.38

<sup>4</sup>E.B.Idowu 1971.’’Witchcraft’’,in the traditional background to medical practice in Nigeria,University of Ibadan,Institute of African studies,occasional publication,No 25

He confirms that'' more often, however, it is believed that witchcraft and bad magic are combined and work evil either deliberately or involuntarily on the part of the witch or magician. While we may look for a clear academic distinction between the two words, we have to bear in mind that in the villages, there is often no such distinction. For our consideration here, we shall treat the two terms, witchcraft and evil magic, as if there was no distinction between them''.<sup>5</sup>

The notion that Africans do not distinguish between witchcraft and sorcery may be true for some people. On this note, people seem to lump the duo together and see it as the same. When an investigator works with this set of people, it could be hastily deduced that Africans see the duo as performing the same function. But it is erroneous to apply this to the whole of Africa. It has to be said therefore, that using the duo interchangeably will continue to generate confusion if proper research is not carried out among various tribes in Africa as confusion would continue to raise its ugly head when one attributes the work of a witch to that of a sorcerer and vice versa. That is why Mbiti speaks further that'' It is believed that a witch uses incantations, words, rituals and magic objects to inflict harm on the victim. To do this, she may use nails, hair, clothes or other possessions of the victim which she burns, pricks, or wishes evil to. The belief is that by inflicting harm on what once belonged to a person, that person is automatically harmed''.<sup>6</sup>

This is far equidistant to the truth we know about some African peoples. For instance, it is believed that a witch does not make use of palpable apparatus or magical objects. Evil magicians are, however, proficient in using palpable apparatus in their nefarious and noxious acts. There is, of course, another geocentric shift of emotion when another scholar takes the argument to another realm. Marwick believes that the implication of believing in the existence of the duo and their activities could be summed up in a single sociological proposition. And in order to settle the long run argument, since the aim of the duo is to destroy, the term sorcery is the only word that could be used to describe their activities.<sup>7</sup>J.R. Crawford affirms that the argument should not be taken to the sky and immediately uses the word 'wizardry' to explain the activities of a witch and sorcerers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>J.S.Mbiti,1975.Introduction to African Religion,Heinemann,London,166

<sup>6</sup>J.S.Mbiti,1975.Introduction to African Religion,Heinemann,London,116

<sup>7</sup>M.G. Marwick, Sorcery in its Social Setting: A Study of the Northern Rhodesian CEWA, Manchester University Press,60

<sup>8</sup>Evans Pritchard,1965.Witchcraft,Oracles and Magic Among the Azande,Oxford University Press,London,387

The above cannot be used to describe the activities of the duo among the Yoruba because the people have different terms to explain the existence of the duo that is why when studying the African peoples, one must be extremely careful and be exactitude so overgeneralisation would not set in. The Yoruba, for instance see a witch as aje or eleye or iyami., while oso is used to describe a sorcerer or oloogun. Infact, Evans-Pritchard's position on the activities of the phenomena among the Azande of East Africa has captured our thoughts on the activities of the duo among the Yoruba. Pritchard explains that the difference between a sorcerer and a witch is that the former uses the technique of magic and derives his power from medicines, while the latter acts without rites and spells and uses hereditary psycho-psychical powers to attain his ends.<sup>8</sup> The beautiful work of Evans-Pritchard among the Azande deserves some accolades as it perfectly describes witchcraft and spells out the definition of sorcery. The distinction he makes between witchcraft and sorcery speaks volumes about what is obtainable among the Yoruba. He goes on to define witchcraft as'' a supposed psychic emanation from witchcraft- a substance which is believed to cause injury to health and property.<sup>9</sup>

He goes on to give an abbreviated summary of what sorcery stands for when he describes it as bad magic hence when sorcery is discussed, we talk about illicit acts or something considered immoral. One can easily argue with the facts at hand that his definition of sorcery may be true of what we have among some African peoples but such does not apply to that of witchcraft this is because not all African peoples believe that the witchcraft substance, which is a material substance, can be found in visible in witches. Infact, the issue of material substance in the bodies of witches does not have any space in the people's thoughts because it is believed that certain psychic forces in witches are employed to harm people. As Evans Pritchard himself rings the bell in his former definition 'á witch performs no rites, utters no spell, and possesses no medicines, Azande distinguishes clearly between witches and sorcerers'.<sup>10</sup>

The distinction made by Evans Pritchard as touching witchcraft and sorcery and which has now been generally adopted by anthropologists in their treatment of the phenomenal, has long been held by the Yoruba. First, the sorcerer uses concrete and palpable apparatus but the witch does not use any apparatus. She has a special type of personality that she uses. The power is inherent and innate in her and it could be used to cause disequilibrium in the society

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<sup>9</sup>Evans Pritchard,1965.Witchcraft,Oracles and Magic Among the Azande,Oxford University Press,London,9

<sup>10</sup>Evans Pritchard,1965.Witchcraft,Oracles and Magic Among the Azande,Oxford University Press,London,21

or kill or cause some misfortune. This inherent malevolent power is not found in sorcerers, he needs to acquire it by the use of magical apparatus

Another issue that deserves our utmost attention is the fact that sorcerers are intentional and conscious of their action. They deliberately wreak havoc on their victims for reasons best known to them. Jealousy, envy, anger, hatred, enmity, spite or malice are cogent reasons for which they attack their victims. The witch, on the other hand may not be conscious of the evil life that she portrays. There is an inherent urge in her that makes her to cause havoc to human beings. She attacks her victims anytime she likes, makes them irresponsible and eventually kill them. Infact, witches easily transform into animals their guild associate with. Having seen the functions of both and how deleterious they are, one would then understand the reason why the people are always belligerent and brutish in prayer.

