

# **SAMUEL JOHNSON ON THE EGYPTIAN ORIGIN OF THE YORUBA**

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declaration

I, Jock Matthew Agai, hereby declare that 'SAMUEL JOHNSON ON THE EGYPTIAN ORIGIN OF THE YORUBA' is my own original work, and that it has not been previously accepted by any other institution for the award of a degree, and that all quotations have been distinguished by quotation mark, and all sources of information have been duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J.M. Agai', enclosed within a faint rectangular border.

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Jock Matthew Agai

(Student)

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'P. Denis', written in a cursive style.

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Professor Phillippe Denis

(Supervisor)

30 November 2016

## **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to my grandmother, the late Ngo Margaret alias Nakai Shingot, who passed away in 2009, during which time I was preparing for this research. She was my best friend. May her gentle soul rest in peace.

## **Thesis statement**

The Yoruba oral tradition, according to which the original ancestors of the Yoruba originated from the “East,” was popular in Yorubaland during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before the period 1846 to 1901, the East was popularly perceived by the Yoruba as Arabia, Mecca or Saudi Arabia. Samuel Johnson (1846-1901) mentioned that Mohammed Belo (1781-1837) was among the first Africans to write that the East meant Arabia, Mecca or Saudi Arabia. He contested the views of associating the East with a Muslim land or a Muslim origin. In contrast to these views, Johnson believed that the East actually meant Egypt. This thesis presents research into Samuel Johnson’s contribution towards the development of the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba. The study also compares Johnson’s views on Yoruba origins with those of later authors.

## **Key terms**

Africa; Afterlife; Ancestors; Ancient Near East; Ancient Egypt; Burial; Archaeological Discoveries; Civilisation; Culture; Coptic; Death; Deceased; Euhemerus; Hausaland; Heaven; Ile Ife; Migration; Mummification; Myths; Netherworld; Northern Nigeria; Samuel Johnson; Semitic Peoples; South-West Nigeria; Oduduwa; Oral Tradition; Yorubaland.

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## Abbreviations

1. ANE – Ancient Near East
2. Am – Amos
3. BCE – Before Common Era (equivalent to “Before Christ”(B.C.))
4. CE – Common Era (equivalent to AD: “anno Domini”, meaning in the year of our Lord)
5. 1 Chr – 1 Chronicles
6. 2 Chr – 2 Chronicles
7. CMS – Church Missionary Society
8. COCIN – Church of Christ in Nigeria
9. 1 Cor – 1 Corinthians
10. 2 Cor – 2 Corinthians
11. Dn – Daniel
12. Dt – Deuteronomy
13. Ec – Ecclesiastes
14. Eph – Ephesians
15. ETS – Evangel Theological Seminary
16. Ex – Exodus
17. Ezk – Ezekiel
18. Ezc – Ezra
19. FCT – Federal College of Education
20. GL – Galatians
21. Gn – Genesis
22. Hab – Habakkuk
23. Hg – Haggai
24. Hs – Hosea
25. Is – Isaiah
26. JETS – Jos ECWA Theological Seminary
27. Jdg – Judges
28. Jb – Job
29. Jr – Jeremiah
30. Jn – John
31. Jnh – Jonah
32. Jos – Joshua
33. 1 Ki – 1 Kings
34. 2 Ki – 2 Kings
35. Lm – Lamentation
36. Lv – Leviticus
37. Lk – Luke
38. Mi – Micah
39. Mt – Matthew
40. NDE – Near Death Experience
41. n.d. – No Date
42. Neh – Nehemiah



43. Nm – Numbers
44. n.p. – No Publisher
45. NT – New Testament
46. Ob – Obadiah
47. OT – Old Testament
48. 1 Pt – 1 Peter
49. 2 Pt – 2 Peter
50. Phlm – Philemon
51. Phlp – Philipians
52. Ps – Psalms
53. Pr – Proverbs
54. PryT – Pyramid
55. Rm – Romans
56. Rv – Revelation
57. 1 Sm – 2 Samuel
58. 2 Sm – 2 Samuel
59. TCNN – Theological College of Northern Nigeria
60. YWAM – Youth With a Mission
61. Zch – Zachariah

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 General background

Nigeria is one of the countries located in West Africa, boasting peoples and groups of diverse cultural backgrounds. The country has over 500 ethnic groups, with a population extending well over 150 million. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa and as a result, its people are distributed across the globe.<sup>1</sup> The three major ethnic groups in Nigeria are the Ibos, the Yoruba, and the Hausas. With the exception of these three ethnic groups, other ethnic groups encountered in Nigeria include Beroms, Angas, Taroh, Jere, Irigwe, Jarawa, Afizere, Tal, Mwangavul, Tivs, Idoma, Igala, Jukun, Gwari and many more.

Michael Omolewa believed that the name “Nigeria” has many possible origins. The first is the River Niger. Omolewa mentioned that the name River Niger originated during the second century AD, having developed from the word *Nigir* or *Nigeir*, which means black.<sup>2</sup> Niger is also one of the states located in North-Central Nigeria. The name might have been used to refer to both the River Niger and the people who lived in the same region. The second is that the name might be associated with the Jewish-Christians and particularly with Simeon. Omolewa added that the Latin word *Niger* could be associated with black people, similar to the origin of the name Simeon, who was described as a Niger or a black person.<sup>3</sup> In a Bible commentary edited by Hoerber, it was proposed that Simeon was called Niger in association with his dark complexion. He further noted that the word Niger is derived from the Latin word black.<sup>4</sup> The third is that the people of Africa might have obtained the name Nigeria from the Greek word *Naghar*, which

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<sup>1</sup>J.E. Aliogo, *Up to date current affairs* (Dejoe Publication: Enugu, 2012), 20, 26.

<sup>2</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria* (Longman: Ikeja, 2008), 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 13:1.

<sup>4</sup> R.G. Hoerber, et al (eds.) *Concordia self-study Bible* (NIV), (CPH: Saint Louis, 1984), 1679.

meant black.<sup>5</sup> It is postulated that the use of the word *Naghar* could be explained by Byzantine influence in Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Before the name Nigeria came into formal use in the early 1800s, each geographical region in the north and in the south existed independently. A British journalist from the *London Times Newspaper*, named Flora Shaw, was the first person to suggest the use of the name Nigeria. She suggested the name Nigeria on 8 January 1897<sup>7</sup>:

As the title 'Royal Niger Company's Territories' is not only inconvenient to use, but, to some extent, is also misleading, it may be permissible to coin a shorter title for agglomeration of pagan [southern parts] and Mohammedan states [northern parts] which has been brought, by the exertions of the Royal Niger Company, within the confines of a British Protectorate and thus need for the first time in their history to be described as an entity by some general name.<sup>8</sup>

In 1897, Frederick Lugard, a British Brigadier-General, came to West Africa and married Flora Shaw. He came to West Africa as a member of staff in the British government. Lugard so loved the name Nigeria, as suggested by Shaw, that he bestowed the name Northern Nigeria to the Northern protectorate, which

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<sup>5</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria* (Ikeja: Longman, 2008), 11-12.

<sup>6</sup>Generally, the origin of the word Nigeria is mostly linked to the colour black or black people. This perception is equally similar to the origin of the name of Egypt. A freelance writer and scholar, Joshua J. Mark, who lived for many years in Greece and Germany, and had at several times travelled through Egypt, said that the name Egypt might have originated from the Greek word *Aegyptos*. Mark added that the word *Aegyptos* was the Greek pronunciation for the Egyptian name *Hwt-Ka-Ptah* (meaning the house of the spirit of Ptah), an Egyptian god (J.J. Mark, "Egypt", from <http://www.ancient.eu.com/egypt/>. (2009), 1). Egypt was also called *Kemet* (meaning the *black land*), a name derived due to the rich dark soil along the Nile River (P. Johnson, *The civilization of ancient Egypt* (New York: Atheneum, 1978), 10-11). The name *Kemet* was mainly used during the Old Kingdom period. It may be noted that the Nile's alluvial deposits made the soil black from the very earliest times, hence the name *Kemet*. *Kemet* was the name given to the cultivable and inhabitable side of the Nile. There is another part of the Nile that the Egyptians called *deshret*, which is the red or the desert part of the Nile River (P. Johnson, *The civilization of ancient Egypt*, 10-11). Adamo and Eghubare are two of the many scholars who associated the Egyptians with the unique features and the blackness of their skin colour (T.D. Adamo & E.F. Eghubare, "The African Queen: Queen Sheba," *Journal for Semitics*, 19(2), 2010, 415).

<sup>7</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 12.

<sup>8</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 12.

comprised of the region occupied by the Royal Niger Company.<sup>9</sup> The official naming ceremony of Nigeria took place on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1900. In order to promote the use of the name Nigeria, as initiated by Shaw, an editor of the *African Mail*, E.D. Morel published a book in 1912 entitled *Nigeria: Its Peoples and Problems*.<sup>10</sup> The amalgamation of the Southern and the Northern protectorates of the Nigerian territories by the British government in Nigeria took place on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1914, which resulted in the official naming of the entire country as Nigeria.<sup>11</sup>

Since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE, the people of the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria were more advanced in the acquisition of formal education and in international exposure, mainly due to the presence of British imperialists and Christian missionaries in the region, who supported the educational training of many local people.<sup>12</sup> Murray believed that the amalgamation of the various regions of Nigeria not only facilitated equal opportunities for all citizens of the protectorates, but also served to “balance the administrative deficits in the north with the surpluses from the south. Despite the amalgamation, the two halves remained quite distinct culturally, commercially and administratively.”<sup>13</sup> Today, Nigeria as a nation is divided into six geo-political zones; South-South, South-East, South-West, North-Central, North-West and North-East. The Yoruba occupy the South-West region of Nigeria.

The South-West-region of Nigeria, which the Yoruba occupy, comprises of six states or provinces which includes Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. Indigenous Yoruba people are also found in Kogi and Kwara states of North-Central Nigeria (see Appendix A, Table 1 and 2).<sup>14</sup> The Yoruba of Nigeria alone are about 35 to 40 million people, thus making it one of the largest ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are many Yoruba people that are also indigenes of Benin Republic and Togo.<sup>15</sup> Professor Ade Dopamu

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<sup>9</sup> The Royal Niger Company was a mercantile entity founded in 1879 by the British government (J. Murray, (ed.). *Cultural atlas of Africa* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), 147).

<sup>10</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 12.

<sup>11</sup>J. Murray, (ed). *Cultural atlas of Africa* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), 147.

<sup>12</sup>J. Murray, (ed). *Cultural atlas of Africa*, 147.

<sup>13</sup>J. Murray, (ed). *Cultural atlas of Africa*, 147.

<sup>14</sup>J.E. Aliogo, *Up to date current affairs*, 20, 26.

<sup>15</sup>E.A. Ayandele, “Yorubaland up to 1800,” in I. Obaro (ed.). *Groundwork of Nigeria history* (Heinemann Educational Books: Jos, 2004), 121. In addition, it is important to note that more than one-third of Afro-Brazilians claim Yoruba ancestry. Many Yoruba cultural practices are famously visible in Bahia, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Argentina, Venezuela and many more. One popular religious concept found among the Yoruba is the Orisa (Orisha) concept which has to do with the worship

described the Yoruba as a people who would not forfeit their culture and beliefs despite their geographical distribution:<sup>16</sup>

No African group has had greater influence on the culture of the New World than the Yoruba. Today, their descendants still preserve Yoruba culture and traditions in parts of the Caribbean and South America, particularly in Cuba and in Brazil as well as in North America. In many parts of the Caribbean and South America, for example, Yoruba Religion has been accommodated to Christianity; Yoruba divinities have been identified with Catholic saints.<sup>17</sup>

More so, the Yoruba people are a strong homogenous group and many Yoruba people are said to be educated.<sup>18</sup> Their levels of education and high migration rate resulted in many of them to occupy strategic positions in both formal and informal positions across the world. With regard to the preservation of their social and cultural values, the Yoruba people have done more academic work than any other specific ethnic group in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>19</sup> Dierk Lange, a German writer who has completed extensive research on the history of the Yoruba people, said that the Yoruba have been described as “the most outstanding people of ‘Black Africa’ with respect to their myths.”<sup>20</sup> He noted that their history is the most researched and more extensively documented than any other tribe in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>21</sup> Yoruba ruling elites have established institutions and worked out ways in which their history is preserved; such as formal record keeping and the continued recording of contemporary history<sup>22</sup>

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of a specific deity; this deity must have possessed one among many manifestations of God. These religious practices are found among certain tribes in the countries mentioned above.

<sup>16</sup>D.P. Ade, “Change and continuity: The Yoruba belief in life after death,” lecture held at the Metaxus Institute Philadelphia, from <http://www.scripd.com/doc59067767/Dopa-Mu>. [2006], 3.

<sup>17</sup>D.P. Ade, Change and continuity: The Yoruba belief in life after death, 3, originally from J. Omosade Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, (London: Longman, 1979), xiii.

<sup>18</sup>E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 121.

<sup>19</sup> D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, (J.H. Roll: Dettelbach, 2004), 39,

<sup>20</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, 39, originally from Baumann, Herrmann, 1936, *Schöpfung und Urzeit der Menschheit im Mythos afrikanischer Völker*. Berlin).

<sup>21</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 39.

<sup>22</sup>S.A. Akintoye, “From early times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.) *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (African World Press: Trenton, 2004), 3.

Furthermore, Lange stated that the Yoruba people of Nigeria are known to be one of the most prolific ethnic groups in Africa.<sup>23</sup> In addition to Lange, other researchers have also praised the country and its people. For example, Funso Afolayan described the Yoruba as one of the most urbanised groups in Africa.<sup>24</sup> Stephen Adebajji Akintoye, a historian, said that the Yoruba people are popular because of their high literacy levels.<sup>25</sup> The latter can be ascribed to the historical fact that early Christian missionaries, from other parts of the world who came to Yorubaland, aided the provision of formal education to the Yoruba people. In addition, the complex nature of Yoruba traditional societies, together with the establishment of institutional-support (schools, museums, research centres) by Yoruba ruling elites, have contributed to the allure that has attracted countless researchers to study Yoruba history. Another reason is that individual Yoruba regard the history of their families and lineages as vital aspects of life.<sup>26</sup> The Yoruba believe that the documentation of their history is not just the responsibility of Yoruba elites but “...everybody’s business.”<sup>27</sup> In Yoruba societies, a person is regarded as a fool if they have no historical knowledge of their family background.<sup>28</sup>

The Yoruba cherish their traditional and cultural systems with high regard. Even though there are a number of Yoruba living in South-Western Nigerian villages, most of the Yoruba are town-dwelling people.<sup>29</sup> They have different deities, whom they worship, and there is still great political and social diversity among the Yoruba, yet they share many basic features. The Yoruba have different myths, which they use to explain and interpret natural phenomenon or daily events that affect people’s lives.<sup>30</sup> Prominent Yoruba include Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Premier of Western Nigeria from October 1, 1954 to

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<sup>23</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives*, 39.

<sup>24</sup>F.O. Afolayan, “Reconstructing the past to reconstruct the present: The Nineteenth century wars And Yoruba history,” from [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/passes/4761530.0006.008/--\[1993\]](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/passes/4761530.0006.008/--[1993]), 31

<sup>25</sup>S.A. Akintoye, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 3.

<sup>26</sup>F.O. Afolayan, “Reconstructing the past to reconstruct the present: The Nineteenth century wars And Yoruba history,”32.

<sup>27</sup>F.O. Afolayan, “Reconstructing the past to reconstruct the present,”32.

<sup>28</sup>F.O. Afolayan, “Reconstructing the past to reconstruct the present,”32.

<sup>29</sup>E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 121.

<sup>30</sup> A. Ojo, “Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture,” from <http://www.uga.edu/aflang/YORUBA/ODUDUWA.htm>, [1999], 5; D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives*, 39.



October 1, 1960), Professor Wole Soyinka (political activist and winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature), Samuel Ajayi Crowther (first Anglican Bishop in Nigeria), Samuel Johnson (clergyman and historian, see Appendix B, Figure 1), Fela Kuti (king of Afro-Juju music), Pastor T.B. Joshua, Bishop David Oyedepo, Pastor W.F. Kumuyi, King Sunny Ade, Emmanuel Adebayo, and Olumide Jonathan Lucas, to name but a few.

Ile Ife is the most important city of the Yoruba people, as they believe that it is in this city that the historical consciousness of the Yoruba started. The Yoruba people also regard the holy town as the center of the universe. Ile Ife is situated in the modern-day Osun state in South-West Nigeria.<sup>31</sup> More Yoruba festivals are celebrated in Ife than in any other Yoruban town.<sup>32</sup> On the relevance of Ile Ife within the broader context of the Yoruba peoples' distribution, Professor Emmanuel Ayankanmi Ayandele noted that it is from Ile Ife that the Yoruba people dispersed to their present day Yoruba towns and provinces. This theory places Ile Ife in a highly significant position when it comes to understanding the history and the origin of the Yoruba.<sup>33</sup> The Yoruba high regard for their culture is significant in motivating academic interest, which focuses on the study of Yoruba history and cultural practices. One of the cultural aspects held most dear by the Yoruba, are those of burial practices, beliefs and rituals pertaining to the afterlife.

