

The Dynamics of Language in Cultural Revolution and African Spirituality: The Case of Ijo Orile-Ede Adulawo Ti Kristi (National Church of Christ) in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problem of language as a tool in the expression of an African form of Christianity. In particular, it describes how a Nigerian religious community, Ijo Orile Ede Adulawo Ti Kristi (National Church of Christ), founded in 1919 by the Reverend Adeniran Ake in Ibadan, established its place later in Ile-Ife State under the protection of the traditional leadership. Through this example the paper argues that the indigenisation of an African Christian religion can be attained through the use of a local language, a local culture with its beliefs and practices, and adherence to the biblical roots of Christianity. Although the movement has been agitated to cut ties with the mainstream Christianity, it has not done so. The fact that it also maintains several schools, at least some with good reputation, shows that it has extended its influence also to the educational sector. This church has also motivated other indigenous Churches in the Yoruba-speaking area in Nigeria to try to integrate the biblical foundations with African heritage in an authentic manner. (Ed.)

Keywords: African culture, tradition, indigenisation, Christian Church

INTRODUCTION

Twentieth-century Africa has produced diverse forms of Christian religious expression. A lot has been written on the emergence, development and growth of several brands of Christianity in Nigeria, one of the most populous countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Ajayi 1965; Ayandele 1966; Turner 1967; Peel 1968; Kalu 1978; Ndiokwere 1981; Omoyajowo 1982; Sanneh 1983; Clarke 1986; Adogame 1999). Some of these authors, including those in numerous journal articles, have approached the issue from the perspectives of history, sociology, anthropology, church history, phenomenology and theology. Some have focused on the cultural significance of the Christian presence in Africa generally and in Nigeria in particular. Various terms have developed out of these writings, such as indigenisation, inculturation/acclulturation/enculturation, adaptation, interaction, dialogue, syncretism, African Christianity and African Christian Theology (Hastings 1976; Shorter 1977; Ahirika 1991; Babalola 1991; Olayiwola 1993; Ogungbile 1996, 1997, 1998). Most of these terms emphasize

the Africanness of Christianity in which the traditional thought-patterns and worldviews are adapted to make Christianity relevant to the African situation.

One element in this process of Cultural Revolution and African spirituality is the dynamism of indigenous language as the most important vehicle that conveys African thoughts, values and worldviews. It is however regrettable that this area has not been given the treatment it deserves in scholarly discourse. It is therefore the focus of this paper to examine the dynamic role of language as a revolutionary tool in the expression of an African form of Christianity, especially during its nascent stage, with a particular focus on *Ijo Orile Ede Adulawo Ti Kristi* (National Church of Christ) in Nigeria. The study demonstrates how this movement pioneered the revolution of African culture via the medium of an African language. It assesses the relevance of the Church, through her use of indigenous African languages to contemporary African spirituality, with particular regard to the adaptation of African (Yoruba) culture, beliefs and practices in creating her own mode of theology and liturgy. This study is based on ethnographic data, participant observation and interviews with the current primate of the church and some of its members.

1. THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF IJO ORILE-EDE ADULAWO TI KRISTI

Ijo Orile-Ede Adulawo Ti Kristi, the National Church of Christ, which originally emerged under the name of the Ethiopian Communion Church, was founded in Lagos by the Reverend Adeniran Oke on 1st October 1919. Adeniran Oke, an indigene of Ibadan (the capital of the present Osun State) in Nigeria, was a clergyman in the African Salem Church in Lagos, Nigeria.