The witch and the sorcerer are anti-social. They have always been a threat to humanity. The issue of violent prayer wouldn't have come to the fore if not for the activities of these phenomenal. One of the reasons why the so called aggressive prayer is not so popular in Europe and the Americas is because they have less activities of the duo. Infact, a typical African man who travels abroad for greener pasture would have to embrace any faith that would sustain his peace of mind. To him, if he refuses to pray, he could be deported without any reason. Also, a typical Yoruba man who wants to travel abroad the following day may decide not to inform his parents, siblings and friends. To him, it is dangerous because he does not know the one who is a witch or sorcerer.

It is easy to say that there are no witches in Africa but one thing is sure, the presence of the duo in Africa has caused great tension and fear to the people, that is why churches are always full and that is why there are deliverance ministries everywhere in Africa. If people were not scared of the activities of witches and sorcerers, today, churches and mosques would have become redundant and people would be care-less.

Having taking us through this journey of the activities of witches and sorcerers, why then should the people engage in violent prayer? We have seen what the witch and the sorcerer can do and we have chronologically highlighted how deadly they are in the society. One does not need to offend a witch or a sorcerer before they carry out their nefarious activities. They can attack their victims out of jealousy and envy. A typical Yoruba man knows that he becomes a threat to someone who has not made it in life. When he has not gotten a job after years of graduation, he becomes worried and starts suspecting some forces. A pregnant

woman is always praying against some forces that could serve as hindrance during labour. Simply put, everything that is not going on well among the Yoruba is always suspected to have a spiritual dimension and in doing this, two categories of persons are fingered—a witch and a sorcerer. But in our contemporary society, people see a fellow who is not happy or who is not rejoicing when others are happy over the achievement of others as a witch. Although, this is a free-style statement it goes a long way. The belief is that it is only a witch or a sorcerer that will not rejoice over people's achievement hence everything wicked and vile is seen in the camp of the duo as they have no good intention. How then do the people respond to these wicked acts of the phenomenal? The people are always praying to God through the divinities, ancestors, spirits, magic and medicine. We shall explain this one after the other.

## **GOD**

God is at the centre of the Yoruba theocratic government. Without Him, there is nothing to discuss in the religion. Everything is from Him, for Him, and controlled by Him that is why His name is adored at the end of every prayer. Even if the prayer is said in the name of any divinity, the people will respond by saying ASE. Ase simply means, may it be sanctioned by God. It therefore follows that God is supreme, all-knowing, and the creator of everything. The divinities and other agents in the spiritual understanding of the people are answerable to Him. God, as the controller general of everything is impartial, unique, creator, king, omnipotent, omnipresent, immortal and transcendental in nature. Infact, He is benevolent and malevolent. He is good to whoever keeps His laws and punishes moral offenders. He listens to the prayers of those who keep His precept. By implication, those who think that they are offended by some forces report to Him through petition and it is believed that He answers by punishing the perceived enemies.

The Yoruba call God by several names. The most frequently used is Olodumare or Olorun or Edumare. However, some Yoruba early scholars whose education were sponsored by the missionaries, who have vowed to bring down their people's religion have been criticising the concept of God among the people. One of them is J.O. Lucas who sees the name of God as a mere title. In a bid to fully satisfy the missionaries who sponsored his Ph.D. programme abroad, Lucas goes on to argue that the name of God is a title of Ifa, the oracle divinity of Yorubaland.<sup>11</sup> This is too speculative and barren of pragmatic evidence. Meanwhile, before Lucas' thesis, some Western investigators who wrote on the Yoruba people had bastardized

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<sup>11</sup>J.O.Lucas, 1948. The Religion of the Yoruba, Lagos, C.M.S. Bookshop, 9

the concept of God among the people. Lucas, who is of Yoruba descent finds it difficult to change what had been written by his paymasters.

For instance, in 1894, A.B. Ellis writing on the concept of God among the Yoruba hypothesized that "Ólorun is considered too distant and too indifferent, to interfere in the affairs of the world. The natives say that he enjoys a complete life of idleness and repose, a blissful condition according to their ideas and passes his time dossing or sleeping. Since he is too lazy or indifferent to exercise any control over earthly affairs, man on his side does not waste time in endeavouring to propitiate him, but reserves his worship and sacrifice for more active agents, and as a general rule the god is not worshipped or appealed to."<sup>12</sup> Westernmann picked the argument up and posited that "the high-god is, as a rule, not the object of a religious cult and is of small and almost no significance in practical religion. People acknowledge him, but neither fear nor love nor serve him."<sup>13</sup>

The above does not reflect the true nature of God among the Yoruba. Infact, the strategy used by the missionaries and some Western scholars was to first attack the concept of God so they could preach the God of Christianity who, according to them is the only God. Among the Yoruba, the name Olodumare is divided into three parts. The prefix Ol=Oni, it means the owner of.

The second part of Odu. The pronunciation depends on the accents placed on the vowels. According to Idowu, the word may mean Odu, a substantive, meaning, "a main heading or chapter" as we find in Odu Ifa [the corpus of Ifa recitals]. It can also mean "chief head" or "chief" or "sceptre" or "authority". When the word is Odu, it can rather be a substantive, meaning "very large and deep container" or "the full cell in the board of ayo [a Yoruba game made up of a board with twelve cells] or it can be an adjective meaning "very large", "very extensive", "very full", "of superlative worth and quality". When we combine Ol' with Odu it is difficult to know which meaning of Odu is intended. But the double meaning fits in with the idea of God. Thus Idowu has given the word Olodu to mean either someone who is a supreme head, one who possesses the sceptre or authority or one who is superlative and perfect of greatness, size, quality and worth.