Generally, the belief in resurrection (of the dead) is paramount to the Nigerian people and the Christian Church at large. In Nigeria, certain people are not afforded "Christian burial", for whichever reasons, and this may affect the social relations of the family of the deceased. The Yoruba, despite their Christian and Islamic beliefs, still regard the afterlife traditions mostly from a traditional Yoruba perspective. It was the extravagant Yoruba burial rituals that attracted the attention of the author of this thesis. The author believes that the study of Yoruba culture can be regarded as one of the factors leading to the development of traditions of thought that postulate a Yoruba origin from foreign territories such as Egypt, Israel, Arabia and/or others. Another theory is the one that West Africans never had their own civilisation.

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<sup>31</sup>T. Falola, & M.M. Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2010), 23.

<sup>32</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 39.

<sup>33</sup>In 1963, the population of Ile Ife numbered about one hundred and ten thousand inhabitants (E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 121).

From ancient times onward, the political and economic importance of the Egyptians was recognised by the people of the Ancient Near East.<sup>34</sup> Archaeological discoveries in Egypt, which boomed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, fascinated many Europeans and inspired them to learn more about ancient history.<sup>35</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte and his team conducted several archaeological expeditions in Egypt during the French Campaign (1798-1801). He encouraged the scientific study of Egyptians artefacts, extensive site mapping and the recording of architecture by means of artistic illustrations.<sup>36</sup> The fascination, created by the study of the Egyptian culture and its artefacts, encouraged the development of a construct, according to which the Egyptians were the originators of human civilisation.<sup>37</sup> This construct, which categorised Egypt as the centre of human civilisation, was the driving force behind the creation of a school of thought, which viewed the Egyptians as the “civilising” force among other Africans on the continent.<sup>38</sup>

It is the popularity of this construct during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which perhaps inspired Samuel Johnson to associate Yoruba origins with the Egyptians. Therefore, the need exists to critically analyse the role this construct played in the creation of theories that in turn postulate the creation and spread of human civilisation. Thus stated, research elements contained within this thesis address the question of whether or not European perceptions of ancient Egyptian influence over Africa inspired or affected Johnson’s association between Egyptian and Yoruba origins

The definition of the word “civilisation” holds certain negative connotations and its meaning is not universally homogenous. An individual’s judgment or background (personal bias) may even influence that

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<sup>34</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, (J.H. Roll: Dettelbach, 2004), 277.

<sup>35</sup>J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 7-8.

<sup>36</sup>D.T. Adamo, “The African wife of Jeroboam (ano): An African reading of 1 King 14:1-18”, *Theologia Viatorum*, 37(2),[2013], 73.

<sup>37</sup>Folorunso discussed this subject (C.A. Folorunso, ‘Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective’, in D. O’Connor & A. Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, London: UCL, 2003), 83.

<sup>38</sup>W. Fitzgerald, *Africa: A social, economic and political geography of its major regions*, (Methuen & Co. Limited: London, 1968), 418. Gunther (in J. Gunther, 1955, *Inside Africa*, (Hamish Hamilton: London, 1955), 7) believed that the civilisation of Egypt was derived from Europe and from the Middle East, and not from black Africa. Folorunso (in *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 89) on the other hand believed that human civilisation originated from Egypt while Wilkinson said human civilisation originated from Ethiopia (J.G. Wilkinson, *A popular account of the ancient Egyptians: Their life and custom*, vol.1., (London: Bracken Books, 1988), 303). Paul Johnson disagreed with these notions and said that the creation of a nation-state originated from Egypt but not general human civilisation (P. Johnson, *The civilization of ancient Egypt*, 9).

person's interpretation of what is meant by the term "civilisation".<sup>39</sup> In other words, the meaning of the term "civilisation" is determined by an individual's background.<sup>40</sup> There is a school of thought according to which the origins of European culture is directly responsible for the origin of human civilisation, and that even the native-Americans were not civilised until the Europeans civilised them.<sup>41</sup> Thorsten Botz-Bornstein insinuated that the word civilisation is basically adopted from French and German scholars.<sup>42</sup> However, another school of thought is that civilisation emerged from Africa.<sup>43</sup> Professor Graham Connah said that the origins of writing alone did not equate the origin of human civilisation.<sup>44</sup>

The definition of civilisation as the formation of a settled community (city/state) of a significant size, where specialisation or innovation beyond food-production existed, and where local administration is carefully rendered, have been widely accepted by scholars like Connah<sup>45</sup> and Botz-Bornstein. Botz-Bornstein regarded civilisation as the material, technical and the economic endeavours humans' initiated to make their lives easier.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, civilisation could be accepted as the results or inferences of human effort in meeting their daily material needs. However, many scholars believe that civilisation may not have a specific definition, as people's needs vary according to the time and place; thus the non-captivating interest of writers over the definition of civilisation. Connah suggested that the varied and non-specific views on the meaning of civilisation dissuade scholars from further research into the definition of the concept. Instead, scholars prefer to concentrate on the context through which the the word civilisation is being implored.<sup>47</sup> Connah stated:

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<sup>39</sup>S. Kreis, S., "What is civilization?" from [www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture1b.html](http://www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture1b.html), [2014], 1.

<sup>40</sup>T. Botz-Bornstein, "What is the difference between culture and civilization? Two hundred and fifty years of confusion," *Comparative Civilizations Review*, 66, [2012], 10.

<sup>41</sup> The perception of civilisation as the distribution of European culture, enhanced European totalitarianism (T. Botz-Bornstein, "What is the difference between culture and civilization?" 10).

<sup>42</sup> T. Botz-Bornstein, "What is the difference between culture and civilization?" 10.

<sup>43</sup> C.A. Folorunso, "Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective," in D. O'Connor & A. Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (London: UCL, 2003), 85.

<sup>44</sup> G. Connah, *African civilizations, precolonial cities and states in tropical: An archaeological perspective*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 8.

<sup>45</sup> G. Connah, *African civilizations, precolonial cities and states in tropical: An archaeological perspective*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> T. Botz-Bornstein, "What is the difference between culture and civilization?" 10.

<sup>47</sup> G. Connah, *African civilizations, precolonial cities and states in tropical: An archaeological perspective*, 8.

Gradually, this concern with process has come to occupy more attention than the problems of definition, and discussion of this whole subject has become increasingly sophisticated. The term 'civilization' has been quietly abandoned by many writers, it is too vague a concept and too subjective to be useful. It also has unpleasant connotations that are at best ethnocentric and at worst egocentric. It implies as 'us' and 'them' situation: we are 'civilized', they are 'uncivilized' or (to use a word that were best dead and buried) they are 'primitive'. Instead, there has been an increasing tendency to investigate what is often called 'the rise of complex society' and to study as virtually separate entities the process of urbanization and state formation. Indeed the rise of the state has come to be seen as central to the emergence of 'complex societies', although some anthropologists would object to the use of the word 'complex' and prefer instead to speak of 'stratified societies' or even, perhaps, of 'pluralistic societies.'<sup>48</sup>

With regard to the perceptions of the Egyptian civilisation, which is relevant for this research, I suggest that Egyptian civilisation encompassed a variety of technological and cultural developments, including burial rituals, which caused the Egyptians to be popular.<sup>49</sup> Egyptian civilisation included many innovations that sustained their lives and their beliefs. Although the author recognises that culture and civilisation do not hold the same meaning, Egyptian cultural innovations could be regarded as a catalyst for their civilisation.<sup>50</sup> I also believe that Egyptian cultural practices were among the many precursors that lead to the establishment of Egyptian civilisation. This theory is supported by a rich archaeological record, which stands as testimony to ancient Egyptian cultural practices and the role they played in creating Egyptian civilisation.<sup>51</sup> To simplify the concept; Egyptian culture contributed to the development of their civilisation. The monumental or inscriptional evidence of the Egyptian beliefs, as displayed through their

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<sup>48</sup>G. Connah, *African civilizations, precolonial cities and states in tropical: An archaeological perspective*, 8.

<sup>49</sup>Botz-Bernstein noted that the distinction between civilisation and culture has not been seriously defined by the English dictionary, but that the distinctions are well expiated by the European and by some non-European languages (T. Botz-Bornstein, "What is the difference between culture and civilization?" 10).

<sup>50</sup>It is also important to note that there is a school of thought according to which the Egyptian civilisation is basically a construct or an ideology that was developed due to researchers' interests regarding the many archaeological findings in Egypt. Otherwise, the civilisations of the Aztecs, the Mesopotamians and others were as good and ancient as the civilisation of the Egyptians.

<sup>51</sup>Egypt is associated with archaeological discoveries (J.J. Mark, "Egypt," 1.).

burial practices, is one of the reasons for the development of a construct according to which Egypt is the most popular centre of ancient civilisation.<sup>52</sup>

The development of a construct, in which Egypt is proposed as a catalyst for civilisation, has influenced West Africans to begin to associate their origins, and the origins of their cultures, with various ancient civilisations. For example, the Ibos (South-East Nigeria) have a tradition according to which they and their culture originated from Israel.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the Hausas (Northern Nigeria) believed in the Bayajidda legend, according to which the ancestors of the Hausas originated from Canaan.<sup>54</sup> The question then arises; “as to why West Africa is perceived as a region that had no civilisation, thus causing its citizens to believe that they originated from foreign and ancient countries.”

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<sup>52</sup>Many archaeological discoveries have been made inside Egyptian pyramids and tombs; both concepts relate to burials. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein said that the word “culture” originate from the Latin word *cultura* or *colere* (T. Botz-Bornstein, ‘What is the difference between culture and civilization? Two hundred and fifty years of confusion,’ *Comparative Civilizations Review*, 66, [2012], 10). Professor C.A.O. Hoppers sided with Botz-Bornstein on the Latin origin or on the connection between the words culture and *cultura*. He said that the word *cultura* means to tend or to cultivate (C.A.O. Hoppers, ‘Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Development: The Role of the University.’ Centre for Education Policy Development Braamfontein [www.cepd.org.za](http://www.cepd.org.za) [2004], 1-2). In other words, the word culture means “training, development and refinement of mind, taste and manners.” Hoppers further noted that culture is a way of life valued and practiced by a group of people. Knowledge, beliefs, customs, behavior, material traits on racial, religious and social stratifications can also be regarded as aspects of culture (M.O. Opeloye, ‘The Yoruba Muslims’ Cultural Identity Question’ *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2:1, [2011], 3). In this research, culture is understood as traditional practices or norms, which includes beliefs/crafts/customs/oral traditions and languages that are cherished and carefully handed-down from generation to generation by specific group of people living in a specific geographical location within a specific period of time. In other words, culture is liable to change within a period of time determined by a group’s cognitive abilities, location and the appreciation or application of a particular practice from a local or universal point of view. Mark Hopkins said that culture is today understood as a norm propagated by a particular group of society at a specific period of time (M. Hopkins, lectures on “Historical Evangelicalism,” The Theological College of Northern Nigeria Bukuru: 27th September, 2002). Botz-Bornstein while differentiating the words culture from civilization narrowed the meaning of culture as social practices which are basically intellectual, spiritual and artistic in nature. He thought that civilization unlike culture is material, economic, technical and socially engaging (T. Botz-Bornstein, ‘What is the difference between culture and civilization? 10-11). In other words, civilization can be associated with living in the city-state unlike culture which has little to do with city-state life.

<sup>53</sup>S. M. Umoh, “Nigeria’s multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior” (PhD Dissertation, Dept. of Communications, United State International University, [1971], 163-164).

<sup>54</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, 215-216.

The lack of fossils evidence of early humans from West Africa is one of the reasons why so many assume that the origin of West African tribes and their civilisations must be foreign.<sup>55</sup> The history of the earliest travels to West Africa, long before the arrival of the Europeans, has not been recorded in detail.<sup>56</sup> More so, the non-permanent settlement of early European explorers in West Africa has also contributed to a limitation of research concerning pre-colonial West African history. Boateng added that the climatic and other geographical conditions were unfavourable for European settlement in West Africa:

Unlike the rest of the continent, especially East, Southern and North Africa, where the climatic and other physical conditions made permanent white settlement possible, West Africa never experienced permanent settlement by Europeans, and trade and other forms of economic exploitation remained the primary object of European colonising effort within the region.<sup>57</sup>

The poor interest in the study of West African history, especially during the colonial periods, might have contributed to a misrepresentation of West African achievements; thereby attributing them to foreign rather than local influences. Thus stated, the research within this thesis hopes to act as a stimulant for developing further interest into the study of West African history in general, and the study of Nigerian history in particular.

Recently, there has been a growing interest in researching the origins of major Nigerian ethnic groups to include the Yoruba, the Hausas, and the Ibos. For example, the origins of the Yoruba have been attributed to Egypt or Mecca or the Land of the Punic.<sup>58</sup> While some writers believed that the ancestors of the Ibos originated from Israel and migrated to Egypt, then from Egypt to Nigeria, other writers refuted this theory, proposing rather that the Ibos have no history of migration from any part of the ancient world.<sup>59</sup> According

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<sup>55</sup>T. Shaw, "Prehistory," in O. Ikime (ed.). *Groundwork of Nigerian history*, (Heinemann Educational Books: Jos, 2004), 25 Boateng, E.A., *A political geography of Africa* (Cambridge University Press: London, 1978), 102.

<sup>56</sup>M. Shinnie, *Ancient African kingdoms*, (Edward Arnold: London, 1965), 76.

<sup>57</sup>Boateng, E.A., *A political geography of Africa* (Cambridge University Press: London, 1978), 102.

<sup>58</sup>A. Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language," 5; D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives*, 40-41.

<sup>59</sup>A.E. Afigbo, "Igboland before 1800," in I. Obaro (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian history*, (Heinemann Educational Books: Jos, 2004), 76.

Lange, a thorough study and evaluation of the Bayajidda legend by many scholars reveals that the ancestors of the Hausas originated from Baghdad and migrated to the old Lake Chad region of Borno in Northern Nigeria.<sup>60</sup>

The proposed association between the origin of West African peoples and foreign cultures has prompted a number of scholars to associate Yoruba origins (and by extension, the origin of their culture) with Egypt, Israel, Arabia, Greece and Europe. For example, Mohammed Belo, the son of the Uthman dan Fodio, the founder of Islamic jihad in Sokoto Nigeria, associated the Yoruba origin with Arabia. Samuel Johnson, a Yoruba pastor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century associated the Yoruba origin with Egypt, as did Olumide Lucas, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba scholar. The ethnologist Leo Frobenius (see Appendix B, Figure 6), linked the Yoruba origin to the Etruscans. Many Christian Yoruba rejected the tradition according to which the Yoruba and their culture originated in Arabia or from Etruria. The composition of a history of Yoruba origins is still contested. The author of this thesis recognises that there are many theories regarding Yoruba origins. The research will concentrate on the theories elaborated on by Samuel Johnson, who emphasised the tradition according to which the Yoruba originated from Egypt. This research is an attempt to examine and historically contextualise Johnson's theory of Yoruba origins that gave Egypt a significant role in the writing of Yoruba history.

Johnson was trained as a pastor in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Abeokuta and contributed largely to the development of the tradition in which the Yoruba originated from Egypt. I contend that the theories of Samuel Johnson continue to play a vital role in perpetuating the belief among contemporary Yoruba that they and their culture originated from Egypt. The thesis poses two main questions: 1) what contribution did Johnson make to develop the tradition according to which the Yoruba originated from Egypt and, 2) what factors influenced his thinking?

After Johnson, Olumide Lucas, a Yoruba pastor, noted that there are many cultural similarities between the Egyptians and the Yoruba, which lead him to believe that the Yoruba originated from Egypt. Johnson's Christian background, the influences of Yoruba Wars, his regard for the construct of the Egyptian civilisation, the debate around whether the Egyptians were Africans or not, and his view of Oduduwa (Yoruba deity and legend) oral tradition, are major factors that influenced his thinking in developing the

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<sup>60</sup> D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives*, 215-216.

tradition that the Yoruba originated from Egypt. Considering the social, religious and political factors which influenced the writings of Johnson, his views regarding the Yoruba origin can be read differently. He was neither a professional historian, nor an Egyptologist, and as a result, this thesis contends that in the contemporary study of history, the tradition according to which the Yoruba originated from Egypt could be regarded a myth.

## 1.2 Literature survey

In the past, the Yoruba relied mostly on the Oduduwa myth to explain their origins. One aspect of the Oduduwa myth is that he or she (Oduduwa) is the original ancestor of the Yoruba, who originated from the East. The second aspect is that he or she originally came from Heaven.<sup>61</sup> The Yoruba relied on the Oduduwa myth to understand the history of their origins, which was not documented back then as it is today. The exact date upon which an individual, and/or a specific group of people, began to record the history of the origins of the Yoruba remains unknown. Due to a lack of written evidence concerning the origins of the Yoruba, Umoh<sup>62</sup> suggested that the writing of Yoruba history only began sometime around 1700 AD, because:

[i]t is only from this date (1700), when the decadence of the Yoruba Kingdom had set in, that the native chronicles can give us any definite knowledge of the Yoruba history.<sup>63</sup>

However, there is little or no historical text from the 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, which documents the origins of the Yoruba. Mr Femi Fani-Kayode believed that there were as many as 3 488 literature items on Yoruba history by the year 1976.<sup>64</sup> Before 1976, some known records on Yoruba history were those documented

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<sup>61</sup> A., Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture," from <http://www.uga.edu/aflang/YORUBA/ODUDUWA.htm>, [1999], 5.

<sup>62</sup>S.M. Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior,"117.

<sup>63</sup>S.M. Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior,"117.

