Adekunle O. Dada

The Influence of Yoruba Religio-cultural Milieu on Prophetic Activities in Selected Indigenous African Churches

Abstract
Prophecy and prophetism are important elements of liturgical activities in indigenous churches in Nigeria. For the adherents of these churches, prophecy has not ceased in that God still communicates with them. This background therefore justifies the emphasis placed on prophetic activities in the indigenous churches in Nigeria. The goal of this article is to critically examine the influence of the traditional Yoruba culture and religion in the expression of prophetic phenomena and on prophetic personages in these churches. As a corollary, the article will also explore how these churches’ concepts of prophetic inspiration, call, and the inducement of the psychic states have been shaped by the Yoruba religio-cultural milieu.

Introduction
The emergence of the churches variously classified as African Instituted churches, African Independent Churches or Aladura Churches, at the beginning of the twentieth century, has changed the course and direction of Christianity in Africa. These churches were founded by African leaders who sought to reflect African culture and ways of life in their faith. Since their inception, these churches have played a significant role in placing African Christianity on the world map of religious activities. Falk best articulates this conclusion on African Indigenous Churches when he says:

The African Independent Churches constitute a significant portion of Christianity in Africa and unique spirit in African Christianity. The development of Independent Churches has attained a dimension unprecedented in the history of the Christian church. These independent church movements have been founded by a separation from parent churches, missions, or independent churches – in a few cases, under the initiative of a dynamic leader … such ministries may be found in many countries of Africa, especially South of the Sahara; these ministries have a large influence on the population (Falk, 1999: 452).

One of the reasons the Indigenous African Churches are dynamic can perhaps be that they operate the prophetic ministry. For these churches prophecy has not ceased. According to the adherent of these churches, God still speaks to them in order to encourage, rebuke, warn, guide and edify. Inasmuch as adherents of the indigenous churches in Nigeria believe in the Bible as the word of God, they still clamour for fresh and spontaneous revelation from him.
The existence of the different prophetic personages in these churches and the popularity of the prophetic ministry can be justified in the light of this background. It should however be underscored here that the use of the term “prophetic” in this work is in the narrow sense of prediction of future events as a way of addressing different human existential problems. It is an acknowledged fact that the term “prophetic” in the broader sense encompasses issues relating to social justice, human rights and other social concerns. However, the treatment of prophecy in the predictive sense is suitable and relevant in view of the socio-cultural milieu in which the Indigenous African Churches to be examined operate.

This article hopes to explore the interface of Yoruba culture and religion, with particular reference to prophetic activities and expression in Celestial Church of Christ and Christ Apostolic Church. These churches were founded by Yoruba Christians in the last century. The founding of Celestial Church of Christ revolves round the visionary experience of Samuel Bilewu Oschoffa from 1947-1949, while the founding of Christ Apostolic Church oscillates around different events and personalities, like Odubanjo, Sadare, Babalola, Akinyele and others, from 1918-1930.

The Yoruba are mainly found in the Southwestern part of modern Nigeria, where they form one of the large population ethnic groups. A substantial number of the Yoruba people also inhabit the Southeastern part of Republic of Benin. Similar pockets of their population, largely off-shoots from their West African base, are also found across the Atlantic, for instance the Caribbean and South America, particularly in Cuba and in Brazil (Atanda, 1996: 3-34).

Influence of Yoruba Culture on functions of Prophetic Personages in Selected Indigenous Churches

In the Indigenous African Churches, there exist different prophetic personages. These include prophets, prophetesses, visionaries, dreamers and the spirit-possessed. However, the activities of the prophets/prophetesses are central in these churches. The functions of prophets/prophetesses in Christ Apostolic Church and Celestial Church of Christ are similar to those of prophets in other indigenous churches. Apart from preaching, which is not a common feature of their activities, they (prophets/prophetesses) address the existential problems of members and non-members of their respective churches. In some instances, some of their clients are not even Christians. The prophets in these churches are consulted for problems ranging from barrenness, sickness, and security to explanations of knotty issues of life. These problems are often addressed in the context of trance, dreams, vision and spirit possession. If, for example, a person comes to the prophet for inquiries on sickness, the prophet would have to spiritually diagnose the patient, in order to know the cause and possible solutions to the problem. The information needed is often revealed to the prophet in a trance state, vision or dream.