*Mare* is the third part and seems to be difficult to evaluate since it is capable of different interpretations, depending on the emphasis and accents placed on the vowels. For our

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<sup>12</sup>A.B.Ellis1894.The Yoruba-Speaking People of the Slave Coast of West Africa,Chapman and Nall,128

<sup>13</sup>D.Westernmann,1937.Africa and Christianity,London,Oxford University Press,28

purpose, we take the meanings that fit into the concept of a Supreme Being. Firstly, it can be Ma re meaning "do not go", do not move', do not proceed", that which does not go", "that which does not move or wander", "that which remains", "that which continues to be". Secondly, it may be Mo Are meaning cum-Are or combining something with Are. Are is a symbol of authority or uniqueness fixed on the crown worn by the king of Ife. When this meaning is applied to Deity, it means He who has absolute authority over all in heaven and earth and is incomparable. Thirdly, we can take Mare to be a corrupt form of Kari. Kari is the term describing the perfectly and extraordinarily full cell in the board of the Ayo game. We call a person Olodu Kari when he has such a full cell. Using this in relation to Deity, it means "He is one who is absolutely perfect in superlative qualities."<sup>14</sup>

Concerning the Yoruba concept of Olodumare, none of these meanings can be left out. Each meaning fits well into their concept of God. Thus the full meaning of Olodumare is "The unique king or chief who holds the sceptre, wields authority and has the quality which is superlative in worth, and He is at the same time permanent, unchanging and reliable". That is why the Yoruba gave Him the attribute Oyigiyigi Oba Aiku. "The mighty, durable, immovable rock that never dies". Because of this unique worth of superlative work of Olodumare, the name has been translated "Almighty" in the Yoruba Bible.<sup>15</sup>

The Yoruba also refer to this Supreme Deity as Olorun. The people have long adopted this name even before the arrival of the first missionaries and it is the same name that is used in the Yoruba Bible. The name is popular among the people that they can't do without it on their daily dealings. In their daily prayers, the name is frequently surfaced. It is also popularly used in their daily conversations and discussions. The name is split into two parts Ol-is prefix meaning "the owner of" as it used as-Oni. Orun is the "skyey heaven' or heaven. By implication, Olorun means "the owner of heaven".

Among the Yoruba, some people believe that, in a situation whereby they find it difficult to see the shrines of the divinities, ancestors and spirits due to their current location, they resort to using the name of God for aggressive prayer. A traveller, for instance believe that some people may not be happy as he is embarking on the journey. He believes that those who are jealous of him could cause an accident that could lead to his death. He is conscious of the fact that if he prays, God will answer him hence he says Oluwa, maa sin mi lo. Gbogboeniti o

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<sup>14</sup>J.O.Awolalu and P.A.Dopamu,1979.West African Traditional Religion,Lagos,Macmillan,37-38

<sup>15</sup>J.O.Awolalu and Dopamu,1979.West African Traditional Religion,Lagos,Macmillan,39

basope mi o nipadalayo, ma je kin de le ba-“God, go with me as I am travelling, anyone who vows that I will come back dead should die before I get home”. He is equally aware that a fellow could stand against him when he gets to where he is heading and if this happens, it will result in wasting of precious time and resources. He then prays to God that Olodumare, jowo pa enualatakomo bi mo se n lo-God, shut the mouth of anyone who will likely go against me when I get there. At every point, the people do not joke with the presence of “negative fellows”. They know that what they can’t do with their strength, God can help them out.

However, the personality and the relationship of the fellow to the social and spiritual activities of the community need to be sound as it is believed that the one who says the above prayers must have maintained a very good relationship with his environment. The values, ideas and even self-image the individual achieves or receives in social and spiritual situations are what he internalises in the formulation of his personality and personalism. What this suggests is that, although, this prayer is said by many people but the one who maintains positivity towards his environment and not the one whose activities have polluted the environment is expected to genuinely engage in such prayers as the people believe that when your ways and intentions are pure, God easily fights for the fellow and avenges the wrong done to him.

## **DIVINITIES**

Divinities among the Yoruba are deputies of God and each of them has his/her portfolio in the theocratic government of the world. There are ones who were with God during creation. They partook of the creation processes and are believed to be created by God. They were engendered by Him or brought forth by Him. They are said to have come into being in the consequence of Him. They are not in any way higher than God. Infact, they are only means to an end and not an end as believed in some quarters. The divinities are referred to by some as saints and are also powerful. Despite the fact that they are actively involved during worship, God is still superior to them and none of them has ever ascribed his/her power to him/herself. They know that nothing works in them except God has decided to make it work. Everything they have ever become is traceable to God and that is why the Yoruba say AMIN to every prayer directed to the divinities. The belief is that although the divinity is featured in the prayer but God is the one who has the final decision on whether the prayer will be answered or not. Amin therefore means may it be sanctioned by God.

The European scholars and missionaries have labelled the divinities badly and have subsequently and opprobriously given them vile names. This as a matter of fact has affected the religion. The locals who have embraced foreign religions have been seen praying against the divinities of their communities and have seen them as their enemies. The ones whose names are associated with the divinities have decided to change such names to either Christian or Muslim names. This is because the foreign religions have taught them that the gods have ears but cannot hear, have hands but cannot lift them up, have eyes but cannot see. They have forgotten that the images representing those divinities are only mere statues but filled with spirits. The spirits in them are active. Their spiritual eyes are effective and their ears are actively potent in the spiritual world hence the reason why majority of the worshippers still believe in them.

The fact is that, if the gods are completely useless, Christianity and Islam which have really spread like wild fire would have totally obliterated them from the people. Infact, one cannot but mention how people even from overseas still patronise Osun goddess. It means that they must have known how potent the goddess is. People do not just come to Osun Osogbo festival to feed their eyes. Majority of them have attended the festival as they bring their votive offering, while some of them are worshipping the goddess because of what they want from her. They believe that the goddess has answers to some infertility issues hence she becomes their holy land during the festival. If she truly does not have eyes and ears as perniciously projected by the believers of foreign religions, how and why are their prayers answered?