<sup>64</sup> Fani-Kayode, F., 2013b, "Who are the Yoruba people? (Part Two)," *Vanguard*. May 25, From <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/old-yoruba-kingdom-who-are-the-yoruba-people...>, 1-2.



by Belo and Johnson. This thesis and its research therefore focus on the development of a tradition of Yoruba origins during the time of Samuel Johnson (1846-1901). Before Johnson, Mohamed Belo proposed that the Yoruba originated from Arabia.<sup>65</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Samuel Johnson contested Belo's view, affirming that the Yoruba did not originate from Arabia, but from Egypt. Johnson believed that the Yoruba ancestors were Coptic Christians or that they might have originated from Nubia.<sup>66</sup>

Samuel Johnson, born in 1846 to Christian parents Henry and Sarah Johnson, both of whom served the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) in different capacities. Henry and Sarah were both recaptives<sup>67</sup> who lived in a place called *Aku* in the Freetown Peninsula of Sierra Leone. It was the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 by the British parliament that led to the establishment of Sierra Leone. The country became a place of refuge for returning African slaves, most of whom became Christian converts due the presence of Christian missionaries who preached at numerous camps throughout Sierra Leone.<sup>68</sup> The decline of Liberia's economy in 1940 prompted many foreign residents of *Aku*, including Samuel Johnson's parents, to relocate to Nigeria. The request made by Rev. David Hinderer of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), who worked in Abeokuta and Ibadan, to recruit Henry as a teacher in CMS Ibadan mission branch, also stirred Henry's interest to relocate to Nigeria. Henry's appointment helped to introduce Samuel Johnson into Christian missions.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, between 1863 and 1865, Samuel attended the Abeokuta Training Institution where he received professional training in General Education, Greek, Latin, English language, Religious Studies, Philosophy, History, and Mathematics. Both David Hinderer (who came to Badagry for the first time in 1849<sup>70</sup>), and Rev. Gotlieb Bühler (the then principal of Abeokuta Training Institution who joined the

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<sup>65</sup> D. Lange, "Origin of the Yoruba and 'The Lost Tribes of Israel,'" *Anthropos*, 106, [2011], 583; Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*, 332.

<sup>66</sup> S. Johnson, *the History of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>67</sup> "Recaptive" was a term given to slaves that were returned to Sierra Leone, Liberia and to their respective countries of origin after the abolition of the slave trade by the British government in 1807.

<sup>68</sup> S. Stevens, "The Yorubas and early missionary work among them," from <http://www.zionchristianministry.com/international/africa/the-yorubas-and-early-missionary-work-amongthem/>, 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, (African World Press: New Jersey, 1999), 33-37.

<sup>70</sup> K. Olabimtan, [2011a] "Hinderer, David 1819 to 1890," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-6.

Yoruba mission of the CMS on October 24, 1855<sup>71</sup>) believed in liberal education and encouraged Christians to study not just the Bible alone, but other fields of knowledge.<sup>72</sup> Samuel Johnson graduated from the Abeokuta Training Institution in 1865 and was qualified to be a school teacher. He worked as a school teacher in Anglican missions at Ibadan, at Aremo and at Kudi. Samuel Johnson served as an assistant to Daniel Olubi, who was made a deacon with CMS in 1867, until he became a catechist (a teacher of the Christian Faith) of the Aremu Church in 1875.<sup>73</sup> Johnson was influenced to love liberal education and he supported the British colonials in establishing administrative and educational institutions in Yorubaland. He served as a translator between traditional chiefs and foreign administrators who worked in Yorubaland and also served as a mediator in resolving various internal Yoruba conflicts.<sup>74</sup> His involvements with the Church and with various Yoruba communities meant that he developed a very wide knowledge of the Yoruba people.<sup>75</sup>

Many writers of Yoruba history, like Olumide Lucas and Toyin Falola regarded Johnson's book as one of the earliest and the most detailed literatures on Yoruba history.<sup>76</sup> On the credibility of Johnson's book, Falola said that "[i]t is an article of faith to many of its readers that Johnson is always right."<sup>77</sup> Johnson wrote that the Yoruba and their culture originated from Egypt.<sup>78</sup> He argued "that Yoruba culture and those of the Egyptians are similar"<sup>79</sup> and that the Oduduwa myth suggests that the ancestors of the Yoruba

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<sup>71</sup> "Johnson, Samuel (1846-1901)," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5.

<sup>72</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 32.

<sup>73</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 32.

<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, despite the fact the Yoruba knew that Ile Ife is the centre of their origin, and though they speak one dialect, there were so many internal conflicts within the Yoruba for the most part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the Owu war (1817-1824), the Ijaye war (1860-1865), and the Kiriji or Ekiti Parapos war (1877-1893) have succeeded in turning Yoruba nations apart (M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124-133). Samuel Johnson in particular, who served as a literate interpreter and translator between Yoruba local chiefs and white missionaries, likewise imperialists, played a great role in mediating even among the various Yoruba groups. Johnson's 17 years of peace negotiation brought about peace among all Yoruba rival groups (T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 31, 35-36). Johnson's concern towards Yoruba unity is one of the main motivations for the writing of his book, hence it can be said that his manuscript is aimed at uniting the Yoruba.

<sup>75</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 32.

<sup>76</sup> S.A. Akintoye, 'From early times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century', in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (African World Press: Trenton, 2004), 3.

<sup>77</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 33-34.

<sup>78</sup> S. Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>79</sup> S. Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

emerged from Egypt, and not Mecca or Arabia, as was speculated.<sup>80</sup> He said that the ancestors of the Yoruba were Coptic Christians from Egypt and not Arabians or Muslims from Mecca. Johnson believed that Mohammed Belo influenced the Yoruba to develop a belief that their ancestors were Muslims.<sup>81</sup> The precise reason why Johnson associated Yoruba origin with Egypt is still unknown, but it can be suggested that his Christian background and the popular perceived ideology of the civilisation in Egypt would have guided his thoughts.<sup>82</sup> Archaeological discoveries in Egypt from 1798 onward led to enormous enthusiasm in Europe over Egyptian civilisation, which continued throughout 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>83</sup> Hinderer and Bühler both of whom were Europeans, might have introduced Johnson to the knowledge of the Egyptian civilisation. But even before Johnson, there existed the debate regarding the Yoruba origins, as envisaged by Belo's Arab views of the Yoruba origin. Johnson remained a prominent figure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century development of a theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba.

After Johnson, came an alternative theory in which the Yoruba originated from Etruria and not Egypt. Leo Frobenius, a trained anthropologist and explorer, has been described by Olupona as the first anthropologist to advertise Ile Ife's terracotta arts to the world (see Appendix B, Figure 3 and 7). He visited Ile Ife in 1910 and conducted researches on Yoruba sculptures. Frobenius was amazed at the high level of creativity he found in Yoruba arts and as a result, he reported to the German Press that there was some presence of Greek colony on the Atlantic coast of Africa.<sup>84</sup> He proposed that Yoruba civilisation is not of African origin but of European or Etruscan sources; which passed through the Straits of Gibraltar to North Africa and from North Africa to Yorubaland. He named this theory of the Yoruba origins the *Atlantis theory*.<sup>85</sup> In *The voice of Africa: Being an account of the travels of the German inner African expedition in*

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<sup>80</sup> S.Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>81</sup> S.Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 5-6.

<sup>82</sup> Johnson did not have a formal qualification on Egyptian studies rather he had specific interest in both Roman and Egyptian civilizations likewise one of his mentors Buhler. Johnson read the works of Caesar and Eutropius after which he made attempt to link the civilizations of Egypt and Greece to those of the Yorubas (T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 40).

<sup>83</sup> J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 7-8.

<sup>84</sup> J.K. Olupona, "The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective," *NUMEN*, 3(40), [1993], 242.

<sup>85</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa: Being an account of the travels of the German inner African expedition in the years 1910-1912*, vol 1, (Benjamin Blom: New York, 1913), 345.

*the years 1910-1912*, vol 1, he argued that the Yoruba culture corresponded to the Etruscan culture.<sup>86</sup> Frobenius did not discuss in detail the Egyptian theory of the Yoruba origins and also refrained from awarding any credit to Samuel Johnson as the initiator of the Egyptian-Yoruba origins theory. Thus stated, the thesis will also address these concerns.

After Frobenius, Olumide Lucas postulated the theory of an ancient Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Olumide J. Lucas was born in 27 August 1879 in Lagos and received his basic education at St. John's Lagos, CMS Grammar School and Kings College Lagos.<sup>87</sup> In 1920, at Fourah Bay College, he obtained the Bachelor of Arts degree from Durham University in Classics, after which he immediately completed a postgraduate in theology and education. He lectured at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and was recalled to Nigeria to teach at CMS Grammar School Lagos, where he served for fourteen years and later became the acting principal. He then became the Vicar of St Paul's Church, Breadfruit, in 1936 until his retirement in 1962. Before his retirement, he continued to pursue knowledge through private studies and obtained a Bachelor of Divinity with honors as an external student of London University in 1934. In 1948, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Durham University for his thesis on the "*The religion of the Yorubas: Being an account of the religious beliefs and practice of the Yoruba peoples of southern Nigeria, especially in relation to the religion of ancient Egypt.*"<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, Olumide Lucas, a former Pastor of St. Paul's Church, was the first indigenous Yoruba writer who wrote Yoruba history from the perspective of comparative religion.<sup>89</sup> Professor Jacob K. Olupona described Lucas as an acclaimed Egyptologist,<sup>90</sup> perhaps for his effort in the study of the ancient Egyptian culture in comparison to the Yoruba culture.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 336.

<sup>87</sup> Obtained from "Addresses and citations in support of honorary graduands at the Liberty Tadiui, Ibadan on Foundation Day in 1971 by the University of Ibadan," pp. 23-25. This program was organised to award certain dignitaries with honorary doctorate degrees and Olumide Lucas was awarded an honorary degree in Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.

<sup>88</sup> Obtained from "Addresses and citations in support of honorary graduands at the Liberty Tadiui, Ibadan on Foundation Day in 1971 by the University of Ibadan," 23-25.

<sup>89</sup> J.K. Olupona, "The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective," *NUMEN*, 3(40), [1993], 243.

<sup>90</sup>J.K. Olupona, *NUMEN*, 243.

<sup>91</sup> Lucas stated that the Yoruba Olorun will judge the world in the afterlife. This belief in judgement after death was connected to Osiris, the Egyptian god who judged the dead in the hall of judgement (J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the*

Lucas commended Samuel Johnson for writing the Yoruba history.<sup>92</sup> He also commended all those who had an interest in the writing of Yoruba history, yet frowned on their reports concerning the Yoruba which he thought may not be as accurate as his, mainly due to language barriers. Lucas stated that Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther's report, and that of Johnson, on Yoruba history deserved recognition, yet he believed that their stay in Sierra Leone might have limited their understanding and interpreting of Yoruba language. Ironically, he applauded his own writings despite the fact that he also lived in Sierra Leone for a brief period.<sup>93</sup>

Despite Lucas' comparative study of Egyptian and Yoruba culture, Dierk Lange described Lucas' comparative etymologies of the Egyptian and Yoruba culture as "vague and unconvincing."<sup>94</sup> Lange believed that no cultural or chronological evidence exists that could testify to any form of connection between the Coptic Christians of Egypt and the Yoruba of Nigeria.<sup>95</sup>

While Johnson centred his theory of the Yoruba connection with the Coptic Egyptians, Lucas connected the Yoruba specifically with the ancient Egyptians. Lucas said that the migration of the Yoruba ancestors from Egypt to Yorubaland might have taken place during the Predynastic and Dynastic periods due to the similarities of the Yoruba culture with the cultures of the Predynastic and Dynastic Egyptians.<sup>96</sup> Johnson might not have concentrated on the links between Egyptian, Coptic Egyptian, Nubian and Yoruba culture, had he not wished to create some relevance between his Christian faith and his culture. Johnson formulated his claim over Coptic Egyptian or Nubian influences on the Yoruba in his *History of the Yorubas*, which proposed that there may have been trans-Saharan commercial routes between Nubia or Ethiopia

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*Yorubas: Being an account of the religious beliefs and practice of the Yoruba peoples of southern Nigeria, especially in relation to the religion of ancient Egypt.* C.M.S. (Bookshop: Lagos, 1948), 37).

<sup>92</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>93</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>94</sup> D. Lange, 'Ife and the Origin of the Yoruba: Historiographical Considerations' Institute of cultural studies, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, No. 6: [1995], 43

<sup>95</sup> D. Lange, 'Ife and the Origin of the Yoruba: Historiographical Considerations', 43.

<sup>96</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 352.

and Nigeria.<sup>97</sup> Olupona described both Johnson and Lucas approach to Yoruba history as Christocentric.<sup>98</sup> This context necessitated the thesis to discuss Johnson's Christian background and how it influenced his thoughts about the Yoruba origin. Unlike Johnson, who discussed at length the procedural usage of the Yoruba culture among the Yoruba,<sup>99</sup> Lucas emphasised the similarities between the ancient Egyptian and Yoruba cultures.<sup>100</sup> John D.Y. Peel proposed that the 19<sup>th</sup> century influence of Christianity in Yorubaland encouraged the Yoruba people to be conscious of the need for their unity and for their history especially from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. He saw the emergence of independent churches, like the Christ Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim, as an effort by some Yoruba people to keep their Christian faith and their unity together. However, Ogbu U. Kalu believed that the formation of Christian sects created disunity among African Christians. He emphasised an urgent need for ecumenism among Nigerian Churches.<sup>101</sup>

After the writings of Johnson, which linked the Yoruba to the Egyptians, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century writers of Yoruba history, especially Christian writers, continued to write on, and to find reasons to build upon, the foundations that were laid by Johnson. While describing the origin of the Benin people from the Niger-Delta, Jacob U. Egharevba said that their original ancestors originated from Egypt and from Egypt to Ile Ife. It was from Ile Ife that they migrated to Benin.<sup>102</sup> He associated the origin of the Benin people with Oduduwa, a tradition already mentioned by Samuel Johnson. J.F. Ade Ajayi and Robert Smith said that after Oduduwa arrived Ile Ife, one of his sons became the Oba of Benin.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

<sup>98</sup>J. K. Olupona, 'The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective,' *NUMEN*, 3(40), (1993), 242.

<sup>99</sup>S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 98-137.

<sup>100</sup>J. O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 352.

<sup>101</sup>O.U. Kalu, "The Shattered Cross: The Church Union Movements in Nigeria 1905-66" in *The history of Christianity in West Africa*, O.U. Kalu (ed.), (Longman Group. Essex, 1981), 340-343.

<sup>102</sup>J. U. Egharevba, *A short history of Benin* (Ibadan University Press. Ibadan, 1953), 1-7.

<sup>103</sup>J. F. Ade Ajayi & R. Smith, *Yoruba warfare in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1964), 1-3.

Sadiku emphasized that it was during the mid-nineteenth century that Christianity became fully rooted in Yorubaland.<sup>104</sup> Obaro Ikime described the 19<sup>th</sup> century as “a century of change” in Nigerian history. His view is due to events such as the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Yoruba Wars, and dan Fodio’s Islamic Movement.<sup>105</sup> These events transformed the writing of the Yoruba history. Adewale and Abu said that the CMS and the *Aku* Christians played a significant role in the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>106</sup> In this research, I have demonstrated that Christianity influenced Johnson in developing an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Olupona also described Johnson’s approach in writing Yoruba history as Christian-centered.<sup>107</sup> This approach was relevant for Johnson reason being that he wanted to limit the spread of Islam in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century. Gbadamosi said that Islam reached Northern Nigeria in the eleventh century and was consolidated in Yorubaland before or around the eighteenth century to the nineteenth centuries.<sup>108</sup>

This could be one of the reasons why Falola once observed that since the 1950s, major academic works on the Yoruba elaborated on the themes suggested by Johnson.<sup>109</sup> He added that the role played by Johnson as a negotiator during the Yoruba Wars contributed to widening Johnson’s background knowledge, which played a role in his documentation of Yoruba history.<sup>110</sup> Falola reiterated that it is likely that external influences might have influenced Johnson’s decision regarding the Yoruba history. He believed that Johnson used his discretion to influence the traditions he heard regarding the Yoruba people in an effort to foster peace among the Yoruba:

It is not always clear whether the traditions collected by Johnson were those in line with his motives or those already doctored by his informants or those already affected by the contacts with external influences like Islam and Christianity. Since he also interpreted a

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<sup>104</sup> M.N.O., Sadiku, “The practice of Christianity,” in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku and A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (African World Press. Trenton, 2004), 125.

<sup>105</sup> O. Ikime, “The Western Niger Delta and the Hinterland in the Nineteenth Century” in *Groundwork of Nigerian history*, O. Ikime (ed.), (Heinemann Educational Books. Ibadan, 2004), 262.

<sup>106</sup> O.O., Adewale, & O.F. Abu, “Christianity in Nigeria before Pentecostalism,” *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2/2 (2013), 124.

<sup>107</sup> J. K. Olupona, ‘The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective,’ *NUMEN*, 3(40), (1993), 242.

<sup>108</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908* (Longman Group Limited. London, 1978), 4-5.

<sup>109</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 31.