It is evident from the foregoing that the emphasis on visions, dreams and spirits in these churches, especially Celestial Church of Christ, is in a sense evidence of the affinity with Yoruba religious “weltanschauung”. The idea that the paranormal world is directly accessible by ritual specialists such as the “babalawo” (Yoruba traditional priest/diviner) is also integral to the indigenous cosmology. One can possibly see a certain parallel
between the attitude of members the indigenous churches and the role that visions play in these churches and the conception of and attitude towards the traditional Yoruba divination system (“Ifá”). The anxieties and existential problems brought to the prophet/prophetess are akin to those brought before the “babalawo” (Adogame, 2001: 190).

In the traditional Yoruba setting, most situations of failure, diseases, sickness, other misfortunes go beyond human imagination and are believed to be extraordinary or an influence of the malevolent spirit. People resort to the “babalawo” either to find out the causes or to know the wish of the “Orisa” (the gods). Since members of these churches have turned from traditional religion to Christianity, a lacuna is created. It can be said that prophets in these churches fill this lacuna, in that they took over the functions of “babalawo” of the traditional Yoruba religion. Dreams, vision, audition now become the new means of performing their roles. In the light of this, it can therefore be said that what has changed in these churches is more of the sources, channels and nature of revelation rather than in the attitude towards it (Adogame, 2001: 190-191).

A closer survey of the contents of prophetic message in Christ Apostolic Church reveals that of a revolutionary nature, which characterized the Old Testament prophets and some early itinerant African prophets. In present-day Nigeria, itinerant prophets still exist in some Nigerian indigenous churches like Church of the Lord (Aladura) and Cherubim and Seraphim Church. They are often seen carrying a bell and a Bible, preaching during the early hours of the day or at other times. This phenomenon is completely alien to the Celestial Church of Christ as prophets are always warned never to engage in this type of evangelistic strategy. In this sense therefore, the role of the prophet in Celestial Church of Christ is not so much as catalyst or as an agent of social change but rather as an oracular source of hidden knowledge concerning the past, present and future of an individual and the measures to be adopted to remedy certain existential problems and situations. Thus heavenly revelations – vision, dream, audition and spirit possession - in Celestial Church of Christ, are diagnostic as well as therapeutic, similar to the divination “odu” (poems) recited by the “babalawo” (Adogame, 2001: 191).

The difference in the contents of prophetic message in Christ Apostolic Church and Celestial Church of Christ can be predicated on the fact that the call of the two pioneering prophets in these churches, was brought to bear on the subsequent expression of the prophetic ministry in them. Joseph Ayo Babalola, one of the pioneers and early prophets in Christ Apostolic Church, was working with his roller on a road construction site, on October 4, 1928, when the engine developed a mechanical fault. It was while trying to fix the roller engine that he heard his name called twice, with a threat that he would die if he refused to leave his job. When the same words were repeated the following day, he did not give heed. However, on the third day, the same voice told him it was a sheer waste of time to remain on the job. In response to this call, he left the job. Towards the end of a seven-day fast, the Lord Jesus Christ and an angel appeared to him.

During this encounter, Babalola was told to use a hand bell and was also given a rod of iron. The Lord also instructed him in the use of sanctified water for healing every form of sickness and disease. In addition to these, he was to denounce the use of every form of medicine and charm. Jesus Christ then gave him the parable of three palm leaves. One was completely dry, the other was in the process of dying, while the third was fresh.
The interpretation of this parable is as follows: anyone who does not accept Jesus Christ as saviour is compared to the dried leaf. The lukewarm Christians are compared to the half-dried leaf, while those who accept Jesus as their saviour are compared to the fresh leaf.

The experience of Babalola related above might have propelled him to embark on extensive evangelistic outreaches during his lifetime. Though Babalola as a prophet also addressed people’s existential problems, like sickness, demonic possession, barrenness and other crises, his demonstration of power over these problems was often exhibited in the context of his evangelistic activities. This perhaps became a paradigm for prophets in Christ Apostolic Church.