The people believe in their gods, know how to worship God through them, believe in how active they are when they are properly venerated and constantly invoke their spirits during prayers. The Yoruba know how majority of these divinities helped them during invasion of their communities by the foreigners before and after colonial periods. They understand how the divinities have helped them to bring equilibrium into their communities. The traditional Yorubaland is agrarian and during infertility, they call on the divinity of agriculture to help them regain the fertility of the land. Infact, till date, when it is suspected that the land is not yielding good fruits as generally expected, the people still consult the priests to inquire what has gone wrong and immediately they are guided by the priests who must have enquired by the god what needs to be done for the people to experience boom in their farm produce, they

become happy and even bring sacrifice to the god. Above all, the people know that the gods are mere servants of the Supreme God. They do not see them as their final destination.

One is therefore surprised to see some missionaries and Western scholars write volumes against the divinities. They have forgotten that the same scenario plays out in the Scriptures when God sent Jesus to this world. Jesus himself knows that he cannot do it alone, he has to ask for the assistance of the twelve disciples who carry out some miracles using his name and Jesus in turn appreciates the name of His father who has sent him. The target in Yoruba traditional religion is the same as the gods are only assisting God to carry out some assignments in the theocratic government of the world and none of them has openly denied this fact. It is impossible for any god among the Yoruba to wave the supremacy of God. The day he does that, that is the moment he seizes to exist. In fact, it is sacrilegious for it to happen among the people. Every divinity fears God and sees Him as their all in all. Some Western scholars have however denied this fact.

Richard Gehman for instance believes that what the Yoruba profess may be different from what they practice. It may be that the Yoruba are not polytheists in theory. The Yoruba believe that Olodumare created the divinities. But what about their practice? Isn't the honour and worship given the divinities really idolatry?<sup>16</sup> Well, the issue of idolatry in this context has brought forth another serious debate because the researcher has found out that Christianity, as practiced today is also guilty of the former. Idolatry is from the Greek word, *eidolon* and it means image or something used to represent other things. It also means imagination. Catholicism is a conservative religion and the church has long erected and adopted the image of Mary, the mother of Jesus as one of their objects of worship. Every Catholic bows and prays to Jesus using the name and the statue of his mother. When they bow down to the image of his mother and still call the name of God, what does that suggest? Is that not idolatrous?

Today, many Pentecostal churches have started selling the images of their GOs. The belief is that when such images are hung at the entrances of their homes, they would be exempted from burglary attacks and thieves would not have their way into the compound. Also, it is believed that when the images of their GOs are hung in their cars, accident would elude them. They have even started using the name of their founders to pray. The researcher has noticed with

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<sup>16</sup>R. Germann, 2013. *African Traditional Religion in the Light of the Bible*, Bukuru, ACTs Publisher, 117

shock and dismay, the photographer who took the photograph of Jesus that the Christians are using. Apart from this, the image on the cross worn by some Christians, what do we call that?. If idolatry is practiced in Yoruba religion then with the facts displayed above, Christians are guilty of idolatry, too.

Lois K. Fuller recently has joined those Western scholars who find fault in Yoruba religion and use the Scripture to back up their arguments. He affirms that "the Bible talks about gods as if they are nothing. There is only one Being who is worthy of the name of God, and that is the one who made the heavens and earth. The gods are only idols. In one sense, gods and idols are nothing more than names and pieces of woods, clay or metal, or whatever they are made of. They are not gods. Jeremiah 16:20 says, 'Do men make their own gods?' Yes, but they are not gods." They cannot do evil or evil or anything at all. God calls them useless. When trouble comes, they will not be able to help the people who cry to them. They have no life and cannot speak.<sup>17</sup>

One, the gods the Bible refers to are gods of Israel. One needs to ask the position of those gods in Israel: Do they actually see themselves as lesser gods to God?. Do they see God as their Master who must be respected and adored?. The contest between Elijah and the priests of the gods clearly shows that the gods do not respect God, the Supreme Deity. No Yoruba indigenous priest will drag himself into such contest because he knows that, no matter how hard he tries to make the rain fall, it won't happen if he challenges God. No custodian of the Yoruba divinity can successfully come out openly and disregard God and His supremacy. Two, Fuller should know the difference between gods and God. The Yoruba do not see gods as equal to God. There is a clear distinction that is why the superlative nature of God is clearly spelt out so the two will not be merged together to mean the same. For instance, among the Yoruba, the capital letter "G" is used to distinguish the Supreme Deity from the small letter "g" which is used for the "lesser gods". If only Fuller recognises the fact that Jesus is also referred to as God, he won't drag himself into this argument. The only way by which his argument can successfully have a space on this discourse is for him to deny Jesus as not being god and renders the concept of trinity useless, then his argument will be embraced.

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<sup>17</sup>Babalawo Ogunse Awopegba is an indigenous priest based in Ibadan. He is seventy- three- year old practitioner interviewed 19-07-2023

Third, yes, among the Yoruba, there are some images that represent the gods. Of a truth, people bow down for those images but in real sense, the people know that there are spirits in them. They reverence those spirits, and not the statues, that is why if anything happens to the statues, the spirits in them can be transferred to another image and worship continues. In Anglicanism, during service, the officiating priests are always seen bowing to the altar whenever they pass through where the altar is stationed: Why are they doing this? Is God physically present there? This simply shows that there is a force that is referenced and revered. Fourth, the gods are much more than woods. They represent the religious realities of the belief system of the people and have helped them when trouble knocks at their door steps. There are countless Yoruba myths and mythology that have explained how the gods have helped humanity. Those stories cannot be totally far from the truth. There have been evidences on how some gods have helped in bringing equilibrium into the society. There have been facts about how some of the gods have successfully answered people's prayers and deliver them from the hands of the evil people of the world.