Adeniran Oke claimed to have received numerous revelations through visions and dreams in which he was 'commissioned' to prepare Africans for the task they needed to face. This task would affect the political and spiritual lives of the people. More precisely, he predicted that Nigeria would soon gain her independence from the British and that the colonizers would go back to their land in due course. Thus, Nigerians needed to be ready and prepared to take up the challenge and continue to work towards independence. However, before this political independence would be realized, spiritual independence would be inevitable in order to integrate African values and culture. Spiritual independence, according to Oke would pave the way for unity and solidarity. This was to be pursued through Africans, in particular Nigerians', own efforts, first by renouncing and liberating themselves from foreign ways of worship that had been attached to western social and spiritual life. In other words, Africans needed to worship God through indigenous modes of expressing their spirituality and inspiration. This religio-cultural revolution, according to Adeniran Oke, would allow Africans to establish an African-oriented Christian Church that would use the people's language and culture as a medium to gain a

meaningful relationship with the Divine (God), and to appeal to African emotionalism as opposed to already existing western-oriented Christianity. This religious agitation, in the words of the Nigerian Church historian, Adewale (1988: 9),

...was purely a struggle for the re-discovery of African nationalism. It was for the emancipation and liberation of the Church in Nigeria from foreign political domination and ecclesiastical bondage. It was a struggle for an independent African Church where the members could worship God in their own way to satisfy their spiritual needs and aspirations knowing fully well that foreign agencies in the country could not effectively and adequately cope with the situation.

It should be remarked, according to Bishop Timothy Soobola, that the Reverend Adeniran Oke did not at first take his visions and dreams seriously. This attitude was reminiscent of the old biblical prophetic calls of Moses, Jeremiah and Jonah.

However, after incessant warnings and impressions upon his mind to obey the call, the Revd Oke summoned up the courage to proclaim a total emancipation of Africans that would be preceded by spiritual freedom. During his evangelistic campaigns he used local drums and indigenous songs. His prediction most of the time was a political independence for the Nigerians that would further grant them the license to use their own official currency and elect their own political leaders. But this brought great persecutions upon him, both within and outside his former Church, including from colonial political authorities. Thus, his movement received a cold reception in Lagos. He was once even stoned at Oke Popo, in Lagos, in 1920. However, his strong spiritual persuasion and determination led him to move on to other towns until he came to Ile-Ife, several kilometres west of Lagos, the former Federal Capital territory of Nigeria.

2. GENESIS IN ILE-IFE, THE CRADLE OF YORUBA CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

The introduction of Ijo Adulawo into Ile-Ife in 1924 had a permanent influence on the movement and the host community. Oke was invited by one of his converts, Adetola Agbetuyi, during one of his evangelical missions to Osogbo, the present capital of Osun state in the western part of Nigeria. The late Mr. Adetola Agbetuyi and Jeremiah Arayomi (both natives of Ile-Ife) were on board the same train (subway) with the Reverend Adeniran Oke from Lagos to Osogbo, where Agbetuyi and Arayomi intended to board a vehicle to Ile-Ife. They had listened to the preaching of the Reverend Oke. Agbetuyi (then a Muslim) and Arayomi (an Anglican Church member of Ayetoro, in Ile-Ife) became the first converts to Oke's movement in Ile-Ife.

That same year, Agbetuyi's invitation was honoured by the Reverend Oke. He lived at the late Prince Adefarakan Olubuse's Compound at Ilare in Ile-Ife. Ooni Ademiluyi Ajagun the First (a traditional ruler of Ile-Ife, 1910-1930) was contacted and informed of this new movement. He was favourably disposed towards it and he gave them the rare opportunity of using the Enuwa, the King's Square, for their preaching activities. The Ooni himself, his chiefs and several other eminent Ile-Ife indigenes listened to and received Oke's message. Agbetuyi's house at the Lujumo Compound in Ile-Ife was used for the movement's meeting-place for the new converts. Later, the Ooni Ademiluyi, in answer to their request, volunteered the Opepe forest at Oke-Ijan as a location for a building. The forest was once a powerful spirit-inhabited place and a burial ground for victims of deadly diseases such as smallpox and leprosy (Personal Interviews, Timothy Soobola and T. Adeyemi). Such a place, in the Yoruba (African) worldview, is considered dangerous for human beings to inhabit. Diseases such as smallpox and leprosy are believed to be controlled by some malevolent spiritual beings, which inflict such diseases as a punishment for moral depravity in society. The inflicted become outcast banished into a forest, such as that at Opepe. Thus, this gesture could be seen probably more as a test of the movement's faith than as a gift.