A careful examination of Oschoffa’s (founder of Celestial Church of Christ) first call-experience reveals that it was without a clear-cut evangelistic mandate. According to Oschoffa, on 23rd May 1947, he was marooned in a mangrove forest in Toffin, a village in the Ganvie area of Dahomey (present Benin Republic). Unable to find his way out, he resorted to prayer, and, according to him, he had an unusual encounter with the divine:

On the 23rd May 1947 the day of the eclipse of the sun, as I was praying in the forest on this trip, I heard a voice and could not open my eyes. The voice I heard was “luli”, and the same voice told me ‘This means the grace of Jesus Christ’ … when I heard this voice, I noticed I felt quite different from my normal self … there was a complete change in me.

Oschoffa also had a visionary experience, and one of the spectacular visions that had great spiritual implication for him was that in which he saw a white monkey with wings, a peacock and a short snake. Oschoffa further claimed that, after this experience in the forest, he had series of visions, and it was in one of the visions on 27th September 1947, that he received divine commission to preach to the whole world and demonstrate the divine power over all forces of evil.

While not denying the visionary experiences of Oschoffa, it may not be far from the truth to say that, perhaps, the visions of 27th September, 1947, in which Oschoffa was commissioned to preach, might be an attempt to correct or rectify some people’s impression about his first visionary experience. This is because, in his first visionary experience, there was no mandate given to him as a messenger of God. Besides, there are references to some animals, which symbolize uncleanness in the Old Testament, and treachery, pride and wiles in some African cultures. Among the Yoruba, for example, the monkey is seen as a symbol of treachery, the peacock a symbol of pride, and snake a symbol of wile. This perhaps made some Christians in Nigeria to call to question Oschoffa’s credential as a prophet. However, in spite of this criticism, Oschoffa was reputed to be unusually endowed charismatically. This perhaps is responsible for the phenomenal growth of the church he founded – The Celestial Church of Christ. In the Celestial Church of Christ, the prophet is more of a diviner, in that he has the faculty of ‘seeing’ and ‘finding remedies’, especially when compared to the Old Testament type of prophet as the spokesman of God and foreteller of doom. Prophets in Celestial Church of Christ are
often consulted for different problems of life and also to inquire about vital issues of life like marriage and business plans. The prophet is expected to give direction in such situations. Answers and solutions to people’s problems are revealed in a trance state, vision, audition and dreams. Through these phenomena, the prophet is usually informed on the form of ritual (eto) to be performed in order to solve or alleviate one problem or the other. As earlier observed, this function of the prophet is similar to those performed by the “Babalawo” (diviner) in traditional Yoruba society. The “Babalawo” would always divine in order to get to the kernel of his client’s problem; it is only after this that rituals (“ebo”) for solving the problem would be prescribed. The prophets in Celestial Church of Christ have taken over the functions of the “Babalawo”. But instead of using the traditional “Opele” (divination chain or device), dream, vision, and audition have become the media for their divinatory practices.

The Influence of Yoruba religion on The Concept of Call in Prophetism of Selected Indigenous Churches

Another aspect of the Yoruba religious genius that provides a background for the indigenous churches’ prophetism is their concept of “call”. In the indigenous churches in Nigeria, especially Christ Apostolic Church and Celestial Church of Christ, it is claimed that God raises certain men and women up as prophets and prophetesses. Examples of these prophets and prophetesses include: Joseph Babalola, Samuel Oshoffa, Daniel Orekoya, Abiodun Emmanuel, Sophia Odunlami and others too numerous to mention. Olupona has pointed out that the calling and status of some of these prophets are modeled after the biblical paradigm. Some of them were called and commissioned in similar fashion as the Old Testament prophets. It is, however, incontrovertible that the traditional culture and environment also have an impact on the call of the prophets in the indigenous churches.