For instance, among the Ikale/Ilaje peoples of the Southwestern Nigeria, when they cannot unravel a particular issue that has brought a fellow into a state of confusion as a result of spiritual attack or physical assault or intimidation, they involve a god popularly known as Ayelala. Ayelala is a divinity that punishes moral offenders. The people know that when they invoke his spirit and earnestly pray in his name, any evil done to them would be avenged by him. In fact, Ayelala is permanently used for warfare prayers. He is used for hurling or commanding evil on someone or a group of people because of an evil done to them or an individual. Ogun is also a god who detests cheating and immoral acts. People often use his name for aggressive prayers. He is brutish when prayer is said in his name. When he has confirmed the veracity of the incidence, he swings into action. For instance, a fellow whose item was stolen may decide to involve Ogun in his prayer and pray thus: 'whoever has stolen my item or whoever has done evil to me, let Ogun use his/her blood for his bath' as a matter of fact, whosoever Ogun uses his blood to bath is completely dead and before he dies, he must have sustained some injuries that would make him appear in a pool of blood. The god of smallpox [Sonponno] is another scary divinity used for implicatory prayers. People pray that the god of small pox should visit the homes of their perceived enemies. When they feel cheated and are attacked by evil forces, people visit the homes of the priests of smallpox, pray at the shrine of the god and offer him sacrifice so he could quickly answer their prayers. Any

man who prays and cries for help at the shrines of the divinities want a spiritual war fought for his survival.

When the people pray, the word ASE that I earlier discussed is seen as being potent most especially among the indigenous priests. Although the people who pray in the names of God and divinities are also aware of this fact. The Babalawo[indigenous priest] reiterates the importance of ase in the Ifa corpus. The following verse therefore from the ose Otura as narrated by Babalawo Awopegba is a good way to conclude prayers. It is used to seal all the requests:

Pansaojuina, abaradudupetepete-blackened calabash meat preserver that hangs on the fire place

Obun lo t'okobo, lo risiasia-Farming compounds the filthy person's filth

D'ifa fun Olusole-Divined for Olusole

Ni'joti o nmuomiojusunrahan omo-When he was crying for a child

Igbatiyo o bi, o bi oka-When he was to have children, he had oka[oka is a snake that coils over its tails for protection]

Obi ere-He gave birth to ere[he had boa constrictor for a family]

O bi opolo[He gave birth to opolo][he had frog]

O bi ojola-He gave birth to ojola[he had ojola-a member of the boa constrictor family]

O bi guntere-He gave birth to guntere

Ekoninseomoikehin won lenje-lenje-Eko was the last of his children[centipede was the youngest of the children]

Ekowas'awo re apaokun, ilamejiosa-[Eko went on a spiritual sojourn overseas]

Igbatiyo o de, koba baba m-[When he came back, he did not meet his father[their father had died before he eko, returned from the trip]

Oni "niboni baba lo?-He asked"where is father?"

Won ni baba tisosun-They told him that baba had died

Owa to awon Babalawo lo-He went to his Babalawo

Won nieboni ko se pe yo o ri baba re-He was told to make ebo that he would see his father

Ekoru 'bo-Eko made the ebo

Awon Babalawo re fun nieyokookanninuohuneboki o lo fi bo baba re-After the ebo was made,the Babalawo gave him pieces of the things used for the ebo for his own personal propitiation

Won nitiobatibo baba re tan,ki o ma baba lo-They told him to seek his father after the personal propitiation

Eko burin gada,opadeilapekil'ona-Far into the journey,eko met ila

Ila niomoolooreoun,'niboni o nlo ?'-Ila asked''my benefactor child,where are you going?''

Ekoniounnwa baba lo-Eko said he was seeking his father

Ila fun niogunokeowo-Ila gave him twenty bags of money

Eko burin gada,opadeikanl'ona-Further into the journey,he,eko met ikan

Ikan niomoolooreoun,'niboni o n nlo-Ikan asked,my benefactor child ,'where are you going?''

Ekoniounnwa baba lo-Eko said he was seeking his father

Ikan fun niogbonokeowo-Ikan gave him thirty bags of money

Eko burin gada,o padeolonbeganl'ona-Further into the journey,he,eko,met olobengan

Olobenganniomoolooreoun,'Niboni o nlo ?'-Olobengan asked''my benefactor's child,where are you going?''

Ekoniounnwa baba lo-Eko said he was seeking his father

Olobengan fun niogbonokeowo-Olobengan gave him one thousand,four hundred and three bags of money

Ekotun burin gada,ile pin niwaju,o pin l'ehin-As eko kept going,the road suddenly disappeared

Igbatiyoogbeesekini,gbeesekeji,tiyo o gbeiketa,o jinsiagbedeorun-He took one step,the second step,,the third step landed him in the spirit world

Won ni,Ogbonrun-They[ressidents of the spirit world]said they smelled an unpleasant odor[they complained of the smell of a living being-an intrusion]

Baba a re ni,Ogboko run.O ni,omooounni-His father[eko's father]said there was no unpleasant odor that the smell was that of his son[that his son should be spared reprisal for the intrusion]

Oni''ki lo de ti o fi nwaounbowa?''-He asked his son''why do you come to the spirit world?looking for me?