The forest was cleared of bushes and a tent was erected there in 1926 but replaced with a larger one in the same year. This was however blown away in a rainstorm, and a new building had to be constructed. This was completed and officially opened by Oba Ademiluyi in 1928. That the movement was first accepted in Ile-Ife, where it also gained considerable ground with certain implications. First, the support of the royal stool (the king) contributed to the success of the movement in Ile-Ife. The king, the traditional ruler in Yorubaland as in so many African societies, is seen even to the present day as a semi-divine and divine-political figure whose orders and commands are unchallenged by his subjects. He represents both the moral and the social order, and hence his thoughts, words and actions are taken seriously and obeyed to the letter. As the chief priest he presides over all community rituals to which the society as a whole owes allegiance. Hence, his acceptance and support of the Church acceded to the movement's effort. Why was the monarch attracted? In Yoruba mythology Ile-Ife is regarded as the cradle of the human race, which has always refused to be eroded by external cultures and religions. Traditional elements still flourish in the city. Hence, the emphasis of Adeniran Oke's message on Cultural Revolution coincided with the cultural situation of this city, and Ile-Ife became the National General Headquarters of the Church.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF THE NAME ‘AIJO ORILE-EDE ADULAWO TI KRISTI’

The evolution of the name of the church passed through three stages. It started life as the Ethiopian Communion Church (Ijo Idapo Adulawo). When Nigeria gained her independence in October 1st 1960, the name was changed to the Ethiopian National Church (Ijo Orile-Ede Adulawo), and finally to the National Church of Christ (Ijo Orile-Ede Adulawo Ti Kristi). For the movement, the changes in the name had political implications. The word ‘national’ signified to the movement independence. The adoption of the name ‘Ethiopia’ showed the revolutionary motives onto which certain biblical assertions were forced. It may be correct to say that the Reverend Oke probably caught the wave of the spirit of ‘ethiopianism’, which was a common phenomenon during the period. But according to Bishop Soobola, the current Head of the Church, “Ethiopians are black people or race, Africans originated from Ethiopia. Thus, it is a general name for the blacks and it unites all Africans”. This was perhaps adopted in order to find a uniting origin and a common link for the black race. Uncritical of historical correctness, the Reverend Oke claimed that he received certain biblical passages where the word ‘Ethiopia’ appeared to justify their spiritual liberation and God’s universal generosity in the matter of salvation. Most important among the biblical passages are:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin

Or the leopard his spots?... (Jeremiah 13: 23)

Let bronze be brought from Egypt,

Let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out her hands to God. (Psalm 68: 31).

Neither Adeniran Oke nor his followers were keen about the contextual and the theological interpretation of these biblical passages. His emphasis was on the first phrase of Jeremiah 13:23 regarding the Ethiopians from whom, according to him, the black race originated and who also represented the black people and the unchangeability of the colour black. This destiny, in Oke’s estimation, should be seen as having been recognized by God, and so in Psalm 68:31 the black people should “hasten to stretch out (their) hands to God”. Thus, in accepting this colour destiny, they could also practice their religion in a manner acceptable to God.

It should be noted, however, that historically Ethiopia happened to be one of the earliest places where Christian civilization developed and flourished as far back as in the fourth century (Tafla 1977). Adeniran’s insistence on Cultural Revolution was a reaction against the kind of Christianity that was prevalent in his days. Owadayo’s (1980: 99) statement summarizes the cultural self-assertion of the Africans when he notes that,

This notion of Ethiopians has been related to the situation of the persons of African descent who recognized their lost country and struggled to recover their cultural heritage and cherished their religious independence.

4. INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE AS AN EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL REVOLUTION

One important distinguishing and profound element of Ijo Adulawo is the use of the indigenous Yoruba language as a medium of communication. The Church adapts some linguistic connotations from cultural elements to be incorporated into their liturgy, worship and practices. This affects the design of their programs, the naming of their activities, their hymn composition and their singing pattern, ritual and ceremonies.

4.1 BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Ijo Adulawo accepts the Holy Bible as the standard scriptures of her faith. They call it *Iwe Esin Agbaye*: literally, The Book of the Religion of the Whole World. Like most other Christian Churches, Ijo Adulawo maintains a strong belief in the Trinity - God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost with His respective manifestations as the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier. The Church believes in the practice of Baptism and the Eucharist but with some modifications. To become a member of Ijo Adulawo, a convert is baptized by immersion in a stream or river, or by the pouring of a sufficient quantity of water on to the person in a standing position, while invoking the invocation of the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The candidate for baptism must be of a minimum age of twelve years old and must have undergone a baptismal course for a period of time. This course requires proficiency in the memorization and recitation of certain creeds.

The Eucharist is the most celebrated event in the Church. The significance of the Eucharist underlies its theological and cultural importance. According to the founder, the Eucharist, the celebration of the death of Jesus Christ, is the most important celebration that Jesus Christ commanded to be celebrated in His remembrance. Secondly, *imule*, the covenant and covenant-meal, are a strong socio-religious element that is common in traditional Yoruba and other African societies. The covenant meal, according to Awolalu and Dopamu (1979: 210-211), is taken with the divinities and human beings. The Eucharist, which is translated and used in other Churches as *Ounje Ale Oluwa* (The Lord's Supper), is called *Ounje Imule Pelu Ayanfe*, literally, the Covenant Meal with the Elect. Celebrated once a year, precisely on 1st October at the National Headquarters, baptized members are expected to wear costumes made of white material, though not necessarily pure white. Members who are not properly married in the

Church are not allowed to take part in the meal. This event coincides with and is celebrated with the event of the Founding Day of the Church, *Ojo Idasile*. Thus, 1st October becomes significant in so many ways for the congregation. It was on 1st October 1919 that the Reverend Adeniran Oke went in public to proclaim his mission and launch the Church. The miraculous, according to the Church members, is that it was on 1st October that Nigeria gained her independence, a fulfilment of Oke's prediction. Hence, on 1st October 1960, Nigeria's Independence Day, the Reverend Oke led his congregation in singing an independence song in affirmation of his Church's mission:

<i>Adulawo, e jo, e yo</i>	Adulawo (members), dance and rejoice
<i>A bo l'oko eru (l'oko eru)</i>	We are free from slavery (from slavery)
<i>A bo l'oko eru, e e e!</i>	We are free from bondage, yes!
<i>A bo l'oko eru,</i>	We are free from bondage,
<i>Adulawo, e jo, e yo,</i>	Adulawo (members), dance and rejoice
<i>A bo l'oko eru.</i>	We are free from bondage.

Another important celebration by Ijo Adulawo is that of Good Friday. The Church calls this *Ojo Etutu Nla*, literally the Day of the Great Sacrifice.

4.2 LILO SAAMU (THE USE OF PSALMS)

The use of Psalms is profuse and occupies a powerful place in the Church and her liturgy. A Psalm is simply a religious song or poem used in public worship or in private devotion (*Bible Dictionary* 1971: 38). One important note is the adaptation of the Yoruba religious genre and paradigm in the use of the Book of Psalms. In most other churches in Yoruba societies they either interpret the Book of Psalms as Saamu or Orin Dafidi (the Songs of David). A radical shift was introduced by the Ijo Adulawo, which uses some indigenous cultural parameters to draw up a content analysis of the Book of Psalms in order to make it functional and efficacious when recited during prayers. The following classifications of the Book of Psalms exist in Ijo Adulawo:

a) <i>Ofo/Ogede Dafidi</i>	David's Incantations	Psalm 35; 37:12-13 31:18; 77; 121; 125
b) <i>Ayajo Dafidi</i>	David's Invocations	Psalm 115; 143
c) <i>Orin Aro/Ofo Dafidi</i>	David's Lamentations/ Mournings	Psalm 6:2-4
d) <i>Rara Iyin Dafidi</i>	David's Praise Songs	Psalm 103
e) <i>Orin Idupe Dafidi</i>	David's Thanksgiving	Psalm 8; 100; 117; 136; 148; 150
f) <i>Aroye Dafidi</i>	David's Complaints	Psalm 13; 15, 22; 31:9-12
g) <i>Ikaanu Ese Dafidi</i>	David's Penitentials	Psalm 32; 51

- h) *Ibeere/Ebe/Itooro Dafidi* David's Supplications Psalm 6, 18, 28, 30,
Begging/Pleading 56, 116.

These classifications are not exhaustive, nor are they given any biblical/theological analysis. They are adapted and used to conform with the African's (Yoruba) approach to their social, religious and ritual ceremonies. Each of these Yoruba literary genres is used at specific times, on specific conditions and for specific occasions to effect a particular change and desire. They all have their psycho-religious and metaphysical applications in Yoruba culture and religion. The contents of the Psalms are recited as appropriate for the members' needs. They form part of the Church liturgy, listed in their order of services in Yoruba language.

4.3 IWURE (PRAYER) AND ASE (VITAL FORCE)

Another element in Ijo Adulawo is prayer. As in most other Christian Churches, prayer constitutes a major ritual activity in the Church. A traditional Yoruba person offers prayer on every conceivable occasion. This is mostly extemporaneous and ejaculatory, and responded to in a forceful and affirmative manner. The Ijo Adulawo uses *Iwure* in place of *adura*, which she considers to be an 'adulterated' interpretation for prayer. To the members, *Iwure* conveys the intrinsic quality of making a strong petition and an interaction between a human being and a spiritual being or beings. Closely connected with this is the response to prayer that is rendered in English as Amen. All other Churches in Yoruba using the Yoruba language only 'yorubanize' the word '*Amin*'. To the founder, however, this word could not convey the affirmative implication of '*Ase*', a Yoruba word which is a traditional response to *Iwure*, and which has literary and mystical connotations. In his extensive historical-critical investigation of the concept of *Ase*, Roland Hallgren (1995) notes that *ase* has strong elements of order, command, power, bidding, effect, consequence, and imprecations. The psychology of the Yoruba, as of most African peoples, is that such a word has its inherent efficacious power which when uttered 'certainly' sanctions the request, and a compulsive and unflinching effect is guaranteed. To the Yoruba, *amin* appears to be too weak and not as affirmative and compulsive as *ase*. The use of *amin* is regarded as an alteration of the Yoruba thought-patterns. For this reason Ijo Adulawo insists on the use of *ase* to maintain the traditional response. Not only this, while it is usual in the hymnals of most Churches to close every song with the word '*Amin*', Ijo Adulawo uses *Ase* instead.

4.4 IWOSAN, OOGUN ATI ITOJU (HEALING AND MEDICAL CARE)

Ijo Adulawo supports and encourages the use of both African curative and western medicines. It uses water for therapeutic purposes. Holy water is prescribed to members for the healing of diseases and sicknesses. Every Monday morning, the Leader of the Church's Midwives/Chief Nursing Mother, *Iya Iwemo*, administers ritual baths to children aged between one day and six years. It is believed that such a practice will ward off evils and cure both physical and spiritual illnesses. Individuals bring water in bottles or any other containers to be prayed over. The Pastor or Bishop recites specific portions of the Psalms over the water with the touch of his staff. This water is then drunk or bathed with.