According to Olayiwola (1994:11), in the Yoruba traditional context, the call to join the service of a powerful deity is something that many devotees of traditional religion receive from the deity called the “Orisa”. In the process, some people are even mysteriously carried away by a whirlwind for training in esoteric/deep knowledge related to the calling. During a period of isolation, the devotee/apprentice, it is claimed, is taught hidden knowledge and also gains the power to perform healing miracles and other types of miracles. Examples of this phenomenon abound among the devotees of the “Ifá” divination system. There are cases of some diviners and traditional healers who are mysteriously carried away by the whirlwind. The experience of Oschoffa (the founder of Celestial Church of Christ) during the time of his call reflects the paradigm described above. After he had been marooned in the forest for about three months, an angel appeared to him and he became transformed:

On the 23rd May 1947, the day of the eclipse of the sun, as I was praying in the forest on this trip, I heard a voice and could not open my eyes …. When I heard this voice, I noticed I felt quite different from my normal self … and I then noticed that there was a complete change in me (Celestial Church of Christ Constitution, 1980: 5).
From the experience of Oschoffa related above, it is evident that the paradigm of his Call is rooted in two sources, the Bible and Yoruba religion. In the Bible, especially extant Israelite prophetic tradition, the Call narrative is an important component (Akao, 1993).6

Another area where the traditional religion has been able to influence prophetic activities in the indigenous churches in Nigeria is in the area of evocation of spirit. The spirit occupies a central place in traditional Yoruba religion. Most divinities, in spite of their physical representation, are believed to be spirit. These spirit-divinities are often summoned during festive occasions, in order to communicate with the worshippers. For example among the Yoruba, a devotee might be called by an Orisa (a deity) through possession. This may happen at any time, but often it will be during some ceremony connected with “orisa”. The person may just be standing at a distance, watching, or may be one of the worshippers - often singing and dancing – when he/she goes into ecstasy (Idowu, 1996: 136). When this takes place, the priest/priestess takes on the ability to foretell or prophesy. The heavy imprint of the Yoruba autochthonous religion is evident in prophetic activities in the indigenous churches (Olayiwola, 1994:114).

In Celestial Church of Christ, the prophet, visioner, or gifted individuals within the church who are susceptible to trance or other forms of altered state of consciousness are called “elemi” (the spirit possessed). The Holy Spirit is regarded as taking over or possessing an individual and when this occurs there are visible signs that indicate such states. The one possessed by the Holy Spirit often becomes frenzied or makes staggering movements, like a drunk, shaking and perspiring profusely, or sometimes violently rolling on the floor, letting out both coherent and unintelligible sounds. At this time, the subject is no longer percipient about what happens around him/her, neither has he/she any sensational feelings. The possessed may be in this state for hours, days or even weeks. During this period, the possessed is said to bring from the Lord messages of comfort, edification, warning, direction or guidance. At other times, inquiries are also made on any matter from the possessed. If it is a long period of possession, on the day the possessed will return to normal consciousness, special preparations are made to “welcome” him/her back to “life”. This form of possession is not however attested in Christ Apostolic Church. Some of the ministers in Christ Apostolic Church interviewed said that if there is any of such possessions, it must be an influence from the Cherubim and Seraphim or Celestial Church of Christ.

Music and creation of Psychic Atmosphere in Traditional Yoruba Religion: Influence on prophetism in Selected indigenous Churches in Nigeria

Music has always played a vital role in African traditional religion. It is one of the media employed in praising, appeasing and requesting the good things of life from the divinities. In the African traditional religion, a festive ceremony or ritual is incomplete without the accompaniment of music. Apart from music, dance is also central to ritual performance and festive ceremony among the adherents of the traditional religion in Africa. According to Nabofa, dance is the most favourable media for communicating with the divine. Dance is no luxury, it is a necessity because it is the physical manifestations of mystical experience. Inner conviction requires that an adherent of the traditional religion should commune with and attempt to control, those forces over which
he has no actual control. Dancing is thus one of the most effective avenues through which the worshippers can commune with those spiritual forces he believes in (Nabofa, 1990:12).