<sup>110</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34.

number of traditions, he imposed his own perspectives. He admitted to editing many of the traditions, at least in order not to cause divisions in society.<sup>111</sup>

In 1999, Toyin Falola published *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa* (African World Press: New Jersey). Falola discussed a number of prominent Yoruba figures, whose contribution to the preservation of Yoruba culture, history and identity will forever be appreciated. Some of the Yoruba figures, which Falola described as “Yoruba gurus,” are Samuel Johnson, M.C. Adeyemi (the historian of Oyo), King Isaac Babalola Akinyele (the scholar of Ibadan), Kemi Morgan (the Ibadan historian), Chief Samuel Ojo Bada (specialist on Ilorin), Theophilus Olabode Avoseh (specialist on Epe and Badagry) and many more. Falola described Johnson as the “Pioneer and Patriarch” of both Yoruba history and Yoruba culture. In other words, Falola regarded Johnson as the “founder and father” of Yoruba history.<sup>112</sup> Although Falola discussed the life and the history of Samuel Johnson, he did not discuss Johnson’s view of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. He did not say why Johnson associated the Yoruba origin with Christianity. In this thesis, attention is paid as to why Johnson connected the Yoruba origin with Christianity.

Dr Olabimtan Kehinde Olumuyiwa concentrated on the missionary influence of Samuel Johnson and he applauded the role of Johnson, not just as a missionary alone, but also as a historian, a Yoruba patriot and nationalist. Olabimtan’s publication did not show any serious interest in Johnson’s theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Frobenius, Lucas, Falola and Olabimtan did not prioritise Johnson’s view of a Coptic Christian origin of the Yoruba. Because of this general gap within existing research, this thesis will focus on the Christian view of a Yoruba origin from the perspective of Samuel Johnson. Omolewa discussed the Oduduwa myth according to which Oduduwa is regarded by the Yoruba people as a deity and a migrant from Arabia.<sup>113</sup> Ayandele echoed a similar view with Omolewa regarding Oduduwa as a migrant.<sup>114</sup> Both of them did not discuss an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Firstly, this research focuses on a study of an

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<sup>111</sup>T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 45.

<sup>112</sup>S.A. Akintoye, ‘From early times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century’, in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (African World Press: Trenton, 2004), 3.

<sup>113</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, (Ikeja: Longman, 2008), 58.

<sup>114</sup> E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 123.



Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Secondly, it prioritises the Christian view of a Yoruba origin from the perspective of Samuel Johnson.

### 1.3 Research problem and objectives

Samuel Johnson can be regarded as the first or one of the earliest proponents of the theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. While it is cannot be proven where the Yoruba originated, the question remains as to why Johnson argued that the Yoruba are of Egyptian origin. The objectives of this research are: Firstly, to discuss Johnson’s contribution to the development of the tradition of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Secondly, to discuss the religious, social and the political context of Sierra Leone and Nigeria during the time of Johnson and how these factors influenced his thoughts regarding the tradition of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Students of history, anthropology, archaeology and comparative religion would find this research of great importance because the research has significant traces of subjects related to these fields. For example, African civilisations, culture, oral traditions and many more are discussed extensively.

### 1.4 Theoretical framework

There are two concepts that inform the theoretical framework of this research. The first is the oral tradition, and the second is myth. Oral tradition in the context of this research means information or stories that answer human questions and are preserved and passed by way of mouth from generation to generation. Questions and answers about human origins, creation, and life after death, natural disasters and many more were preserved by way of mouth before the emergence of writing. Flexon Mizinga said that oral traditions involved human artistic creativity and cultural heritage transmitted by way of mouth.<sup>115</sup> Samuel Johnson relied on oral tradition to document the history of the Yoruba. He interviewed

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<sup>115</sup>F. Mizinga, “Learn from the dying generation: A critical analysis of oral tradition in history reconstruction,” National Museum of Zambia, [1992], 1.

and listened to Yoruba elders in order to write their history.<sup>116</sup> In this thesis, I shall read Johnson's view of the Yoruba origins with an understanding that he relied on oral tradition.

Johnson also associated his views of the Yoruba origins with myth. His view of myth is defined by what is true and what is not true. Peet van Dyk believed that myths were regarded as true narratives or true events initiated by the gods to guide humans, or explain natural events that are mysterious to humans.<sup>117</sup> I explained that on one hand, Johnson believed his Egyptian theory of the Yoruba origins. On the other hand, he doubted Oduduwa's migration from Egypt to Yorubaland. This makes it necessary to include background information on the perception of oral tradition and myth in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>118</sup>

Africa's reliance on oral traditions and myths before the colonial period is one of reasons that caused Africa to be regarded as an uncivilised part of the world. The debate on the perceptions of the Egyptian civilisation and the positioning of Egypt as an African territory in Roman times have contributed to the nineteenth century argument over whether the Egyptians were Africans or not.<sup>119</sup> Professor Tomoko Masuzawa published a number of books. One of her books relevant to this research is *The invention of world religions: Or, how European Universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism* (published in 2005).

Masuzawa stated that some western or European literatures written before and in the early periods of the 19<sup>th</sup> century portrayed Egypt as a non-African society due to the assumption that Africans were not civilised.<sup>120</sup> She echoed Hegel's thought in this regard:

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it- that is in its northern part- belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an

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<sup>116</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>117</sup>Dyk van, P., "Mythical linkage and mythical frameworks," *Old Testament Essays*, 867.

<sup>118</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>119</sup>D.T., Adamo, "The African wife of Jeroboam (ano): An African reading of 1 King 14:1-18," *Theologia Viatorum*, 37/2,2013, 73-74; C.A. Folorunso, *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 85, 91.

<sup>120</sup> Masuzawa, T., *The invention of world religions or how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2005), xi, 3-5, 8, 16, 37, 41-43, 46-47, 64.

important transitional phase of civilization; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of World's History.<sup>121</sup>

It is known that Africans who lived during the pre-colonial and early colonial periods left little or no detailed records of the history of their origins, as written by themselves.<sup>122</sup> They relied on other forms of knowledge-dissemination such as oral tradition, poetry, songs, poems, legends, proverbs, myths, folk tales, crafts, rituals and ceremonies, folk songs and many more.<sup>123</sup> With reference to oral traditions, Ezekiel Oladele Adeoti believed that despite the fact that oral traditions may not have been written down and preserved in modern archives during the pre-colonial Africa, yet, such traditions could survive through rituals and ceremonies.<sup>124</sup> He argued that the methods of preserving knowledge by oral tradition among Africans deserve to be upheld. He said Africans preserved knowledge through court historians like the *Arokin* of Oyo (south-west Nigeria), the *Okyeame* of the Ashanti, the *Griots* of the Mande-speaking people of western Sudan, the *Moaridi* of the Congo, and the palace drummers found among the Akan and *Ihogbe* of Benin.<sup>125</sup> He added that the main duty of the palace drummers, who normally work in the king's palace, was to guide both religious and political leaders through proper education in history.<sup>126</sup> This is one of the reasons why Adeoti maintained that in African societies, local historians who preserved knowledge by oral

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<sup>121</sup>T. Masuzawa, *The invention of world religions or how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*, 42, originally from G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (1956), 99. Folorunso also highlighted that the regard for Africa as a non-civilised society is one of the main reasons behind the European colonisation of Africa; to 'civilise' Africans (C.A. Folorunso, *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 85).

<sup>122</sup>M. Delafosse, *The Negroes of Africa: History and culture*, (Kennikat Press: New York, 1931), xxv-2.

<sup>123</sup>A. Oyebade, "Reconstructing the past through oral tradition," in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.), *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (African World Press: Trenton, 2004), 52.

<sup>124</sup> E.O. Adeoti, "African History and the Tradition of Historical Writing," *Journal of Social Science (COES & J-JSS)* 3(2), [2014], 319.

<sup>125</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 319.

<sup>126</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 319.

traditions were important in preserving the unity of specific societies.<sup>127</sup> The court-historians for example, contributed greatly to creating social harmony and the appointment of office holders.<sup>128</sup> Adeoti said that:

Although, these traditions were not written down and preserved in physical structures like modern archives, they have managed to survive because they have been preserved in rituals and re-enactment ceremonies particularly the Installation of new kings. On these special occasions, some of these traditions were publicly recited and dramatised partly as ritual offerings to ancestors and partly as entertainment and education of the people at large.<sup>129</sup>

The years 1846 to 1901 marked the colonial period in Nigeria. During this time, scientific research was not implemented within the writing of a history of African tribal peoples, especially by the African tribal peoples themselves. A change in historical studies emerged from the 19<sup>th</sup> century whereby:

...study of human past activities was transformed into a scientific discipline. No longer a narration of morally and spiritually edifying tales about bygone eras, history became for the first time essentially a work of research, whose cardinal objective now was to establish certain facts about the past.<sup>130</sup>

This is why the writing of African history in the post-colonial era needs to be reconstructed without neglecting these traditional means of imparting knowledge such as myths and oral tradition.<sup>131</sup> Twenty-first century writers of African history may question the scientific methodology used by Johnson in ascertaining that the Yoruba originated from Egypt. In this regard, Johnson's tradition of the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba could be treated as a myth, or an "aspect" of oral tradition. More so, Johnson's reliance on oral traditions and his usage of the term "mythologic"<sup>132</sup> together with his description of

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<sup>127</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 319.

<sup>128</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 319.

<sup>129</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 319.

<sup>130</sup> T. Masuzawa, *The invention of world religions or how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*, 51.

<sup>131</sup> A. Oyeade, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 52.

<sup>132</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

Oduduwa (the original ancestor of the Yoruba) as a “mythical personage”<sup>133</sup> necessitates the need to study the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba as myth. In a similar manner, Geoffrey Stephen Kirk, noted that since the Palaeolithic period, there has never been any society that did not use or apply “mythical” or “mystical” knowledge through the range of life experiences.<sup>134</sup> Even in present-day societies, myths are still used as patterns to explain certain human precedence.<sup>135</sup>

Over centuries, writers have debated the specific definition, theories and the criteria for interpreting myths, yet the debate is still on-going. This is due to the fact that there is no singular theory, definition or criteria for interpreting myth that is universally pragmatic or comprehensible to all forms of societies.<sup>136</sup> Grosso noted that no myth in itself can be pure, meaning myths have the characteristics of altering within a context and that their meaning should therefore be defined within that specific individual context.<sup>137</sup> The formation of myths are diverse, likewise the interpretation of myths even, within a specific cultural setting.<sup>138</sup> The Yoruba have high regard for their myths.<sup>139</sup> The Oduduwa creation myth is often told to Yoruba children as an oral tradition. In fact, the subject of Oduduwa is formally included in literatures of Nigerian history for high school students and is accepted as a formal means of explaining the origins of the Yoruba people. The Yoruba believe that Oduduwa is their ancestor and that he/she originated from the “East” or “Egypt” or “Arabia.”<sup>140</sup>

According to Scarborough, general consensus states that not all myths are tales and that not all myths are false.<sup>141</sup> This is so because some myths contain historical facts that warrant scientific consideration,

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<sup>133</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>134</sup>G.S. Kirk, “On defining myths” in A. Dundes (ed.), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, (University of California Press: Los Angeles, 1984), 59.

<sup>135</sup>B. Malinowski, “The role of myth in life” in A. Dundes (ed.) *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, pp.193-206, (University of California Press: Los Angeles, 1984), 194.

<sup>136</sup>G.S. Kirk, *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 53-58.

<sup>137</sup>M. Grosso, “A Postmodern Mythology on Death,” in *Perspectives on death and dying: Cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary views*, A. Berger & P. Badham, (eds.), (Philadelphia: Charles, 1989), 233.

<sup>138</sup>G.S. Kirk, *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 55.

<sup>139</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 39.

<sup>140</sup>C.A. Folorunso, *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 83.

<sup>141</sup> G.S. Kirk, *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 56-57.

depending on the sources and its relevance within specific periods of time.<sup>142</sup> However, in the case of the Yoruba connection with Egypt, archaeological evidence, which could support the theory of migration between Egypt and Yorubaland during the rise of the Coptic Church, is still lacking. Lucas and Parrinder speculated that contact occurred between Egypt and Yorubaland during the Predynastic and Dynastic periods,<sup>143</sup> mainly based on cultural similarities between the two groups. However, cultural similarity on its own does not confirm contact, as Egyptian culture shares similarities with many groups, not only with the Yoruba cultures, but also with those of other ethnic groups in West Africa, such as the he Ekoi, the Ibos, the Beroms, and many more. Furthermore, no concrete evidence exists to support the theory that these West African ethnic groups were strictly influenced by the Egyptians as well. Using the Euhemerist theory in the study of myth, I explain that Johnson's tradition of the Egyptians origins of the Yoruba is a myth which regarded Oduduwa as a god or a historical person defied. I also maintain that myths are aspects of oral traditions and that the reading of the Oduduwa myth makes some sense when is read from the perspective of Euhemerus.

## 1.5 Methodology

This thesis is basically a literary research on the thoughts of the Yoruba origins before, during and after the time of Samuel Johnson. The thesis is not an anthropological or archaeological study. Rather, a study of the Yoruba culture in its relation to the Egyptian culture. This research is centred on the contribution of Samuel Johnson to the development of the thesis of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. The goal is being achieved by firstly developing a discourse on the background of Samuel Johnson in both Sierra Leone and in Nigeria. Major factors that affected Johnson in the development his thesis of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba included Christianity, Islam, the Yoruba wars of the early nineteenth century and the contribution of the British government who ruled over Yorubaland and the entire Nigerian territories until 1960. After given a detailed background of the socio-political context of Sierra Leone and Nigeria in the nineteenth century, the researcher explains the individual biography of Samuel Johnson including the specific

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<sup>142</sup>M. Scarborough, *Myth and modernity: Postcritical reflections*, (New York State University Press: New York, 1994), 107-108.

<sup>143</sup>J.M. Agai, "An investigation into the ancient Egyptian cultural influences on the Yorubas of Nigeria," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1919>, [2013a], 12.

backgrounds that influenced the writing of his book *The History of the Yorubas*. The contribution of Samuel Johnson's elder brother Obadiah and the Church Missionary Society to the publication of *The History of the Yoruba* have concomitantly been recognized.

Mohammed Belo discussed the Yoruba origin before Johnson while Frobenius, Lucas, Falola and many more discussed the thesis of the Yoruba origin after Johnson. I use the views of these authors in contextualizing the study of Yoruba origins. As a result, the research constitutes a three-prong approach as follows: pre-Johnson's view, Johnson's view, and post-Johnson's view. I demonstrate that Johnson prioritized Christianity in developing his thesis of the Yoruba origins. Johnson's book *The History of the Yorubas* was first published in 1921 and the text used for this research is the version reprinted in 2011 and published by the Church and School Suppliers (CSS) in Lagos, Nigeria. *The History of the Yoruba* is a 740 paged book.

Many writers have written about the origins of the Yoruba. This research uses as a main source one text, Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*. Firstly, I mentioned the reasons that encouraged Johnson and other Yoruba writers to associate their origins with Egypt. Samuel Johnson, Olumide Lucas and Geoffrey Parrinder are significant authors on the subject. The rationale behind the use of these authors is to describe the flow of thoughts of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba from the time of Johnson to mid-twentieth century. More so, I argue that both Lucas and Parrinder believed that the similarities of cultural practices between the Yoruba and the Egyptians suggest that the Yoruba people either originated from Egypt or were influenced by the Egyptians. Contrary to Johnson, Lucas and Parrinder, I argue that other ethnic groups in Africa like the Berom of North-Central Nigeria have many similarities of culture with the Egyptians.

Secondly, I argue that from the mid-twentieth century to the twenty-first century, the debate of a possible Egyptian origin of the Yoruba continued to interest many Yoruba people who wrote about their origins. The materials used in this regard are those written by Folorunso, Fani-Kayode, Oyebade, Omolewa, Falola, Olopuna and many more. Generally, this research discusses the issue of the Yoruba origin before, during and after Johnson. During the time of Johnson, Egypt was not dominant in the study of the Yoruba history. After Johnson, the Yoruba people continued to believe that their ancestors might have originated from Egypt. During this research, I did not come across a single study that strictly discuss at length Johnson's thesis of an Egyptian origins of the Yoruba. This research is an attempt to fill the gap.

## 1.6 Structure of thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the subject by giving a general background of what I hope to achieve. Chapter Two is a study of Johnson's socio-religious and political backgrounds which included his life in both Sierra Leone and in Nigeria. Chapter Three is a biography of the main character of this research-Samuel Johnson. The chapter addresses issues concerning Johnson's life and the factors that led to the writing of his book *The History of this Yorubas*. The chapter also addresses issues on the influence of Christianity, Islam and the Yoruba Wars on Johnson's worldview of the Yoruba origin. Johnson himself did not see his book published. His brother Obadiah published the book and made some additional notes to it, and as a result, there was a controversy on whether Johnson or Obadiah is the original author of the book. Chapter three addresses such issues.

Chapter Four is a discourse on the views of Johnson on an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba as presented in *The History of the Yorubas*. Chapter Five is a discourse on the theories of the Yoruba origins and their culture before, during and after Samuel Johnson. The theories discussed are Arab, Jewish, Etruscan, Egyptian and Local origins of the Yoruba. Belo, Crowther, Frobenius, Lucas and Parrinder are relevant in this discourse. In conclusion, the researcher discussed that the socio-religious and the political context of Sierra Leone and Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that influenced Johnson to associate the Yoruba origins with Christianity.