4.5 ETO IKOMO, IGBEYAWO ATI ISINKU (NAMING, MARRIAGE AND BURIAL CEREMONIES)

The Church accepts the use of traditional elements such as the kola nut, bitter kola, alligator pepper, salt, honey, and water for naming and marriage ceremonies. As a theocentric and sacred cosmos the Yoruba consider these items to be sacred and ritual objects. In some other Churches there exists the separation of traditional and Church ceremonies. During the traditional ceremonies that precede Church ceremonies, the items can be used in the celebrants' homes. Ijo Adulawo combines the two, and members are made to include the items to be used for consecrating newborn babies and solemnizing marriages in the church itself. Polygyny is permitted to members, including clergy who do not aspire to become Bishops.

5. ORIN (MUSIC) IN IJO ADULAWO

In most religious traditions of the world, music "is a vehicle for communicating thoughts and desires, and it also provides a forum for fellowship in corporate existence" (Olukoju 1987: 118). As an integral part of Yoruba (African) religious worship, it stimulates emotions to a state of joy and happiness, it distils sadness, inspires devotion, concentration and meditation, and it reinforces commitment to spiritual activities. It need be noted that mission-related Churches in Nigeria generally adopt the forms, content and tunes of Western (mission) Church music, which are translated into Yoruba. Ijo Adulawo, however, makes a distinction. Though the African Church tries to introduce traditional songs, tunes, drumming and dancing into her worship, her hymnbook "is composed of collections of hymns from hymnals of other Churches and of a few original compositions of the native air composers of the Church" (Adewale

1988: 165). Ijo Adulawo's hymnbook is a collection of songs by Yoruba members who claimed to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. These songs were composed from moonlight stories, folklore, traditional cosmological myths and other religious forms. The Church also adapted songs and tunes from traditional Yoruba religious rituals and festivals. A few examples will suffice; a tune from Egungun (masquerade) cult, which is thus adapted into Ijo Adulawo hymnal, is:

<i>Omo oloje, t'oje se</i>	Oje (masquerade) devotees, revive your zeal
<i>Omo oloje, t'oje se;</i>	Oje (masquerade) devotees, revive your zeal
<i>Awon ogberi ti b'awo je,</i>	Non-initiates have desecrated the cult,
<i>Omo oloje, t'oje se.</i>	Oje (masquerade) devotees, revive your zeal.
	The tune of the above song is adapted to:
<i>E m'ori bale f'Olorun wa</i>	Bow your heads down to our God
<i>E m'ori bale f'Olorun wa;</i>	Bow your heads down to our God;
<i>Oba oke, Eni Mimo,</i>	The Heavenly King, Most Holy One,
<i>E m'ori bale f'Olorun wa</i>	Bow your heads down to our God.

The next song is from the devotees of Ifa (also known as Orunmila) the Yoruba deity of wisdom, knowledge and divination. The content has been adapted by the Ijo Adulawo:

<i>Ifa t'o ni k'a bo wa k'a na'wo</i>	Ifa, who instructs us to come and stretch our hands
<i>Baba wa, a de o!</i>	Our father, we have come!
<i>A na'wo si O, gba wa ye, Ifa</i>	We stretch our hands to you, deliver us, Ifa
<i>Fa gbogbo wa mo'ra.</i>	Draw us near to yourself.

This is adapted to:

<i>Oba t'O ni k'a bo wa ka na'wo,</i>	The King who instructs us to come and stretch our hands,
<i>Oba wa, a de o!</i>	Our King, we have come!
<i>A na'wo s'orun, gba wa ye Olu,</i>	We stretch our hands to heaven, deliver us Lord,
<i>Fa gbogbo wa mo'ra.</i>	Draw us near to yourself.