Apart from the functions of music and dance in traditional religion earlier highlighted, music has also been found to help in creating conducive atmosphere for the invasion of the personality of the worshipper by the deities. On this phenomenon, Idolor writes:

In any of the various categories of religions such as Animism, Fetishism, Polytheism and Monotheism music is a functional element … Music is found in instrumented, vocal, dance or a combination of two, or all three forms. It is meant to praise the deity for good things such as provision, protection and redemption. At other time, it is designed to invite the deity into the worship atmosphere, to take control of the sequence of activities, bless and possibly possess the worshippers. The latter is achieved with the aid of some music-specifics, by which the psyches of the devotees are stimulated to facilitate the readiness of their body divining habitation of the deity. These functional processes, through the use of music, explain the strong desire of a traditional African society to have the gods take part directly in the material, moral and spiritual life of the community (Idolor, 1999:58-59).

Among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, it is believed that music and ritualistic dancing can generate “ase” or life force in the individual. The Yoruba believe that “ase” – a dynamic, malleable energy, a life force could be put to good or evil use. It is received from the Orisa (the gods) through propitiation and invocation. It is also the source of spirit possession. This generated power is tapped directly from the “Orisa” to whom the individual is dedicated. The power is said to increase particularly during the trance states of possession, when an “Orisa” is said to take over the conscious personality of a believer. Ceremonial possession is brought about by rhythmic stimulation (drumming and chanting), energetic concentrated dancing, and controlled emotional and mental concentration (Floyd, 1995:20).

Unlike the West and the Orient whose musical instruments are mainly strings, the musical instruments of the Yoruba, like most other Africans South of the Sahara, are mainly percussion-based. Besides, all the divinities have their favourite drums, for example, the favourite instruments of “Sango” (the god of thunder) are the ‘bata’ drums. These are a set of conically shaped, double headed, fixed pitch membrane drums, usually consisting of four instruments. ‘Bata’ drums are not restricted to ‘Sango’ but are played for some lesser divinities and for certain masquerades. “Igbin” ensemble is Obatala’s (the god of purity) favorite drum, while the devotees of ‘Orunmila’ (the god of divination) use an ensemble of iron bells, “agogo Ifa”. These bells are not played together with drums. The special drums of ‘Orunmila’ are called ‘ipese’, while the devotees of Ogun (the god of iron) use a special set of single membrane, fixed pitch drums known as “ageree” (Euba, 1988:7-8).

These different drums apart from entertaining functions also help in working the devotees and adherents of the different divinities into states of altered consciousness, where inspiration is encountered. For example, an important feature of the annual festival
of “Sango” (god of thunder) in Yorubaland is the magical display by the “Elegun” (the one ‘Sango’ rides or one predisposed to possession by ‘Sango’). He works himself up with the aid of charms, ‘Sango’ chants, and ‘bata’ drum music. At a stage, he becomes ‘possessed’ and then performs some magical feats. A common performance is the piercing of the tongue with a thin iron bar having a sharp point (Isola, 1977:114-115).

The female ‘elegun,’ on the other hand, in the state of possession would shake and jerk profusely, and may utter some unintelligible sounds, which may be taken as an indication that the deity is communicating with the devotees.

The use of music and dance in the selected indigenous churches in Nigeria can be appreciated in the light of the background described above. The introduction of Christianity into Yorubaland marked the beginning of Gospel music. The early Gospel musical forms in Nigeria were mostly translations of Western Christian hymns. The main weakness of the early Christian hymns, as Ojo observed, is that they did not accommodate the tonal character of the Yoruba language (Ojo, 1998:2). “The missionaries translated the English texts into Yoruba, but instead of providing suitable melodies that would fit tonal inflection of the language, they retained the original western tones which were thus superimposed on them (Adegbite, 1994: 4). Apart from this, the use of traditional African music was not permitted in and outside the church because they (the missionaries) regarded everything in African culture as ‘pagan’ and ‘devilish’, and therefore unsuitable for the church. The consequences of this denial is that African Christians were unable to express the deepest level of their being in worship as they did in traditional worship.