# CHAPTER TWO

## THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF SIERRA LEONE AND NIGERIA IN SAMUEL JOHNSON'S TIME

### 2.1 Christianity

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

The role of Africa and Africans in the spread of Christianity is relevant to this research, as certain Yoruba, like Samuel Johnson, Lucas Olumide and others were likely influenced by their Christian background in their writing of Yoruba history. These backgrounds made it necessary to understand how Christianity spread to Africa and to the Yorubaland in particular. The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked a period during which documents on the spread of Christianity in West Africa were recorded, both in greater numbers and with increased richness of content.<sup>144</sup> The abolition of the slave trade in Britain was a main factor which led to the widespread adoption of Christianity in West Africa.<sup>145</sup> After the abolition of the slave trade, many people in West Africa, who were previously slaves and converted to Christianity, became missionaries. This conversion of countless African slaves to Christianity motivated missionary organisations, like the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesleyan Missionary Society and others, to extend their missions into the interior regions of West Africa.<sup>146</sup> However, information regarding the origins of Christianity's first contact on African soil can be traced back the earliest periods, when Christianity itself started. Lamin Sanneh believed that Scriptural materials, historical sources and oral traditions, when pieced together, can provide relevant information on Africa's role in the development and spread of Christianity.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> S. Stevens, "The Yorubas and early missionary work among them," from <http://www.zionchristianministry.com/international/africa/the-yorubas-and-early-missionary-work-amongthem/,1-2>.

<sup>145</sup>O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, "Christianity in Nigeria before Pentecostalism," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2 (2), [2013], 122.

<sup>146</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 39-41.

<sup>147</sup> L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The religious impact* (London: Hurst & Company, 1983), 1.

For the sake of this research, which seeks to elucidate the factors that informed Johnson's theory, it is pertinent to have an idea of how Christianity spread to Egypt. This is relevant because Samuel Johnson linked the Yoruba origins with the Coptic Church in Egypt.<sup>148</sup> It is also important to have a better understanding of the Coptic Church in Egypt, so that the researcher may be able to evaluate Johnson's alleged Egyptian influences in Yorubaland.

During its history, Egypt suffered various invasions during the first millennium BCE. For example, in 700 BCE the Kushite king, Kashta, conquered Egypt and ruled as far as north of Thebes, the old capital of Upper Egypt.<sup>149</sup> Also, from 671 BCE, Egypt was invaded about six times by foreigners. After the capturing of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, Egyptian culture and language were subdued to the point that Greek culture and language became prominent even among the Egyptians in Egypt.<sup>150</sup> History shows that when foreigners captured Egypt, they took responsibilities in the political administration in Egypt. Rome in particular captured certain regions of the Ancient Near East together with Egypt around 30 BCE; and as a result, the Romans organised a united administration which allowed efficient communication systems. The coordination of certain regions in Egypt ruled by Rome especially for the development of the Nile as a trading artery created easy access for communication and for early Christian evangelism among the Early Church.<sup>151</sup>

Scriptural sources, which shed light on the influence of Christianity in Egypt, indicate that Jesus of Nazareth visited Egypt at a young age.<sup>152</sup> The book of Matthew records that Jesus was born in Bethlehem but was hunted by Herod the Great. Herod was a district governor and the Roman client king of Judea. The hunt for Jesus caused Joseph, Mary and Jesus to flee Bethlehem for Egypt.<sup>153</sup> Sanneh states that the arrival of Jesus with his family in Egypt "... is the first tradition connecting the African continent with the

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<sup>148</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the beginning of the British protectorate* (Lagos: CSS Limited, 1921), 7.

<sup>149</sup> M. Shinnie, *Ancient African kingdoms* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), 23-24.

<sup>150</sup> D.B., Redford, 2006, *A history of ancient Egypt: Egyptian civilisation in context* (Iowa: Penn State, 2006), xiii.

<sup>151</sup> H.R. Boer, *A short history of the early Church* (Ibadan: Day Star Press, 1976), 1-7.

<sup>152</sup> Egypt is regarded as an African country in this research. See Chapter Four for the details behind this motivation.

<sup>153</sup> See Matthew 2:13-18.

Christian story.”<sup>154</sup> He believed that, apart from Scriptural sources, there seemed to be no other sources again that mention Jesus’s life in Egypt<sup>155</sup>. This view by Sanneh may require further study.

Furthermore, according to Sanneh, the Gospel of Mark is generally regarded as an eye-witness account of the life of Jesus by the apostle Peter and is also regarded as the oldest known documents of the New Testament.<sup>156</sup> Mark records that one man, Simon from Cyrenia, was compelled to carry the cross after the trial of Jesus.<sup>157</sup> It is important to note that Cyrenia was a Roman province in Libya. The Gospel of Mark further states that Simon was also the father of Alexander and Rufus.<sup>158</sup> The Apostle Paul also mentioned Rufus together with Priscilla and Aquila.<sup>159</sup> Sanneh said that the phrase describing Rufus as being “chosen in the Lord”<sup>160</sup> means that Rufus was a part of the Gentile Church who was responsible for spreading the Gospel to Africa. It is written in the book of Acts that the name of Jesus’ followers as “Christians” was first given in Antioch.<sup>161</sup> It was also in Antioch that a man from Cyrenia called Lucius was given as an active member of the Church in Antioch.<sup>162</sup>

Another important member of the Early Church was Simeon; identified as a black man who might have originated from Ethiopia.<sup>163</sup> One important Ethiopian official in the service of the Queen of Candace, who originated from the kingdom of Meroe, is also mentioned to have an African link. Sanneh gave the name of this Ethiopian official as Judich. In Acts, the Apostle Phillip was asked to go and meet Judich in Gaza, where Judich was found reading the Book of Isaiah.<sup>164</sup> The Kingdom of Meroe in Africa finally became important in the history of the spread of Christianity “...history tells us that Meroe grew to be prosperous

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<sup>154</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 1-2.

<sup>155</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 1-2.

<sup>156</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 2.

<sup>157</sup> Mark 15:21-32.

<sup>158</sup> Mark 15:21.

<sup>159</sup> Acts 18; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.

<sup>160</sup> “Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine” (Romans 16:13).

<sup>161</sup> Acts 11:26.

<sup>162</sup> Romans 16:21.

<sup>163</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 2; cf. Acts 13:1; M. Omolewa, M., 2008, *Certificate history of Nigeria* (Ikeja: Longman, 2008), 11-12.

<sup>164</sup> Acts 8:26-40.

and flourishing Christian kingdom in the Upper Nile valley, lasting several centuries.”<sup>165</sup> History also suggests that remnants linked to the achievements of the roots of the Early Church in Africa can still be felt in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Church in Egypt.<sup>166</sup>

Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea contributed to the development of a tradition in which John Mark, the author of the gospel of the same name, once came to Egypt in the service of the Church to establish itself in Egypt. Eusebius said that Saint Mark was the founder and the first Bishop of the Church of Alexandria.<sup>167</sup>

And they say that this Mark was the first that was sent to Egypt, and that he proclaimed the Gospel which he had written, and first established churches in Alexandria. And the multitude of believers, both men and women, that were collected there at the very outset, and lived lives of the most philosophical and excessive asceticism, was so great, that Philo thought it worthwhile to describe their pursuits, their meetings, their entertainments, and their whole manner of life.<sup>168</sup>

The precise date of Saint Mark’s arrival in Alexandria (the old capital of Egypt) to preach, is still unknown. A writer by the name of M.A. Marcus said that various sources point towards different dates, including 48 AD, 55 AD, 58 AD and even 61 AD. However, there is a general consensus that Saint Mark was martyred in Alexandria in 68 AD.<sup>169</sup> Up to this day, the members of the Coptic Church revere Mark as the founder of their Church.<sup>170</sup> There is another tradition, according to which the apostle Thomas also came to Egypt

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<sup>165</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 2.

<sup>166</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 4.

<sup>167</sup>Ahmed Osman wrote that Egyptian traditions, together with Eusebius’s book *History of the Church*, written in Greek around 310 CE, confirms Eusebius’s argument that Saint Mark established the Coptic Church or the first Church of Alexandria (A. Osman, “The origins of the ancient Coptic Church of Egypt,” from [www.ancientorigins.org](http://www.ancientorigins.org)., 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014, 1.

<sup>168</sup> “Eusebius of Caesarea ~ 340 AD CHURCH HISTORY.” L.1, C.17, from file:///D:/Documenta%20Chatolica%20Omnia/99%20-%20Provvi...ibrary/001%20-Da%20Fare/01/EusebiusChurchHistory1-16.htm2006-06-03 11:29:32.

<sup>169</sup>M.A. Marcus, “History of the Coptic Orthodox Church,” from [www.stmary-ottawa.org](http://www.stmary-ottawa.org). [2011], 4. cf. A. Osman, “The origins of the ancient Coptic Church of Egypt,” 1.

<sup>170</sup>The Coptic Church believes that Saint Mark brought Christianity to Egypt during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. They also believe that Mark was among the four evangelists that came to preach Christianity in Alexandria. They argue that the formation of the Coptic Church is a fulfilment of a number of Old Testament prophecies including: “In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and

to perform Christian work before he travelled to India sometime around 52 AD: "Apostle Thomas came to Egypt and did some Christian work there before going on to India. This was about 52 AD."<sup>171</sup> Another unconfirmed tradition also attributed the formation of the Church in Ethiopia to the same apostle Thomas.<sup>172</sup> Carthage, Cyrenaica and Alexandria had made huge impacts in the formation and spread of Christianity in Egypt. As mentioned by Sanneh, early Christian apologists, like Origen and Clement, all had their early foundational training in Alexandria:<sup>173</sup>

One of the strongest centres of Christianity in Egypt was Alexandria....It was in Alexandria that a serious attempt was made to interpret Christian teachings in the light of Greek philosophical thought, a process begun under Jewish scholars. Clement made his mark there, though he was not a native of that city; belonging to an elite, he stressed the element of reason in religion and established it as an important foundation of faith.... One of his [Clement] pupils was Origen (c. 185-253), who was to eclipse him in learning and fame. In 203, after Clement left Alexandria, Origen, then only eighteen, was appointed to succeed his teacher at the Catechetical School which he successfully guided through a time of fierce persecution and gave it an enviable pre-eminence in the Christian world.<sup>174</sup>

The word "Copts" might have been derived from the Greek work "Aegyptus", which literally means Egypt.<sup>175</sup> Marcus noted that the Copts are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians.<sup>176</sup> The Copts in Egypt were still practicing the traditional religions of the pharaohs before the emergence of Christianity in Egypt<sup>177</sup> and lived mostly in rural areas where they tended flocks. When Christianity arrived in Egypt, it was welcomed and practiced mostly by members of the elite class who lived in urban areas. However, sometime around the mid-third century AD, the Egyptians who lived along the Nile embraced Christianity,

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a pillar to the Lord at its border (Isaiah 19:19) ("The Christian Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt "from <http://st-takla.org/Coptic-church-1.html>).

<sup>171</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 4.

<sup>172</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 4.

<sup>173</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 5-6.

<sup>174</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 6.

<sup>175</sup> M.A. Marcus, "History of the Coptic Orthodox Church," 4

<sup>176</sup> M.A. Marcus, "History of the Coptic Orthodox Church," 4.

<sup>177</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 7.

thus leading to the development of more Coptic villages and towns. The Coptic Egyptians faced great opposition, which eventually resulted in their persecution.<sup>178</sup> The persecutions in turn limited Coptic Christian influences on the spread of Christianity outside of Egypt. As a result, the Coptic Church then concentrated on developing comprehensive liturgical and sacramental ordinances within Egypt. The strength of the Coptic Church was boosted in the fourth century CE when they translated the Scripture into Coptic.<sup>179</sup>

Sanneh, who wrote in 1983, said that the Coptic Church has over five million members;<sup>180</sup> yet they are still regarded as a minority group in Egypt due to the influence of Islam, which now dominates all other religions in Egypt.<sup>181</sup> With regard to the influences of Africans in the spread of Christianity, Sanneh suggested that:

But whatever success there was in those early beginnings some of it could be credited to African Christians, some of whom met Jesus personally and were present in Jerusalem, Antioch and other places when the Christian movement began. Similarly some of the Apostles appear to have landed on African soil, encouraging the setting up of Churches.<sup>182</sup>

It is important to note that 20<sup>th</sup> century studies on the spread of Christianity gave credit to Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia and other parts of North Africa as the earliest regions to have spread Christianity to other parts of Africa, particularly within its first fourteen hundred years of existence.<sup>183</sup> Historians Sundkler and Steed

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<sup>178</sup>L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 7. Christianity gained popularity in Egypt to such an extent that the Romans were concerned that the Copts rejected the divinity of the Roman Emperor. Because of this, the emperor Diocletian (284-305) persecuted the Coptic Christians fiercely (M. A. Marcos, "History of the Coptic Orthodox Church," 5).

<sup>179</sup> M.A. Marcos, "History of the Coptic Orthodox Church," 14-15 cf. L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 8.

<sup>180</sup>L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 8. However, research conducted in 2011 by the Pew Research Centre's Forum on Religion and Public Life shows that the population of Coptic Christians is about 5.3 per cent of the total Egyptian population; translating into 4.3 million out of the 80 million (according to the 2006 Egyptian census) people in Egypt. See E. Harrington, "Number of Coptic Christian in Egypt is far less than media estimate," <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/number-coptic-christians-egypt-far-less-media-esti...> [2011], 1-2.

<sup>181</sup> Sanneh said that Eusebius once said that he himself was in Thebes where he saw the persecution of the Coptic Church (L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 7-8).

<sup>182</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 13.

<sup>183</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7-34. The establishment of the Church in Alexandria is important because the Alexandrian Church has helped in the spread of Christianity to other parts of Africa, in part thanks to the work of Christian apologists. Marcus noted "it is noticeable that, with the fall of colonialism, the Africans look to Egypt for religious leadership and spiritual guidance, since it is

noted that “there is a generalization that the message of the Messiah came from the east proclaimed by Jewish individuals into Egypt and Africa.”<sup>184</sup> However, the role of the Egyptians, together with other North African Christians in the spread of Christianity to West Africa and to Yorubaland in particular, is not found to be comprehensively documented by modern authors. Modern studies, especially those used in this research, support the school of thought which proposes that Christianity only came to Nigeria during the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE; led in greater part by missionaries from mission organisations, most of whom did not originate from Egypt or from the Ancient Near East.<sup>185</sup> So the question arises, from where did Christianity spread to Nigeria and to Yorubaland in particular? There are two periods or phases during which Christianity spread to Nigeria. The first phase of the spread of Christianity to Nigeria started from the 1500s and the second phase, which clearly affected the Yorubaland, started sometime around the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.1.2 *The first phase of the spread of Christianity in Nigeria*

Two major groups from foreign countries, which entered into Nigeria during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, have influenced the spread of Christianity in Nigeria. The first group included explorers and traders, while the second group consisted from the Christian missionaries themselves. Christian missionaries first came to the Southern parts of Nigeria before they arrived in Northern Nigeria.<sup>186</sup> Christian missionary work only

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the only indigenous African Church.” Coptic churches are now established in Kuwait, Lebanon, Europe, England, North and South America, the Caribbean Island and Australia (M.A. Marcus, “History of the Coptic Orthodox Church,” 17).

<sup>184</sup>The Jews who converted to Christianity, and who represented a reasonable population in Alexandria, also contributed to the spread of Christianity. More so, the first Christian group from Judea who came to Egypt appeared as missionaries, and while they sought refuge in synagogues, they equally preached the Gospel (B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 7-9).

<sup>185</sup> This subject is discussed below. Studies like *Certificate history of Nigeria* (2008) by Omolewa, *West African Christianity* by Sanneh (1983) and the article by Adewale and Abu (2013), all supports the suggestion that Christianity started in Nigeria around the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>186</sup>M. Omolewa, M., 2008, *Certificate history of Nigeria* (Ikeja: Longman, 2008), 136. Mr. Michael Omolewa is a professor of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan. He studied “historical research methodology and preparation of thesis” at the Institute of Historical Research in the School of Advance Study, University of London from 1968 to 1970. Omolewa is one of Nigeria’s popular historians who had obtained many international and local awards and was also a member of the Historical Society of Nigeria. One of Omolewa’s popular books is *Certificate history of Nigeria*, which was first published in 1986 and reprinted in 2008. In the book, Omolewa gave a detailed history of the beginning of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. It is for this reason that I consulted Omolewa’s book extensively in the compilation of this thesis. Another author, Sadiku, wrote on “The Practice of Christianity’ in

started in Northern Nigeria after the Niger Expedition of 1841 and was led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).<sup>187</sup>

The trade between Portugal and Benin in the Delta region of Nigeria<sup>188</sup> started before Portuguese missionaries began preaching Christianity in Benin.<sup>189</sup> The African slaves who were found in Portugal around 1441 were not from Benin but from the upper Guinea Coast.<sup>190</sup> Sanneh agreed with Ume that formal trade started between Nigeria and Portugal in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>191</sup> The first Portuguese voyage to Benin took place in 1475 and was led by Ruy de Sequeira. In 1480 an estimated 400 slaves were obtained from Benin by two caravels, which made their voyage to “the slave River” (Rio dos Escravos) in the Niger Delta.<sup>192</sup> First contact between the Portuguese and the king of Benin might have taken place in 1485 during an expedition in the Delta area and its immediate hinterland, and was led by Joao Afonso d’Aveiro.<sup>193</sup> The Portuguese also traded pepper produced in Benin and their love for trading pepper urged Portuguese rulers to ban other European merchants from trading pepper produced in Benin. The mutually beneficial trade relationship between Portuguese traders and the leaders of Benin created the impression among Portuguese missionaries that they could introduce Christianity in West Africa by making Benin their starting point.<sup>194</sup>

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Yorubaland, yet he did not discuss in detail the history of Christianity in Yorubaland during the time of Samuel Johnson (M.NO.O. Sadiku, ‘The practice of Christianity’ in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (African World Press, Trenton, 2004), 125-136. Ume discussed some aspects of the history of Christianity in Southern Nigeria, but he did not write extensively about Christianity and culture in Yorubaland (cf. K.E. Ume, *The rise of British colonialism in southern Nigeria, 1700-1900: A study of the Bight of Benin and Bonny*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1980), 150-178. Omolewa discussed Christianity and how the people of Southern Nigeria responded to Christianity while upholding their individual cultures during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>187</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140-141.