Ekoninigbatiounde'le,ni won niotiwasihiin-Eko said that when he got home,he was told that he[father] had transcended

Oni,Oka tij'ogunoro-He said oka has inherited poison[oka has become poisonous]

O ni,Ojolatij'ogunohun-He said Ojola has inherited Ohun[Ojola has become very unfriendly and hostile]

O niOpolaj'ogunewuifan-He said frog has inherited a rough skin[he said frog has turned wicked]

O niAgunsooraj'ogunsisan-He said,Agunsooro's biting has become deadly[that agunsooro has become a deadly snake]

Oni won nitioun bas un mo won,awonyogbeoun mi-He said that they threatened to swallow him,eko,if he went close to them

Baba re ni ko ya'nu-His father told him to open his mouth;he opened his mouth

Baba a re ba so asekonsosotioniku,siekonienu-His father-His father put his last ase in eko's mouth

O nikokalo-He,the father,asked eko to come along,to follow him

Oba beresi fi gbogboawonnkantieko fi ru'bol'ode aye haan an-The father showed eko all the things that he,eko,had sacrificed on earth

O ni tie ko ba de le aye-The father told eko that when he,eko,gets to earth

Ki ekowi fun won pe-He should tell the people

Ki won pa okaniapadari-To kill oka by cutting off its head

Ki won pa ere niapalado-To kill ere by slicing it open

Ki won ma fi opateerejairuguntere-To kill guntere with a long stick

Ki won pa opolopo,ki won ma t'uju re bo ere.To kill frog by rubbing its face in mud

Oni ti oba de' aye.The father told hi,eko,that when gets on earth

Ti oba kano do nlati ko ba le le-If he comes across a big river that he could not cross

Oni ti o batie nu so bebeihin,yo ma baara re nibebeohun-He eko, should put his mouth on the shore line,once he does that,he should himself on the other side of the river

Ti obakaniginla-That if a big tree impeded his movement

Oni ti o bati fi enu so bebe, yo ma baara re nibebeohun-He should put his mouth on the side of the tree,once he does that,he would find himself on the other side of the river

Oni ti oba kan oke ti ko le gun-un

That if he came across a mountain that he could not climb

Oni ti o bati fi enu so bebeihin,,yo ma baara re nibebeohun-He should put his mouth at the base of the mountain,once he does that,he would find himself on the other side of it

Oni kodiju-He[father]told eko to close his eyes

Eko di ju-Eko closed his eyes

Baba re bagbaniidi-The father tapped eko on the buttocks

Ekoba tun baara re l'oriyonrinniibiti o tijas'odeorunniakoko-Eko saw himself on the same spot,where the road had previously disappeared

Igbatyingada,ila lo tunkopade-As he was tracing his way back,the first person he met was ila

Ila niomoolooreounniyatiosuketa,o ni,ori baba abi o ko ri ?-Ila said here comes my benefactor's child,it has been three mouths,did you see your father?

Ekoniounri baba-Eko answered that he saw his father

Ila nikinni baba fun-Ila asked,what did your father give you?

Eko ni o fun oun ni ase

Eko said that his father gave him ase

Ekonioun tile dan ase baba ounwo-Eko decided to test his newly acquired ase

Oni ila,ewo lo ndun e-He asked ila, 'what are our problems?'

Ila niomonioun ko ri bi-Ila said he lacked children

Ekonikiila o bi ogunomo-Eko commanded that Ila should have twenty children

Ila bi ogun omo-Ila had twenty children

O nikiomokookan ma niogboogbonomo,ogoogunomo-Eko commanded that each child[seed]should have[bear]multiples of thirty children[seeds],twenty children[multiple seeds]Ila had children[multiple seeds]as commanded

Otunpadeikanpeki-Next,he met ikan

Oni,Ikanewo lo ndun e?-And asked,Ikan what is your main problem?

Ikan niomonioun ko ri bi-Ikan said he was unable to have children

Ekoniki ikan o bi ogboogbonomo,ki won ma niaddota,ogoogunomoninu-Eko commanded that ikon should have thirty children that each child should have multiples of fifty children,twenty children

Beeni ikan se bi mo-Ikan had children as commanded

O tun padeolobengan- Then he met olobengan

O ni,olobengan,ewo lo ndun e-He asked 'Olobengan,what borders you the most?

Olobenganniomonioun ko ri bi-Olobengan said he was unable to have children

Ekonikiolobengan bi etalegbejeomo,ki won ma niogboogbon,ogoogojio-Eko commanded that olobengan should have one thousand,four hundred and three children that each child should have multiples of thirties,twenty children

Eko wan jo,o nyo,o nkorin-Eko was so happy for the manifestations of his prayers,and for the potency of his newly acquired ase,that he started to sing,dance and praise Ifa[Odumare]

O ni[Saying]

Bi mowure

Ire e mi kasaigba

Bi mobere,bi mowure

Ire e mi kasaigba  
Baba okaku,okajogunoro  
Bi moduro  
Bi mowure  
Ire e mi kasaigba  
Bi mobere,bimowure  
Ire e mi kasaigba....  
If I am standing,and I pray  
May my prayer manifest  
Ifa I am on the bent knees,and I pray  
May my prayer manifest  
If I am standing,and I pray  
May my prayer manifest

Chorus

Ifa I am on the bent knees,and I pray

May my prayers manifest  
When ere's father died,ere became hostile  
If I am standing,and I pray  
May my prayers manifest

Ifa I am on bent knees and I pray

May my prayers manifest  
When opolo's father died,opolo became wicked  
If I am standing,and I pray  
May my prayers manifest

Ifa I am on bent knees,and I pray

May my prayers manifest.