However, the nationalistic and cultural awareness of the late nineteenth century brought awareness to Nigerian Christians of the value of traditional music. For example, the indigenous churches were quick to adopt traditional music during Christian worship. The effect of this innovation is that the worship of these churches became livelier and prepared the people to gain access into supra sensible realms:

During services, many would kneel as they sang praises in reverence to God. The lifting up of hands, eyes, and voluntary shouts became normal practices at worship. Members also went into trance and prophecies were uttered freely in the congregations. These spiritual phenomena were enhanced by the use of indigenous elements that had been brought into the church … local instruments like “gangan”, ‘agogo’, ‘akuba’, ‘sekere’, ‘omele’, ‘ako’, ‘omele abo’, ‘agidigbo’, ‘seli’, ‘akuba’, ‘sekere’, among others are extensively used (Oye, 1998:40).

All traditional instruments in use in the traditional Yoruba society are employed in worship services in Christ Apostolic Church, except ‘gangan’ (talking drums) which is forbidden. Members of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) are implored not to dance to the sound of “gangan” (See Chapter 17 of the CAC Constitution and Doctrine, English Edition). The reason for the ban has been linked to a warning said to have been issued by prophet Babalola, who warned that the talking drum might be an avenue for demonic invasion. On the other hand, Celestial Church of Christ members do not clap hands during worship-service. The founder laid down this rule as part of the revelation he
received in 1947. Still as part of what God revealed, the trombone and trumpet are to be the leading instruments in church music.

Music no doubt helped in creating the atmosphere conducive for the stimulation of the psychic state in which prophetic inspiration thrives in the selected indigenous churches in Nigeria. This fact is well underscored by Olayiwola:

The descent of the Holy Spirit is discernible in the individuals that are being briefly physically shaken by Spirit, a phenomenon usually referred to as spirit seizure. This always happened when the worship session gets to a climax with dancing the rhythmic music and drumming …. During such climaxes, prophetic declaration, or tongue-speaking or intense joy may be experienced which is more profound than the usual level of spirituality of normal worship …. As the centre of power of the Holy Spirit, the church building is especially conducive to the experience of dreams, visions, auditions, and prophecies by the members (Olayiwola, 1996:51).

On the influence of music in generating the psychic state and phenomena in the selected churches, different reasons have been offered. According to M. Ogufayo (Interview, 2004), a leader in Celestial Church of Christ, music often softens the mind of the spiritually gifted, who most of the time resist the “move of the Holy Spirit in their lives. On the other hand I.O. Agun (Interview, 2004), a prophet and pastor in Christ Apostolic Church, believe that music helps to create the conducive atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to work on the people. According to him, music often lifts up the worshippers emotionally, thus taking them out of the normal state of consciousness into the dissociative states.

This use of music in the indigenous churches in Nigeria marks the difference between worship in the old mission churches like Roman Catholic Church, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist. In the mission churches, worship is contemplative and follows a regular format. Many of such churches still use the old prayer and hymn books inherited from Britain and elsewhere (Awolalu, 1997:101). Though today some of these churches have incorporated traditional drums and other musical elements into their worship, the intensity of their use is still far below those of the indigenous churches. This can be seen in the sense that singing, clapping and dancing are highly monitored, tending to restrain the worshippers from a spontaneous expression of their innermost being.

Some Concluding Remarks

From the treatment of the issue at stake, it is evident that to claim absolute beginning for any religion is not a problem, but impossibility. This is because, historically, there are no absolute beginnings; none of the religions known to us found a clean sheet, but all built on earlier strata of religion. This perhaps can account for the influence of Yoruba religio-cultural milieu on the prophetic activities in the selected indigenous churches in Nigeria.
Two factors may be responsible for the integration of Yoruba religio-cultural heritage into prophetic activities of indigenous churches in Nigeria. The first is the dynamism and the resilient character of some cultures in the face of outside or foreign influence. The Yoruba culture, the milieu of both Christ Apostolic Church and Celestial Church of Christ, has been able to adapt and reengineer itself in the face of foreign domination and influence. Idowu aptly describes how Yoruba culture is able to do this when he writes:

The contact with an alien culture may be a result of colonization in consequence of such contact a people’s indigenous culture is never really the same again – there is some change through absorption or fussion of cultures or by the imposition of an alien one. Where an indigenous culture is strong enough it exercises the power of rejection and selection, in which case it takes what it chooses of the alien culture and refuses what is incompatible with its own ethos (Idowu, 1975:675-683).