<sup>188</sup>J.E. Aliogo, *Up to date current affairs*, (Enugu: Dejo Publication, 2012), 26.

<sup>189</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 36.

<sup>190</sup> Ume, K.E., *The rise of British colonialism in southern Nigeria, 1700-1900: A study of the Bight of Benin and Bonny*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1980), 74.

<sup>191</sup>Adewale and Abu say that Europeans first came to the shores of West Africa in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 121.

<sup>192</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 36. The possibility exists that Portuguese traders conducted business in Nigeria before they entered Gambia and Sierra Leone. Curtin, Feierman, Thompson and Vansina believes that Portuguese influence on the slave trade in Sierra Leone was felt only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (P. Curtin, S. Feierman, L. Thomson & J. Vansina, *African history* (New York: Longman Group Company, 1989), 231.

<sup>193</sup> Ume, K.E., *The rise of British colonialism in southern Nigeria*, 74.

<sup>194</sup> L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 36-37.



The earliest known missionaries to have visited the Nigerian Delta region were the Portuguese, who came to Benin in 1515 and later to Warri in 1570. These missionaries were accompanied by Portuguese ships belonging to Portuguese explorers.<sup>195</sup> The missionaries began their quest for conversion by mainly preaching to the South-South Nigerian chiefs and kings, believing that the conversion of rulers would automatically lead to the conversion of their subordinates.<sup>196</sup> For example, in 1538, the Oba (King) of Benin and his son Domingos were both baptised as believers in Christianity and, as a result, the Oba decided to send his son Domingos to study in Portugal.<sup>197</sup> The Oba's action gained the interest of the people of Benin, which subsequently led to the widespread acceptance of Portuguese missionaries by the people of Benin.<sup>198</sup> For example, by 1733, a number of people in Benin chose to be baptised. Some of the missionaries' achievements included the building of churches in Benin and Warri, along with the adoption of the Portuguese language as a language of communication between locals and missionaries during court cases. In addition, Christian relics and signs were seen at the King's palace in Warri through the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>199</sup>

According to Omolewa,<sup>200</sup> Adewale and Abu, this first phase of the activities performed by Christian missionaries in Southern Nigeria yielded limited achievements for many reasons. Many traditional leaders, who invited the missionaries into their territories, did so primarily for political and economic reasons. For example, the Oba of Benin was more concerned about obtaining arms to fight his enemies than he was concerned about Christianity.<sup>201</sup> Also, the Olu of Warri invited the Portuguese missionaries primarily to help him fight against Benin.<sup>202</sup> The missionaries' misconception, that once a ruler or a king is converted, all other members of the ruler's community would automatically be converted, therefore played a role in limiting Christian influence during the first phase of missionary movement in Nigeria.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 136.

<sup>196</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 122.

<sup>197</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 136.

<sup>198</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 136.

<sup>199</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 136.

<sup>200</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 137.

<sup>201</sup> Adewale and Abu said that the Oba of Benin was not interested in Christianity when the Portuguese missionaries preached to him (O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 122).

<sup>202</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 137.

<sup>203</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 122.

Despite the acceptance of the local indigenes in Southern Nigeria to be baptised by foreign Christian missionaries, the indigenes believed that their traditional religions were superior to Christianity.<sup>204</sup> The missionaries who first came to Southern Nigeria refused to appreciate traditional practices of the local people. Adewale and Abu mentioned that in 1651, some of the missionaries attempted a protest against the practice of child sacrifice in Benin, but were subsequently expelled from Benin Kingdom.<sup>205</sup> Many local people in Southern Nigeria thought that the missionaries, European imperialists and European traders had the same goal; to colonise the locals. This belief negatively influenced the attitudes of Southern Nigerians towards the acceptance of the Christian faith.<sup>206</sup>

In addition, the missionaries did not spend much time teaching Southern Nigerians about the Bible. Rather, they emphasised water baptism, which caused many people to be baptised without even fully understanding the Bible.<sup>207</sup> The missionaries suffered from inadequate funding, personnel shortages and transportation issues. In addition, their failure to understand indigenous languages also limited their influence. Adewale and Abu said that some of the missionaries were frustrated and decided to abandon their mission work, mainly because indigenous rulers began to turn their backs on Christian missions.<sup>208</sup> Omolewa said that in 1740, an unknown member of the French Capuchin Missionary Society described the Warri people as a people that are full of witchcraft.<sup>209</sup> A combination of factors therefore caused the first phase of Christian missionary movement in Nigeria to suffer.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>204</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 137.

<sup>205</sup>The missionaries who were deported because they protested against the practice of human sacrifice in Benin were mostly Spanish and Italian Capuchins (O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 122).

<sup>206</sup>During the time of Samuel Johnson, the British government, who colonised Nigeria, were involved in peace negotiation over the Yoruba internal wars (M. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian," 172).

<sup>207</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 137.

<sup>208</sup> The Oba of Benin in 1515 assured the missionaries of his support towards their mission work, but when they returned in 1538, he rejected them (O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 122).

<sup>209</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 137.

<sup>210</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 137.

### 2.1.3 *The second phase of the spread of Christianity in Nigeria*

The second phase of the missionary movement in Nigeria started in the early 1900s. During this phase, the missionaries were able to cover a wider part of Nigeria through their preaching. In addition, Christian converts in Nigeria were also being trained to become missionaries by foreign mission organisations.<sup>211</sup> The second phase of the missionary movement in Nigeria was successful for many reasons. The abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament in 1807 contributed to the training and recruitment of African missionaries by foreign missionaries.<sup>212</sup> Settlements were formed in Sierra Leone and in Liberia to accommodate slave “repatriates” or “recaptives.” Two groups of repatriates contributed to the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland: the Sierra Leonean and Brazilian repatriates or returnees. The Brazilian repatriates returned to Yorubaland in the mid-1850s to evangelise. In 1859, the Brazilian returnees who came to Lagos numbered 130 individuals, an estimate which grew to 1200 by 1872.<sup>213</sup>

The Brazilian returnees established a community called “Portuguese Town”, which hosted highly skilled traders, middlemen and builders. The Brazilian returnees built a Catholic church in Lagos, which became famous in 1881.<sup>214</sup> It should be noted that the Sierra Leone group of repatriates who returned to Yorubaland, recorded greater success in their missions than their Brazilian counterparts. This thesis focuses on the Sierra Leonean group of repatriates. The fact that Samuel Johnson and his parents lived in Sierra Leone<sup>215</sup> is another reason that gave the Sierra Leonean repatriates an edge over the Brazilian and Liberian repatriates in this research.

The Yoruba repatriates stationed in Sierra Leone were famous, as they were the largest and most socially organised group of repatriates in Sierra Leone, when compared to other repatriates from Congo or Senegal for example.<sup>216</sup> They greeted one another with the expression *Eku*. Because of this, the Yoruba

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<sup>211</sup>Cf. S. Stevens, “The Yorubas and early missionary work among them,” 1-2.

<sup>212</sup>In 1807, the British Parliament forbade their subjects and colonies from practicing slave trade and afterward, the law became global (C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 34.

<sup>213</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 947, 959.

<sup>214</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 947, 959.

<sup>215</sup>C.M. Fyle, *The history of Serra Leone: A concise introduction* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Limited, 1981), 5-6.

<sup>216</sup>C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra*, 48.

repatriates in Sierra Leone soon became identified as the *Aku* people.<sup>217</sup> Many repatriates, who were of Yoruba descent, desired to return to their country of origin, but were prevented from doing so by the on-going and fiercely fought internal Yoruba wars. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Yoruba began to return to Yorubaland from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Sadiku said that it was during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Christianity clearly found its way into Yorubaland through the influence of the *Aku*.<sup>218</sup>

Furthermore, it was in these two settlements (Sierra Leone and Liberia) that West Africans were trained for evangelisation by the Wesleyan Missionary Society together with the Church Missionary Society. Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman of the Wesleyan Missionary Society arrived in Badagry on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1842. At this time, there were already 300 repatriates who settled in Badagry.<sup>219</sup> In December 17, 1842, a sailing vessel named “The Wilberforce” owned by a Liberated African Communicant and packed with repatriates arrived in Badagry. Adewale and Abu said that the return of the sailing vessel was sponsored by the Church Missionary Society.<sup>220</sup> The abolition of the slave trade, which allowed many repatriates to return home, influenced many Nigerians to become missionaries in their respective regions of origin.<sup>221</sup> Many traditional rulers or chiefs in Nigeria continued to develop interest in associating with missionaries, mainly for security or political support during the second phase of Christian missions in Southern Nigeria.<sup>222</sup> The abolition of the slave trade had also encouraged the traditional chiefs to associate with the repatriates, whom they thought would connect them with other foreign missionaries. For example, Abeokuta had

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<sup>217</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, M.N.O. “The practice of Christianity,” in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.) *Understanding Yoruba life and culture* (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 125.

<sup>218</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 125.

<sup>219</sup>O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 124.

<sup>220</sup>O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 124.

<sup>221</sup>In the late 1700s, before the British Parliament passed a law banning the practice of slave trade in 1807, slaves in Britain were already being repatriated to Sierra Leone “The first batch of freed slaves to leave the Britain soil left on April 8, 1787 for Sierra Leone” (O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 123).

<sup>222</sup>There were instances when African traditional rulers sought help from foreign and local missionaries. For example, Sodeke (a Yoruba chief) requested assistance from missionaries to aid his fight against King Ghezo of Dahomey (M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 138). In other instances, traditional rulers in Nigeria refused to accept the missionaries and their teachings. For example, the Sudan United Mission (SUM) extended her missionary work towards Plateau State in North-Central Nigeria since 1914. They built a hospital in Du, but traditional leaders of Du in Plateau State banned their subordinates from using hospital medicines or from going to the hospital to seek medical attention. The traditional healers in Du thought that their jobs were being threatened by the teachings of missionaries who dissuaded local people from believing in the healing powers of African spirits (B. D. Gyang, “The effect and influence of the SUM in Du District, 1907-1990,” BD Thesis, The Department of Church History, The Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Bukuru, 1994, 20-35).

often been under attack by Dahomey and by Lagos.<sup>223</sup> The military ruler of Abeokuta, Sodeke, had at one time invited missionaries after listening to the advice of the repatriates. He thought missionaries could help him secure arms to fight Dahomey.<sup>224</sup> At a point in time, some repatriates had helped Sodeke and when Sodeke saw the missionaries he said:

My people [the Saro repatriates] told me they were sure their friends in England would not neglect them; but I fear they would not come so far. Now I see you, and my heart rejoices; and as you have come to visit us, I hope the English will never leave us.<sup>225</sup>

So, one important factor which influenced the entry of Christian missionaries into Yorubaland was the invitations local chiefs made to missionaries. Secondly, the Yoruba believed in the power of the Ifa god (one of Yoruba deities), who they believed could bless or curse them. The Yoruba, especially during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, consulted Ifa diviners whenever they were in need. For example, in the 1830s, Sodeke consulted Ifa diviners on whether to allow missionaries into Abeokuta or not.<sup>226</sup> The diviners encouraged him to hearken and to love the missionaries. In 1851, King Gezo of Dahomey arraigned between ten to fifteen thousand armies to fight Sodeke and to capture Abeokuta. Christian missionaries, together with the British government in Southern Nigeria, supported Sodeke by sending him some military aid. This assistance gave Sodeke victory over King Ghezo. The people of Abeokuta praised the Christian missionaries and attributed their victory to the God of the missionaries. The persecution of Christians in Abeokuta was lessened as a result of the victory won by Sodeke, which was secured through the support provided by missionaries. This victory won by Sodeke encouraged other Yoruba kings to start inviting missionaries into their respective regions. Between 1852 and 1857, Christian missionaries were already making impact in Ibadan, Ijaye, Oyo, Ilesha and Ogbomosho.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 138.

<sup>224</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 138.

<sup>225</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 138.

<sup>226</sup> B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 949-950 cf. K.O. Olabimtan, "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, [2009], 238-239.

<sup>227</sup> B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 949-950.

Like Sodeke, who asked for, and duly received, military support from the missionaries and the British government in Southern Nigeria, King Akintoye of Lagos appealed to the missionaries for assistance. Through the support provided by the missionaries, Akintoye was crowned as the Oba of Lagos and his arch rival Dosumu was dethroned. In addition, in the Niger Delta region, missionaries were invited to build schools, to teach and to develop skills among people so that the region could become economically buoyant. Through their involvement in such activities, numerous missionary societies contributed immensely to the spread of Christianity to Yorubaland. The Wesleyan or Methodist missionaries were the first mission organisation to begin work in Nigeria in 1842. The Wesleyan missionaries established mission stations in Lagos, Ibadan and Abeokuta. The Church of England also established its own mission stations in Badagry, Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ilesa from 1842 to 1845.<sup>228</sup> The Roman Catholic mission, which consisted of the Society of African Mission and of the Holy Ghost Fathers, opened new mission stations in Lagos, Ibadan (Yorubaland), Onitsha, Owerri and Aba (South-East Nigeria) from 1860 to 1871.<sup>229</sup>

At Ogbomosho, Lagos and Abeokuta, the Southern American Baptist Mission also founded their stations since 1862.<sup>230</sup> The Qua Iboe Missions, which was founded by Samuel A. Bill in 1887, today boasts several branches all over Nigeria. The Qua Iboe missions started when the Protestant part of the Ireland Church came to Rivers state.<sup>231</sup> The Scottish Presbyterian Church established mission stations at Creek Town and in Duke Town in 1846 and was led by H. M. Waddell.<sup>232</sup> The missionary interest of almost all mission societies who came to Nigeria to establish their stations in Abeokuta caused the region to be dubbed the “sunrise within the tropics”. It was from Abeokuta that many parts of Yorubaland were evangelised.<sup>233</sup>

During the second phase of the missionary movement in Nigeria, the first recorded baptism, according to Omolewa, took place on 5 January 1845. The Scottish Presbyterian Church also had its first baptism in the South-Eastern parts of Nigeria in 1853.<sup>234</sup> The various missionaries who came to Nigeria built schools,

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<sup>228</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 124.

<sup>229</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 127 cf. M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>230</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 126.

<sup>231</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 128.

<sup>232</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>233</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>234</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

hospitals and agricultural plantations.<sup>235</sup> The second missionary phase in Southern Nigeria, which started around the 19<sup>th</sup> century, recorded greater success compared to that of the first phase, which took place during the fifteen century. Omolewa gave reasons for the 19<sup>th</sup> century success of doing missions in Southern Nigeria:

Repatriates who were originally citizens of Southern Nigeria and who returned to Nigeria were given opportunities to evangelise. The repatriates also served as interpreters and preachers.<sup>236</sup> The repatriates who returned to Nigeria had sufficient contacts with local chiefs and they were able to convince the local chiefs to accept the faith offered to them by white (foreign) missionaries.<sup>237</sup>

Unlike the missionaries of the first phase, those of the second phase displayed an appreciation of the culture of black people in Southern Nigeria<sup>238</sup>. Despite the growth of Christianity recorded during the second phase of the missionary movement in Nigeria, problems were encountered. Omolewa pointed at some of the challenges faced by the missionaries as follows:

Many Southern Nigerians regarded the teachings of the missionaries as strange, while some missionaries still had no regard for African traditional religions.<sup>239</sup> Certain traditional leaders, like the Awujale of Ijebuland, also refused to allow missionaries to live together with the local people, citing that it was not within the wishes of their ancestors for a white man to live alongside a black man. More specifically, the Awujale of Ijebuland once said "Our ancestors never handed it down to us, that a white man ever lived among them."<sup>240</sup> The Awujale also believed that the white missionaries were involved in politics as, for example, missionaries assisted in the dethronement of chief Kosoko, the Oba of Lagos who fled for

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<sup>235</sup>O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 125-128 cf. M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 138-139.

<sup>236</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>237</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>238</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>239</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140. In 1856, the Efik people of the Old Calabar in South-South Nigeria resisted the activities of the missionaries. They believed that the missionaries were not obedient to Efik traditional laws, and that the missionaries were encouraging Christians to resist all forms of Efik traditional laws, which encouraged total submission to the king and to the gods (K.E. Ume, *The rise of British colonialism in Southern Nigeria*, 163-164.

<sup>240</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140.

Ijebu.<sup>241</sup> The Awujale thought that the missionaries could temper with his political influence as well, so he feared them.<sup>242</sup>

More so, in 1867, some of the missionaries themselves were involved in local politics to the point that they began to encourage slaves to declare themselves free. This action led to the expulsion of some Christians from Abeokuta.<sup>243</sup> The upset arose in Badagry, as some local people regarded the slave trade as their main source of income; they did not cooperate with missionaries because they thought the missionaries supported the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>244</sup> In addition, there was an insufficient level of discipline among some of the missionaries. For example, in 1864 a missionary was said to have sexually defiled an Ijaw girl.<sup>245</sup> More so, the responses of the missionaries to Islam and to colonialism also influenced the flow of Christianity in Southern Nigeria. The missionaries were determined to limit the growth Islam in Southern Nigeria in pursuance of the growth of Christianity.<sup>246</sup>

The missionary influences, with regards to the education of the local people within four-wall classrooms, served as an invaluable tool in the propagation of the Christian faith. Many Nigerians became Christians through the prioritisation of education among the local people. However, in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Yoruba converts, who were educated in the four-wall classrooms, had conflicts of interest with the foreign base mission organisations and their staffers.<sup>247</sup> For example, the poor treatment of Nigerian priests in the Anglican Church Missionary Society; the fact that local people were not allowed

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<sup>241</sup>Kosoko was a Yoruba king who supported the slave trade for his economic gains (K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," (PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal), 35-36).