6. SOCIAL CHANGE

The most significant area of sociological interest where the Church has made an impression on Yoruba society is education. At present, the Church has four primary schools, at Iyekere, Boosa (Modakeke) Alutierin and Oru. The Ethiopian National Primary School, Boosa, in Ife, was elevated to Secondary Modern School in 1963 and was further upgraded to Ethiopian Secondary Grammar School, Ile-Ife, in 1980. This school is one of the largest schools in

Ile-Ife, Osun State of Nigeria. The Church is recognized by the traditional and political administration as a vital institution in Osun State of Nigeria.

Though there is mutual interaction between the Church and traditional institutions, it frowns on participation in traditional rituals and festivals. Members are, however, allowed to accept traditional chieftaincy titles.

7. CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND SYNCRETISM: IJO ADULAWO AND IJO ORUNMILA

A development of Ijo Adulawo later arose in Ile-Ife. This has given rise to one of the most institutionalised forms of African indigenous religious practice in Yorubaland: Ijo Orunmila, at Oke-Itase in Ile-Ife, which draws its members from several important spheres of life. Ijo Orunmila was founded as a secessionist movement by one of the early members of Ijo Adulawo named Osiiga, an Ijebu man. His contention was that the inculturation process advanced and preached by Adeniran Oke was syncretic. He then agitated for the establishment of a purely African indigenous system of worship rather than mixing Christianity with African religious culture. To Osiiga, Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews, while Orunmila was the Messiah of the Yoruba. His influence was so much felt that the whole membership of the congregation had to be called upon to decide which leader each member would follow: the Reverend Oke or Osiiga. Both two leaders had followers. Out of this division emerged Ijo Adulawo and Ijo Orunmila. While the Ijo Orunmila assumes an institutional status that was not all that present in Yoruba religion, Ijo Adulawo represents a radical challenge to the kind of liturgical renewal once put forward by Pope Paul VI to the effect that,

The expression, that is, the language and mode of manifesting this one Faith may be manifold, hence it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius and the culture of the one who professes this one Faith ... Indeed you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to perfection so as to find in Christianity, and for Christianity, a true superior fullness and prove to be capable of a richness of expression all its own, and genuinely African (Shorter 1977: 20).

8. CONCLUSION

Ijo Orile-Ede Adulawo Ti Kristi (in its shorter form, Ijo Adulawo) has undoubtedly scored some points in the indigenisation process of Christianity. This Church has branches in Ibadan, (Oyo State), Ilesa (Osun State), Ido-Osun, Ayegunle-Ekiti, Ogotun-Ekiti, Erinjiyan Ekiti, Ipole-Ekiti and Iloro-Ekiti (Ekiti State), all in the western part of Nigeria where Yoruba indigenous culture still flourishes. The present leader of the Church is Bishop Timothy O. Soobola. Ijo

Adulawo has been able to incorporate African thought processes into biblical messages and faith. That it has refused to bow to the agitation of the secessionist force to terminate its existence as a Christian movement is clear evidence of the founder's vision and commitment. Its impact on education is noteworthy. Ijo Adulawo appears to be the best-known indigenous Church in Yorubaland that is able to demonstrate the dynamic effect of the indigenous language as a vehicle that conveys a truly indigenous African Christianity. Through the use of the indigenous language the vitality of Christianity as truly matching up to the African (Yoruba) situation in its liturgical practices and operation is communicated. This cultural revolution or 'culture theologising' that started some eight years ago and which the late Professor Bolaji Idowu advocated in his *Towards An Indigenous Church* (1973), has been yielding fruit. This has continued to have an effect on all brands of Christianity in present-day Nigeria. Each brand has continued to discern and utilize those elements in African (Yoruba) culture that are relevant in designing the Christian faith for Africa (Yoruba) in such a way that the kernels of biblical faith will not be jettisoned. The conclusions made here are not intended to suggest that Ijo Adulawo is a perfect Church, but rather that it is one of the earliest successful movements that pioneered the cause of African Christianity through the recognition and use of African linguistic genres in their liturgical practices and really made Christianity relevant to African *Sitz-Im-Leben*.

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

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