The dynamism of Yoruba culture is evident in how adherents of the indigenous churches in Nigeria, have been able to reject those elements of foreign cultures that are incompatible with their spiritual sensibilities. It is also apparent in how they have been able to harness and accommodate those aspects of Yoruba culture that are compatible with their religious ethos. This therefore leads us to the second factor responsible for integration of Yoruba cultural traditions into indigenous churches prophetism -- which is the concern to make their religion relevant to the people’s socio-cultural context. The Western Missionaries that brought Christianity to Nigeria came from a worldview that was fast becoming scientific in orientation. Most of them, for example, operated and preached as if the world of spirit was a farce. The people, therefore, failed to see the direct relevance of Christianity to their lives. The reason for this is not far-fetched, because, as Omoyajowo observed, the early African Christians lived in two world:

That of traditional religion, in which he had been brought up (but with which he could not openly associate himself lest the colonial masters took offence) and that of Christianity (with which he was not at proper grips). There was therefore a conflict within the individual Christian. A spiritual revolution was necessary to restore harmony and this was promptly provided by the Aladura Churches (Omoyajowo, 1978:109).

The way the Indigenous African Churches, which Omoyajowo refers to as “Aladura” above, provided the much-needed revolution was the adaptation of some elements in traditional African culture and religion. These borrowed elements indeed satisfy their yearnings and aspirations in that their (African) members found in them something they could easily identify with.
Notes

1 The Indigenous African Churches are known as “Aladura” among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria. In Yoruba “Aladura” basically means a “prayerholic” or one who passionately believes that prayer is an effective panacea for all known ailments.

2 Many modern scholars have asserted that Israelite prophecy underwent a decline and ultimately ceased sometimes after the Babylonian exile. These scholars based their conclusion on what appears in Jewish texts of the second Temple and early rabbinic eras. However, several types of texts also suggest that prophecy existed during and perhaps even after the Second Temple period. In the New Testament times, prophecy and prophetic ministry were recognized. John the Baptist was regarded by the people, a prophet. Even Jesus was cast in the mould of a prophet. The popularity and continuity of the prophetic ministry was reinforced by the recognition of the office of a prophet in the church. And the elevation of the prophetic gifts in the pristine apostolic church goes a long way to establish that prophecy has not ceased.

3 “Eto” is a form of ritual performed in Celestial Church of Christ and some indigenous churches in Nigeria. Different elements are mixed in order to produce magical effects. It is the belief of the adherent of these churches that “eto” is an efficacious panacea for all manner of problem. There are “eto” for deliverance, court case, protection, prevention of death, etc.

4 Ifa is a literary divination system found in many parts of West Africa, including Nigeria, Benin and Togo, especially among the Yoruba, Eme, Fon, Igbo, Edo, Ijaw as well as many other ethnic groups of West Africa. Despite increasing Christian and Islamic evangelical activities in West Africa, Ifa remains a prestigious and popular system of divination among the Yoruba. The reasons for this prestige and popularity are not hard to find .... Ifa has governed almost every aspect of Yoruba life from the birth of a child through his or her childhood days to marriage and Old age and finally death.

5 “Ebo” in traditional Yoruba society is ritual made of different materials offered as sacrifice to appease or appreciate the gods.

6 The word “call” or “calling” occurs some 700 times in Old and New Testaments. In the Old testament, Yahweh calls people to His Service, indicating a close relationship with Him which He initiates. For example in Isaiah 43:1 God called the Israelites to be His people, gave them a task and promised them protection.

7 For worship to be meaningful, it should be down-to-earth: it should be relevant to the day-to-day aspirations of worshippers. If singing, clapping and drumming and dancing will raise people’s souls, such musical devices should be introduced.
References


Celestial Church of Christ Constitution, 1980.