The importance of the above in prayer cannot be carpeted.While it is believed that only the indigenous priests have the technical-know-how to chant the chorus,many worshippers believe that it becomes extremely important to see the former to help them lead prayers so they will help them quicken the process when their dexterity is used.Of a truth,prayers by the worshippers are very potent but it becomes more efficacious when they contact the priests for assistance.The priests know the right words to use,the perfect time to utter those words and the right place to be when the prayers are said.That is why when a fellow is desperate to avenge any evil done to him,he rushes straight to the shrine for prayers

## ANCESTORS

In Yoruba ontological setting, belief in ancestors comes third. Ancestral cult in the traditional Yoruba is popular. The people believe that the spirits of their dead aged fathers are still hovering around the family and when their offerings are given to them daily, they become more active. They have the power to punish moral offenders and can also bless those who uphold the virtues, culture and precepts of the family. The head of the tutelary shrine is the oldest man in the house who wakes up very early in the morning, invoke the spirits of the ancestors by giving of offerings and pray for the protection of the family.

Among the Ikale/Ilaje peoples of Ondo State, the cult of ancestors is still very much active and the people still get scared of their wrath. For instance, if a fellow sleeps with his distant cousin and eventually impregnates her, the lady will not give birth until she confesses. The pain may be too much that, even when operation is to be done on her, she may die if she is obdurate to confess. When she eventually confesses, the operation may not be needed. Immediately she confesses, a big goat will be taken to the eldest man of the family who will appeal to the ancestors to halt other punishments. But if the two cousins have had intercourse out of ignorant, when it is eventually revealed to them that they have made a mistake, the guy's father would still buy a goat, take it to the father or the eldest in the family of the lady who will kill and offer the goat as sacrifice to the ancestors. When misfortune befalls the family, the ancestors are appealed to, to help them unravel the mystery and they, in turn, would reveal whatever could have been the problem to the eldest members of the family through dreams. That is why in Yoruba religion, the place of dream is held in high esteem. The people also use the spirits of their ancestors to pray. When they are attacked by the suspected sorcerer in the family, they ask the ancestors to fight the fellow.

Some Western scholars and converted Christians and Muslims have been attacking the cult of ancestors in Yorubaland and in some other African tribes. For instance, Lois K. Fuller maintains that "the people who contact the spirits of the dead are called mediums or spiritists. The Hebrew terms are yid'oni, a spiritist [KJV says wizard or familiar spirit] and 'ov, a medium [KJV says familiar spirit]. In his thesis, he further affirms that, this practice is forbidden in Deu. 18:11; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; and Is. 8:19-20. The passage in Isaiah mentions that the people should consult God, not the dead, for guidance. Other practices concerning the dead are also forbidden. These are cutting one's body for the dead [Lev. 19:28], shaving for the dead and offering part of the harvest to the dead. Lois then concludes that involvement with the

spirits of the dead may be forbidden because of the likelihood of contacting demonic spirits and being deceived and enslaved by them.<sup>18</sup>

Since Lois K.Fuller has decided to use Bible to confirm the validity and veracity of other people's faith,let us use the same scripture to checkmate the authenticity of his claim.Elisha,when he was about taking over from Elijah recognised the latter in his prayer.It shows that,those who have died are not totally ostracised from their immediate environment.Jesus,today,is remembered by the entire Christian community.There is no Christian who does not invoke his spirit while praying.It is therefore,imperative to note that,Jesus,died years back and has not been forgotten by the Christians.Even his death is still being celebrated till date.This qualifies him as an ancestor.

Many Christians who desire to have Abrahamic blessings use his name to pray in all of the churches in the world.The popular song which says.

Abraham blessed a man  
Abraham blessed a man  
I am blessed in the morning  
I am blessed in the evening

Abraham blessed a man

It is instructive to note that this song is sung among many Christians and it is used during prayer session.Not only this,it is also believed that David uses praises to bring down the presence of the Lord to fight his battles hence Christians normally pray using the name of David.These mentioned characters are dead yet still remembered during prayers.Infact,in the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria,worshippers still use the names of their dead founders to pray.The Christ Apostolic Church still pray in the name of their founder,Babalola.The Celestial Church of Christ members still use the name of their founder,Oshoffa to pray.They are all ancestors.Belief in ancestors therefore,is not a monopoly of African indigenous religion.

## **SPIRITS**

Spirits are a set of apparitional entities believed to inhabit the natural phenomena for different purposes. In Africa, whatever Africans believe to have the presence of the supernatural is

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<sup>18</sup>L.K.Fuller,2017..A Missionary Handbook on African Traditional Religion,Bukuru,ACTs Books,51-52

believed to have a taste of the divine world. There are several kinds of spirits in Yorubaland. Some are attached to a particular mountain, trees, lakes, rivers and so on. Many tribes believe that there are spirits in some mountains which helped them to fight their enemies and delivered them from invaders in the pre-colonial period and have vowed to continue to worship the spirits. A very good example of this is Olumo rock in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. Some people also believe that rivers have spirits and that their spirits could be of help when misfortune knocks their doors. Today, many people in Yorubaland offer sacrifice to some big trees believed to have had divine presence. The popular tree among the Yoruba is Iroko [*Chlorophora excelsa*]. It is fondly seen in the west coast of Africa. Sometimes, it is called African, or Nigerian, teak. But the Iroko is not related to the teak family. The wood is hard, dense and at the same durable.<sup>19</sup>

The Yoruba people of the Southwestern part of Nigeria believe that, the Iroko tree is possessed by a spirit called Iroko man. The tree is so feared that no one dares stand face-to-face with the Iroko man. Any time a fellow dares him and sees him physically, he will either die or run mad, and any fellow who tries to cut it down has already invited to himself misfortune unless a prayer is said to protect the latter.<sup>20</sup>

Yoruba elders believe that Iroko is permanently living at the top of the tree within the confine of its canopy, with a special limb getting so high and runs through the sky that it is believed to be the throne of God. All kinds of spirits are also living at the core of the tree and the main reason for this is to keep Iroko from descending below the earth's core. It is generally believed that the spirit of the Iroko man can be loudly heard in the homes that use Iroko timber, as its spirit still remains in the wood.<sup>21</sup>