<sup>242</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140.

<sup>243</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140.

<sup>244</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140.

<sup>245</sup> Ijaw is located in South-South Nigeria (M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140).

<sup>246</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139-140. Cf. K.E. Ume, *The rise of British colonialism in Southern Nigeria*, 150). For example, after the death of the Bale (King) of Ibadan in 1858, the Muslim community in Ibadan blamed white missionaries for the slow growth of Islam in Ibadan. They even threatened to fight and expel all white missionaries from Ibadan, including the Yorubas who also preached Christianity (K. Olabimtan [2011a], "David, Hinderer 1819 to 1890" *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 3). Some of the missionaries were not kind towards Islam, with some supporting the activities of the British government in Nigeria. The CMS secretary of Yoruba Missions, J.B Wood and Lieutenant-Governor of Lagos, W.B. Griffiths, intervened in the Yoruba internal wars around 1881 (M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, Historian," 172).

<sup>247</sup>O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 129.



to occupy administrative positions in the church; and the irresponsible perception of Nigerian culture by some missionaries, promoted the indigenisation of Christianity in Yorubaland.<sup>248</sup> Missionaries like Townsend (a leading CMS missionary in Yorubaland) refused to submit to African bishops despite his tolerance of their traditional practices in Yorubaland.<sup>249</sup> From 1850s to 1890s, there was an increased misunderstanding between the foreign missionaries and the local pastors in Yorubaland. One of the reasons for this misunderstanding included the enforcement of the polygamy rule by some local pastors. Another reason was the economic depression of the 1880s, which lessened foreign financial support for missionaries. These circumstances created a rift between the clergy and laity and, as a result, the African churches emerged.<sup>250</sup>

A number of Yoruba, who loved their culture, were not impressed with the missionaries who taught that Christianity should be practiced separately from the Yoruba culture. For example, the adoption of a non-native name at baptism in Yorubaland started in Sierra Leone and is still practiced among Churches in Nigeria today.<sup>251</sup> Some Yoruba Christians felt that the practice of giving biblical names to Yoruba Christians was un-African.<sup>252</sup> Another problem that affected the early spread of Christianity in Yorubaland was the non-submission of foreign missionaries to the control of local Yoruba pastors. The Yoruba Christians of the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century reacted against the influence of foreign missionaries on their land. They therefore started their own churches that were willing to embrace Christianity, with the option of either accepting or not accepting certain aspects of Yoruba culture. A distinction could henceforth be made between the mission churches, started by foreign missionaries and the African churches, with the latter

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<sup>248</sup>O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 129.

<sup>249</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 126; B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 952. Rev. Townsend was one of those who believed that liberal education should not be taught to pupils attending missionary schools, as he believed that liberal education would not equip the pupils in spreading Christianity properly. He emphasised that pupils in missionary schools ought to be taught how to embrace their local cultures and to use it as a tool in spreading Christianity. Bühler's emphasis on the need for pupils to be fully equipped with liberal education brought about mistrust between Townsend and Bühler (K. Olabimtan [2011c] "Bühler , Gottlieb Friederick 1829 to 1865," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2).

<sup>250</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 126-127. Also, around the 1880s, the economies of the United Kingdom, France and the USA suffered an economic recession, thus reducing their financial capabilities in term of sending missionaries to Africa (B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 950). The African churches are churches that encourage compliance to the biblical ordinances in combination with certain aspects of African traditional religions.

<sup>251</sup>C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 42.

<sup>252</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 126.

being the Aladura churches and the charismatic movements.<sup>253</sup> Understanding the histories of these African churches is crucial in understanding of the history and the influence of Christianity in Yorubaland.<sup>254</sup>

The mission churches were founded by mainstream missionary organisations like the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society.<sup>255</sup> These missionary organisations started to come to Nigeria in the 1840s, providing formal education, healthcare and some basic amenities to the local people. As Sadiku pointed out:

Even today, the schools run by missions in Yorubaland are still greater in number than those run by all other agencies combined, including government schools. The missions have left a permanent stamp on the social scene far out of proportion to the number of their converts.<sup>256</sup>

The mission churches made a great contribution to the translation of Christian literatures into the Yoruba language. Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther was a missionary trained by the mission churches and he contributed to the translation of the Bible into Yoruba in 1843.<sup>257</sup> He also contributed to the spread of Christianity in West Africa.<sup>258</sup> Crowther was born in 1806 in Osogun, a town within the Old Oyo Empire, and was captured and sold as a slave to European merchants in 1821.<sup>259</sup> However, he was fortunate enough to be liberated by a British naval anti-slave patrol in April 1822, and was taken to Sierra Leone to meet with other slave repatriates.<sup>260</sup> He became one of the first set of students to have studied at Fourah

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<sup>253</sup> The African churches started around the 1890s (B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 950-951, 953).

<sup>254</sup> M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 126.

<sup>255</sup> The beginning of the Baptist mission in Nigeria started through the voyage of Thomas T. Bowen, Harvey Goodale and Robert F. Hill in 1849 (O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 126).

<sup>256</sup> M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 126.

<sup>257</sup> K.E. Ume, *The rise of British colonialism in Southern Nigeria*, 154-155.

<sup>258</sup> K.E. Ume, *The rise of British colonialism in Southern Nigeria*, 154-155.

<sup>259</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 52.

<sup>260</sup> After his ordination as a minister in 1843, Crowther returned to Yorubaland, where he reunited with his mother and other relatives. His extended family members celebrated his return to Yorubaland extravagantly, as they thought he had vanished forever due to being captured into slavery. His return was therefore a great relief for many. Crowther was greatly respected because of the education he received in England (C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 52).

Bay College in Sierra Leone in 1827. After his studies at Fourah Bay College, he went to England and studied further until he was ordained as a minister in England in 1843.<sup>261</sup> Two years later, he returned to Nigeria, served as a pastor in Badagry and relocated to Abeokuta, where he lived until 1855. Crowther was ordained as a bishop in 1864 at Canterbury Cathedral by Charles Longley, the archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>262</sup> Crowther was one of the first to conduct open air preaching in Abeokuta, and often preached to people who were gathered under trees. The Egba (king) of Abeokuta admired Crowther's passion for Christianity and the Egba people began to invite both white and black missionaries to visit and work in Abeokuta. This was because they thought Crowther was influenced by white people. Crowther died in 1892.<sup>263</sup>

Also, after the death of Sodeke (a warrior who led Ibadan) in January 1845, the missionaries continued to preach in Yorubaland until 1849, when another wave of persecution upon Christians emerged.<sup>264</sup> Christians were not submissive to the Ifa diviners; they refused to consult the Babalawos (traditional & spiritual healers) and refused to practice certain Yoruba traditional rites (like ancestor worship and sacrifice to the dead). The non-submission of Yoruba Christians to the authority of the Ifa diviners angered the Yoruba people who practiced the Yoruba traditional religions. As a sign of their displeasure with the influence of Christianity in Yorubaland, followers of the Yoruba traditional religions whipped Christian women and put them in shackles.<sup>265</sup> Some Christian leaders began to show more tolerance towards Yoruba traditional practices. For example, a missionary named Townsend became the leader of the Abeokuta CMS mission in 1846 and served the CMS for about twenty years. Townsend did not preach against the followers of traditional religions or against traditional religious practices during his twenty years of service to the CMS. Crowther also did not resist the Yoruba Ogboni cult. Rather, he allowed Alake Christians to continue with the practice of traditional rituals during his ten years of service as the secretary

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<sup>261</sup>Cf. O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 123.

<sup>262</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 950-951, 953.

<sup>263</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 948-949.

<sup>264</sup> O.O. Adewale & O.F. Abu, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 124.

<sup>265</sup> B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 950-951, 953.

of Alake, the titular head of Egba.<sup>266</sup> The writing of the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland in the nineteenth century cannot be complete without mentioning the role played by Crowther.<sup>267</sup>

Around the late 1890s, when the African churches began to emerge, the entire Yorubaland seemed to have remained with three major church divisions: Roman Catholic, Protestant and the African churches. In order to admit more Africans into their congregation, the African churches allowed the practice of polygamy among their members, and they allowed polygamists to also participate in the Lord's Supper. In contrast, these practices were not allowed by the mission churches.<sup>268</sup> The African churches emphasised evangelism as a priority for all church members. Other features of the African churches are that they introduced the use of Yoruba drums during their worships; composed and sang Yoruba local hymns; emphasised the need for the churches to be able to meet the physical needs of one another; and allowed members of certain Yoruba cult groups to be part of their churches. For instance, members of the Ogboni cult were not condemned but admitted as normal church members. The most popular among all of the Yoruba African churches are the Aladura churches. The Aladura churches are popular mainly because their members believe that the Yoruba culture is non-contradictory to the Christian faith.<sup>269</sup> The motor of the Aladura churches is prayer, hence the name Aladura (meaning "one who prays"). The Aladura church members believe that the mission churches were not in a position to address their spiritual, cultural, moral and material needs hence; they needed to start their own branched churches which would address their own concerns.<sup>270</sup>

The Aladura churches started in 1918 and accepted members from other African churches. They allowed pastors to worship Jesus Christ and still visit Babalawos (traditional healers) or be members of the Ogboni secret cult.<sup>271</sup> Many uneducated people were pleased with the vision of the Aladura churches, which aimed at solving peoples personal problems, thus many people became church members because the

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<sup>266</sup> B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 951.

<sup>267</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 948-949. He was the first black bishop in Africa in modern times. Despite his achievements in translating the Bible to Yoruba, he failed at the end because he was treated badly by his white colleagues.

<sup>268</sup> M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 127.

<sup>269</sup> M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 127.

<sup>270</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 127.

<sup>271</sup>B. Sundkler & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, 950-951.

church valued their individual problems.<sup>272</sup> The Aladura churches, headquartered in Yorubaland, made a great contribution to the growth of Christianity in Yorubaland. They are now divided into four groups namely: the Apostolic churches, the Cherubim and Seraphim churches, the Church of the Lord, and the Celestial Church.<sup>273</sup> All of these churches believe in the worship of Angels and their members wear white garments during worship, except for the apostolic churches. Another unique peculiarity that binds all these four churches together is the similarity of their beliefs, the emphasis on prayer, and observing the existence of the spiritual world. These churches emphasised rituals involving the use of holy water, rituals involving the use of the psalms, the power of the Bible to do as it says literally (namely the power of God to heal the sick without the use of native or modern medicines), and the reality of establishing God's kingdom on earth. They have high regard for the God of Israel.<sup>274</sup>

The introduction of Christianity to Yorubaland made a number of improvements in the life of the Yoruba people. Infighting among the Yoruba stopped, as Christians regarded each other as a family. Inter-group marriages have also improved among the Yoruba, to the point that an Ijesha man can now marry an Ijebu woman, provided both of them are Christians. This marriage practice was not allowed before the emergence of Christianity in Yorubaland.<sup>275</sup> The foreign missionaries also came with an intention of boosting the economy of Yorubaland, emphasising agricultural development through crop production and animal husbandry. For example, cocoa, which was non-indigenous plant, was brought to Yorubaland in 1890. Since then, cocoa has become one of the main boosters of the Nigerian economy. It stood as the top export until the discovery of crude oil in the 1960s.<sup>276</sup> By the 1960s, the Yoruba were highly educated. This was mainly due to the establishment of local institutions by foreign missionaries, coupled with the opportunities presented by missionary organisations for individuals to study abroad. The Yoruba themselves began to evangelise other Nigerians and eventually, the world at large. Due to Christian missionary influence, the English language is now accepted in Yorubaland, local people wear suits especially for preaching engagements, and monogamy is seemingly imposed as a norm.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>272</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 127.

<sup>273</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 128.

<sup>274</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 128.

<sup>275</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 129, 134, 139.

<sup>276</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 129, 134, 139.

<sup>277</sup>M. N. O. Sadiku, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 129, 134, 139.

## 2.2 Islam

### 2.2.1 *The spread of Islam in Nigeria*

After the death of the Prophet Mohammed (sometime around June 8, 632 CE),<sup>278</sup> the Islamic faith he established spread to other parts of the world. The teachings of the Prophet were spread by the Prophet's followers throughout North Africa from 702 to 708 CE.<sup>279</sup> According to Falola and Heaton, Islam arrived into Nigeria in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when the king of Kanem, King Humai, converted to Islam after traders had preached to him between 1085 and 1097.<sup>280</sup> Traders from Mali who were Muslims came to Nigeria to propagate their faith in Islam.<sup>281</sup> After their arrival at Kanem, in the Borno state in the 1080s, the Islamic faith was firstly centered at Njimi, where many traders from Mali settled before they and their faith spread to Ngazargamu.<sup>282</sup>

Furthermore, the Saifawa dynasty relocated<sup>283</sup> from Njimi to Ngazargamu during the 11<sup>th</sup> century; a move which contributed to the establishment of Borno state. It was from Borno that Islam began to spread west to other parts of the Hausaland in Northern Nigeria. Islam became grounded in the Hausa states of Nigeria from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, because of the trading activities of the Wangarawa<sup>284</sup> traders, who also came from Mali.<sup>285</sup> Around the 14<sup>th</sup> century, not many Hausa people accepted Islam as their traditional faith. The few Hausas who claimed to have accepted Islam as their primary faith continued to practice their traditional religions alongside Islam.<sup>286</sup> Omolewa said that those Hausas, who claimed to have converted to Islam, did so primarily for the economic opportunities the Wangarawa traders offered to them. The Hausas

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<sup>278</sup> P. Sookhdeo, *A Christian pocket guide to Islam*, 13.

<sup>279</sup> E.H. Skolfield, *The false prophet*, 142.

<sup>280</sup> T. Falola & M.M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29.

<sup>281</sup> T. Falola & M.M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 29.

<sup>282</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 90.

<sup>283</sup> Referred to the name of the kings who ruled the Kanem-Borno Empire. Kanem used to be in western Chad but after 1380, it became a part of Borno in North-Eastern Nigeria (cf. D. Lange, 2004, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*. Dettelbach: J.H.Roll, 2004, 280, 284).

<sup>284</sup> A group of Mande traders from Mali.

<sup>285</sup> T. Falola & M.M. Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 29.

<sup>286</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 92-93.

might also have accepted Islam as a proposed solution to the internal conflicts among them. They thought that accepting Islam would unite them and that Islam would end their internal dissent.<sup>287</sup> Some of the Hausas who accepted Islam refused to abandon their traditional religions and continued to practice Islam together with their traditional beliefs. Uthman dan Fodio, the founder of Islamic jihad in West Africa, was not happy with the Muslims who practiced Islam together with their traditional religions. Thus, dan Fodio decided that Islam needed reformation and purification, as it was not practiced properly.<sup>288</sup>

Uthman dan Fodio, a Fulani man, was born on 15 December 1754<sup>289</sup> and spent his youthful life at Degel in Northern Gobir. He belonged to the Qadiriyya, the most prominent Sufi brotherhood (*tariqa*) in West Africa around the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>290</sup> Omolewa noted that Uthman dan Fodio was known to have been a gentle, generous, patient and a well taught young man who was mentored in the knowledge of Islam by his father, Muhammadu Fodio, as well as Uthman Bindin and Jibril Ibn Umar, both of whom were renowned Islamic scholars in Northern Nigeria.<sup>291</sup> Jibril Ibn Umar was later exiled from Agades (in Niger) for his radical teaching on Islamic theology. Uthman dan Fodio travelled to Zamfara and Gobir in 1774 to preach. He taught Muslims to observe the Sharia law in strict terms.<sup>292</sup> His influence was so powerful that he was invited by the popular Bawa (the king) of Gobir for a meeting. After the meeting, Fodio continued to preach in Degelin Degel. Nafata, the new ruler of Degel, was concerned about the respect people had for Fodio, so between 1794 and 1795, Nafata introduced measures to limit the influence of Fodio in Degel. Nafata prohibited the people of Degel from wearing Muslim dress, turbans and veils.<sup>293</sup>

Yunfa, Nafata's successor, disliked the disciples of Fodio and as a result, Yunfa asked dan Fodio to leave Degel. On 21 February 1804, Fodio left Degel for Gudu; a migration event which became significant to local Muslims. Fodio's disciples regarded this movement as a Hijrah, similar to Prophet Mohammed's

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<sup>287</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 92-93.

<sup>288</sup>For example, the Gani Festival in the Hausa land was celebrated as a New Year festival and during such festivals; informal sexual practices were carried out (D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 176-180).

<sup>289</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 112.

<sup>290</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 112.

<sup>291</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 111.

<sup>292</sup>J.M. Agai, lectures on "The effects of poor relationship between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria: The way forward," Bukuru, The Theological College of Northern Nigeria, 16<sup>th</sup> April [2003], 5-6).