People have used the opportunity of the presence of the spirit in the tree to pray for protection from the evil ones and many have made sacrifices to the spirits to help them solve some issues not directly linked to any fellow. But before a sacrifice is taken to Iroko, it must have been that a diviner has advised the fellow and immediately the fellow drops the sacrifice, he starts praying and believes that the spirit in the tree hears him. The prayer could be that the spirit should kill anyone who is responsible to his misfortune and it could be that the spirit should help bring fortune to him. Some persons without any instruction from the diviners go

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<sup>19</sup><https://www.britannica.com/plant>. Retrieved 22-07-2023

<sup>20</sup>The Iroko Indomittable Thorogood.co.uk. Retrieved 22-08-2023

<sup>21</sup>The Iroko Indomittable Thorogood.co.uk. Retrieved 22-08-2023

there and pray that the spirit should fight for them since they have no spiritual muscle to confront the former.

## **MAGIC AND MEDICINE**

Magic and medicine among the Yoruba are based in the belief that there are supernatural forces in the universe that can be tapped and controlled by the phenomenal. Magic is an attempt of tapping the supernatural for man's interest while medicine is an act of using the available resources of nature to heal or cure sickness. Among the Yoruba, however, the use of magic and medicine is still very much breathing, and it can be argued that the duo has been what still makes the religion active because in them, there is belief in God, in divinities, spirits and ancestors. For instance, it is believed that God, through herbs can change someone's story for better. It is also believed that when one prays, the spirits of the divinities can be invoked to heal an ailment caused by the evil men of the world. A particular set of spirit and ancestral cult can help deal with anyone who has attacked any member of the family.

There are several types of magic but because of unavailability of space, we shall go straight to how it is relevant to this discourse. Among the Yoruba, it is believed that, the cause of sickness could be physical or spiritual which is why when an ailment proves intransigent to be totally healed, a diviner is contacted to know the cause of the ailment. If it is confirmed that someone has attacked the fellow using bad magic or sorcery then the family of the fellow may avenge the evil done to him by using counter magic. When counter magic is used, a particular spirit of the divinity may be invoked on the magic to help attack the attacker of the victim. And when both magic and medicine are used to heal sickness, it is called magica-medicine. For instance, when medicine is not efficacious unless it involves incantation, invocation, sacrifice, taboo, ritual etc, it means that it is no longer pure medicine. The combination of the supernatural and natural forces for healing process may be seen in an ailment caused by a sorcerer or witch and it could also surface in an ailment that has natural causation.

When it is suspected that an ailment is not natural, and that it is the work of a sorcerer or a witch, no pure medicine can heal it. Both natural and supernatural forces are used for the healing process. But in a situation whereby the attacked wants to avenge what was done to him, he might decide to use what is generally known as back-to-sender and in doing this, he may invoke the spirit of either Sango [the Yoruba god of thunder] or Ogun [the Yoruba god of iron] and pray that they should help him avenge the evil done to him. It is important to note that, while doing this, he may not know the one who has attacked him but it is believed that

Sango or Ogun[whichever the divinity he uses]can strike the attacker death.The prayer of the fellow depends on what he wants his magic to do for him.Baba Agbomola argues that there are medicines prepared for healing that have back to sender.This means that as the ailment is healing,the sender will suffer the same fate.<sup>22</sup>

Elizabeth McAllister's<sup>23</sup> theory which states that most people associate prayer with moral good. Yet in some cases, people deliberately pray against others in form of what I call "aggressive prayer" that aim to harm, is applicable to this discourse because when a fellow in the spiritual realm plans evil against another man, and the one who doesn't want to be affected by such evil prays aggressively for divine intervention and God eventually answers the prayer of the latter, such could be associated to the concept of "moral good" as posited by Elizabeth in her theory because the one who sent arrow in the realm of the spirit would have been happy if he succeeds.

Answering questions on the importance of prayer, Malcom Zachariah<sup>24</sup> states that praying is as much about the person paying attention to situation as it is asking for divine intervention. Pachamaala hypothesizes<sup>25</sup> that African prayers make you feel connected with your creator and gives you a feeling of security. Jamaica gleaner<sup>26</sup> succinctly describes African prayers as short, extemporaneous and accompanied by sacrifices and offering. Infact, Okafor, Emmanuel / Kenna<sup>27</sup> makes a serious clarification on prayers in African traditional religion when he explains that African traditional prayers form the sub – structures of those institutionalized beliefs and practices.

## CONCLUSION

If there is a place where aggressive prayers are very important,it is among the Yoruba because it is believed that there are people out there who do not want the success of their friends,the success of their family members and the success of their neighbours hence having known that God,divinities,ancestors and spirits frown at injustice,they make use of them to avenge the evil done to them through warfare prayers.

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<sup>22</sup>Baba Agbomola,a seventy-three-year old medicine man.Interviewed 10-08-2023

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth McAlister, 2015 Spiritual Warfare and Aggressive Prayers. Retrieved 22 – 02 – 2024

<sup>24</sup> M. Zachariah, 2022. The Purpose of African Prayers. [www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com). Retrieved 22 – 02 – 2024

<sup>25</sup> P. Pachammaala, 2022. The Importance of Prayers in life. [www. Quora.com](http://www.Quora.com). Retrieved 22 – 02 – 2024

<sup>26</sup> J. Gleaner, 2016 African Traditional Religions: The Worship of God. [https://jamaica – gleaner.com](https://jamaica-gleaner.com). Retrieved 22 – 02 – 2024.

<sup>27</sup> E. Okafor, 2021. African Traditional Prayers as Essential Instruments for Indigenization of African Knowledge and Values. ACJOL.Org. Retrieved 22- 02 - 2024

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