<sup>293</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 111.

movement from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD.<sup>294</sup> This migration of Fodio and his disciples from Degel to Gudu urged Fodio to proclaim a jihad (holy war) against non-followers of Islam. Fodio taught his disciples and followers to fight against the nonbelievers or “infidels”, a command which marked the beginning of a formal Islamic jihad in the whole of West Africa.<sup>295</sup> In June 1804, Yunfa and his army fought with the disciples of Fodio, with the latter defeating Yunfa’s army at the battle of Tabkin Kwotto in Gobir.<sup>296</sup>

After the battle between Fodio’s disciples and Yunfa’s army, Kano, Katsina and Daura were captured and controlled by Fodio’s group in 1808. Fodio’s jihad continued throughout Zaria until about 1812, after which Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gwandu, Nupeland, Kebbi, the Niger-Benue confluence and a part of Yorubaland (Ilorin) were captured by Fodio’s forces.<sup>297</sup> While a faction of Muslims insist that the primary meaning of jihad is to practice the five pillars of Islam including the Sharia law,<sup>298</sup> Islamic extremists say that jihad legitimises the use of strength or even violence for advancing the priorities of Islam.<sup>299</sup>

### 2.2.2 *Islam in Yorubaland before 1846*

A number of Yoruba scholars believe that Uthman dan Fodio and the Hausas had little influence on the spread of Islam to Yorubaland. The exact channels or dates of entry for Islam into Yorubaland remain unknown.<sup>300</sup> While Christianity came into Nigeria around the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>301</sup>, Professor Muhib O. Opeloye of the department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife believes that Arabian-Islamic scholars already visited Yorubaland during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Opeloye further notes that Islam was present

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<sup>294</sup> Cf. P. Sookhdeo, *A Christian pocket guide to Islam*, 11.

<sup>295</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 111-113. Unbelievers and infidels referred to those who refused to accept Islam, and it also refers to Muslims who practice Islam alongside their traditional religions.

<sup>296</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 112.

<sup>297</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 116- 117.

<sup>298</sup> M.R.B Muhaiyadden, *Islam and world peace: Explanation of the Sufi* (Philadelphia: The Fellowship Press, 1990), 68. The five pillars of Islam are: daily prayer, Zakat, the Ramadan, beliefs in Mohammed as the only Messenger of Allah and the beliefs in Angels and in Resurrection.

<sup>299</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 116; Cf. The Holy Qur’an, chapter 2 verses 190,191.

<sup>300</sup>M.O. Opeloye, “The Yoruba Muslims’ Cultural Identity Question,” *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2/1, 2011, 2.

<sup>301</sup>R.B. Kitause & H. C. Achunike, “Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013,” *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3/18, 2013, 47.



in Yorubaland even before the arrival of different Arabian-Islamic scholars around the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>302</sup>

However Opeloye also noted that the contribution of the Arabs to the spread of Islam to Yorubaland was not recorded until the second-half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Hausa-Fulani Muslims began to preach in Yorubaland.<sup>303</sup> As an alternative theory, Sadiq proposed that Islam was grounded in Yorubaland only from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>304</sup> One thing that remains historically certain is that Islam was indeed present in Hausaland before its emergence in Yorubaland.<sup>305</sup> In support of this theory is the presence of Wangarawa traders in Hausaland since the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, together with the capturing of Ilorin by Fodio's forces, which all suggest that Islam was present in Hausaland before its emergence in Yorubaland.<sup>306</sup> Tajudeen Gbadebo O. Gbadamosi stated:

The date of entry of Islam to Yorubaland cannot be fixed with precision. It was unannounced and unplanned; and, for the most part, the first Yoruba Muslims had to worship privately and secretly. What is fairly certain is that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, mention was made of Muslims in Yorubaland.<sup>307</sup>

Evidence supports the presence of Islam in Yorubaland before 1840 or before the birth of Samuel Johnson. Before 1846, the Muslim population of Yorubaland consisted mostly of Yoruba, Hausas, Arabs, Nupes, Kanuri's, Dendis and other migrants. In other words, the Hausas played a significant role in the spread of Islam in Yorubaland before the birth of Samuel Johnson.<sup>308</sup> It can be supposed that the Yoruba had contact

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<sup>302</sup>M.O. Opeloye, *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2.

<sup>303</sup>M.O. Opeloye, *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2.

<sup>304</sup> Y. Sadiq, "The practice of Islam," in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.) *Understanding Yoruba life and culture* (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 137. Kitause & Achunike explained that Islam existed in Northern Nigeria many years before Christianity came to Nigeria "it [Islam] came to Northern Nigeria about five or six hundred years before Christianity" (R.B. Kitause & H. C. Achunike, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 47).

<sup>305</sup>R.B. Kitause & H. C. Achunike, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 47.

<sup>306</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 111-112, 117.

<sup>307</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1978), 4.

<sup>308</sup>The Mandika traders came from Mali to Nigeria. The Mandika people are also found in Gambia and Senegal (West Africa). Gbadamosi stressed that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Umayyad Muslims were already living in Borno (Northern Nigeria) and that Islam was well-established in the Shongai Empire, and in Mali, from where some Umayyad

with the above mentioned regions of Northern Nigeria and as a result, the Yoruba had contact with Islam as well. Gbadamosi said that the contact between the Hausa region and the Yoruba people happened by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was through the activities of soldiers, Hausa slaves, and Arab traders, who had contact with both Hausaland and Yorubaland, propagated the spread of Islam.<sup>309</sup> Sadiq admitted that the Nupes, the Fulanis and mostly especially the Malians, made a great contribution to the spread of Islam in Yorubaland. Sadiq said that Yoruba Muslims are identified as *Imale* (meaning the “religion from Mali”) and that this name is used by the Yoruba in recognition of the contribution the people Mali made to the spread of Islam in Yorubaland.<sup>310</sup> Gbadamosi added that the North-Western parts of Yorubaland represent the region where Islam first started, well before it spread to other parts of Yorubaland. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Yoruba people themselves were known to have been involved in Islamic evangelisation to other parts of West Africa, such as Porto Novo and Dahomey. This suggests that around the period 1840, Islam was present in Yorubaland.<sup>311</sup>

In the Oyo Empire, Islam might have been introduced by Afaa Yigi who was thought to be of Arabian origin.<sup>312</sup> The Muslim population in Oyo before the 1840s was very small, but the activities of the Alaafin of Oyo, especially Alaafin Ajagbo who welcomed Muslims to live at his palace, encouraged Islamic growth in Yorubaland. Afaa Yigi himself lived at Ajagbo’s palace from where he carried out his Islamic evangelisation. Ajagbo’s receptive and welcoming attitude towards non-Yoruba Muslims together with Yoruba Muslim converts, led to an increased occasional influx of Arabs, Hausa slaves, and other men, who

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Muslims and the Mandika<sup>308</sup> traders and missionaries travelled extensively to other parts of West Africa including the Hausaland. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Islam was already strong in Borno, Kano, Nupe, and other parts of Hausaland.

<sup>309</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 4-5.

<sup>310</sup> Y. Sadiq, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 137-138.

<sup>311</sup>For example, before the period 1825, when Owu was destroyed, Badagry had a number of Muslims who often celebrated the Islamic festival *Id al-Fitr* extravagantly. On the 27 March 1830, Landers watched carefully how Muslims in Badagry celebrated *Id al Fitr* lavishly. Islam was first mentioned officially in Lagos in the court of Adele I in (1775-80, 1832-4), which further indicates that there were Muslims in Lagos before the 1840s (T.G O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 4-5). Gbadamosi did not specify the date or period Afaa Yigi preached in Oyo. Johnson also said that a Muslim priest, Baba-Kewu asked Afaa Yigi to rebuke king Ajiboyede of Oyo for murdering some of his (Ajiboyede) chiefs. Johnson did not also say the date Afaa Yiji came to Oyo (Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, 164..

<sup>312</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 5.

brought to Oyo to enforce the knowledge of Islam. Gbadamosi said that “[e]vidently then, Islam was established before 1840 in Ardra, Badagry, Igboho, Ijana, Ikoyi, Iseyin, Ketu, Lagos and Oyo.”<sup>313</sup>

Most of the Hausas that lived in Yorubaland before the 1840s were slaves and were involved in trades such as barbing, rope-making and the rearing of certain animals like horses and cows.<sup>314</sup> Some of the Hausa slaves had an excellent knowledge of Arabic and were highly praised, often receiving lucrative positions because of their distinguished knowledge in Arabic. In order to foster Islamic reform, some of the non-Yoruba Muslims began to challenge erring traditional Yoruba authorities, which affected the flow of Islam in Yorubaland before 1840.<sup>315</sup> For example, during the reign of Ajiboyede, the last Alaafin of Igboho, a Muslim of Nupe origin criticized the Alaafin for allegedly murdering some of the nobles and chiefs that were not sincere to him.<sup>316</sup>

During the period before 1840, Islam continued to spread in Yorubaland. In Oyo for example, about five holy men,<sup>317</sup> two or three of whom were Arab Emirs, preached the Quran publicly, asking Yoruba children to learn to read the Quran. Two of these renowned preachers or holy men are Muhammad Ben Haja Gumso who lived in the palace of the Alaafin; and Al-Salih (Alimi), who preached in Oyo, Iseyin, and Ogbomosho and in Kuwo for many years.<sup>318</sup> Alimi made a great impact in Oyo and its surrounding by preaching Islam. The Yoruba who were pagans were angered by his preaching. They complained to the Alaafin about the negative influence of Islam on Yoruba traditional religion around 1825 and 1826.<sup>319</sup> The Alaafin drove Alimi out of Oyo and killed some of the Muslims who followed Alimi, thus leading to the Afonja revolt.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>313</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 5.

<sup>314</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 6.

<sup>315</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 6.

<sup>316</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 162-163. Both Johnson and Gbadamosi did not say or explain the date Ajiboyede reigned (T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 6).

<sup>317</sup> People that dedicated their lives for the service of Islam.

<sup>318</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 11.

<sup>319</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 11.

<sup>320</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 197-200.

Afonja, one of the Yoruba rulers who held the traditional title Are-Ona Kakanfo, revolted against the Alaafin of Oyo. He refused to pay tribute to Oyo and fought for the independence of his territory, Ilorin, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Afonja requested military assistance from Oyo and Ilorin Muslims, from Alimi and even from Sokoto military jihadists.<sup>321</sup> Afonja won a victory over Ilorin, but his victory was short-lived, as he wanted to establish an autonomous political supremacy over Ilorin and beyond. Afonja was slain, and unfortunately Alimi, and his two sons from Sokoto, never had an immediate opportunity to rule over Ilorin after his death. They could not rule Ilorin immediately because local Yoruba Muslims, led by Solagheru, continued to pursue the wishes of Afonja to resist the influence of Sokoto rule over the Yoruba in Yorubaland. The battle between the two groups continued until Solagheru was killed by Sokoto military forces. Following these events, Ilorin was ruled by non-Yoruba Muslims between 1827 and 1830.<sup>322</sup> According to Gbadamosi, Muslims, especially non-Yoruba Muslims, continued to expand Islam not only in the Oyo Empire but also in other parts of Yorubaland.<sup>323</sup>

The militancy of the Ilorin jihad reached its apogee in Yorubaland when Alaafin Oluewu was made to come to Ilorin 'to tap the Quran, sometime between 1827 and 1830. But it was signally checked in 1840 when Ibadan defeated Ilorin at the battle of Osogbo.<sup>324</sup>

The Islamic advancement of Ilorin southward to other parts of Yorubaland was halted in 1840 and Ibadan continued to renounce the Islamic influence of Ilorin over its domain. Since Ilorin Islamic forces could not capture Ibadan, they focused their attention eastward to Ekiti and Ijesa, but Ibadan stopped the political expansion of Ilorin once again. As a result of the various internal religious conflicts between Yoruba Muslims and non-Yoruba Muslims, and between Yoruba Muslims, non-Yoruba Muslims and traditional Yoruba authorities, Hausa slaves were encouraged by the domineering war leaders of the time to flee to Ilorin from all of other parts of Yorubaland. The Hausa slaves were also taught to rebel against their authorities.<sup>325</sup> The random dispersion of Hausa slaves, due to the conflicts between Ibadan and Ilorin,

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<sup>321</sup>Cf. M.R. Dortmoont "Introduction, recapturing the past: Samuel Johnson and the history of the Yoruba" (Ph.D. dissertation; Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1994), 2.

<sup>322</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 10.

<sup>323</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 6-9.

<sup>324</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 10.

<sup>325</sup> Both Muslims and Christian missionaries were regarded as part of those encouraging slaves to abandon their masters (Cf. M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139-140).

brought about a huge challenge to the political authority in Oyo. For example, the traditional authorities in Oyo did not treat Muslims kindly, as growing numbers of Muslims were becoming refugees. Although blood was not spilled as a result of these internal conflicts, relationships were tied against Muslims and Yoruba traditional authorities. These conflicts did, however, reduce the spread of Islam in Yorubaland, which subsequently required a revival of faith within the Yoruba region during the early 1840s.<sup>326</sup> Public preaching, material support to those in need and the development of stronger relationship with traditional authorities, became the new features of Islamic evangelisation in Yorubaland, especially after 1846.

### 2.2.3 *Islam in Yorubaland after 1846*<sup>327</sup>

The period from 1840 to 1860 is significant because it marked a period of “Islamic revival” in Yorubaland. Various internal conflicts among different Yoruba communities resulted in many people becoming refugees, who needed to be resettled in peaceful areas mostly around the Yoruba regions. Refugees were integrated in camps and shelters in Ife, Osogbo, Iwo, Ogbomoso, Ede, and Oyo, while new towns like Abeokuta and Ibadan were formed as a result of their resettlement.<sup>328</sup> Countless Muslims participated in the resettlement of new refugee communities, whose inhabitants came from Ketu and the northern part of the Old Oyo Empire to resettle in Ilaro, Oke-Odan and Ajilete. In Ilaro for example, the Adeyemi family, who was a part of the royal family in Oyo, fled to Ilaro where they preached and revived Islam in.<sup>329</sup> In Shaki, the Oba and the Balogun permitted Muslims to pray openly, thus attracting other Muslims to settle in Shaki, with a similar warm reception to Islam displayed in Ogbomoso, Osogbo and Ede by their respective chiefs. In other instances, Muslim immigrants were completely integrated into the existing

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<sup>326</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 12-13, 22.

<sup>327</sup>This section deals with the condition of Islam during the time of Samuel Johnson (1846-1901). It is important to note that the compilation of a history of Islam in Yorubaland, covering the period in which Johnson lived, is understudied. This is one of the main factors that motivated Gbadamosi to embark on his research into the history of Islam in Yorubaland: “This work attempt to shed light on the Muslim history of the Yoruba – a subject that has hitherto not been seriously studied, and has suffered considerably from speculation and guesswork” (T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, xiii). Other writers like Sadiq, Opeloye, Omolewa and others have also written on Islam in Nigeria. However, they have not addressed the status of Islam in Yorubaland during the time of Johnson, as Gbadamosi did.

<sup>328</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 23-24.

<sup>329</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 24.

Muslim communities in resettled areas.<sup>330</sup> For example, at Iseyin, the Ijemba people who came from Jemba-Ile formed their own Islamic Ijemba community, from which they promoted the growth of Islam into areas like Abeokuta, accomplished in part by assisting Muslim refugees. In Iwu, two mosques were built in 1848 and a Quranic school was established as well. The school was led by Afa Fulani.<sup>331</sup>

The expedient growth of Islam in Yorubaland during 1848 began to worry some Yoruba traditional priests and traditionalists.<sup>332</sup> In 1849, attempts were made by Yoruba traditionalists to demolish a mosque at Egba, but the Muslims resisted the attempt. Similar instances of attempted mosque demolition occurred in Ibadan and Oyo. This onslaught forced many Muslims to conduct prayer sessions in secrecy, especially in Ibadan in Oyo. Around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims built a mosque in Oja-Oba, but Basorun Oluyole (an army commander from Oyo), ordered that the mosque be destroyed. Fortunately, Muslims obtained the favour and support of prominent members of the Yoruba community after 1849.<sup>333</sup> In Ibadan for example, Opeagbe, an immigrant and a wealthy soldier from Ogbomosho, who became the Osi Balogun and the third leading war chief in the 1840s, was made the patron of the Muslims. In 1850, when Opeagbe became the Bale of Ibadan, the Oja-Oba mosque was rebuilt under his leadership. Other Muslims were invited to worship there openly and Abdulahi Gunugun of Ayeye became the Imam of that congregation. Also, when Kosoko was exiled by the British colonial masters from Lagos in 1850, he and his 1500 supporters, most of who were Muslims and soldiers (like Balogun Ajeniya, Osodi Tapa and Posu), took refuge in Epe and transformed it into a Muslim community.<sup>334</sup>

Another significant event that brought about the resurgence of Islam in Yorubaland, within the 1840-1860 period, was the arrival of Yoruba repatriates from Sierra Leone.<sup>335</sup> Most of the *Aku* in Sierra Leone were Christians. The Muslim *Aku* felt maltreated and disrespected by both Christian and the British authorities

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<sup>330</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 24.

<sup>331</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901," 35-36; cf. T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 25.

<sup>332</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 25.

<sup>333</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 25-26.

<sup>334</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 25-26.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 48.

in Sierra Leone.<sup>336</sup> Gbadamosi noted that the authorities charged with repatriating slaves from Sierra Leone, debated and decided to repatriate Christians first before they repatriated *Aku* Muslims to Nigeria. As a result, *Aku* Muslims decided to sponsor their own return to Yorubaland. Mohammed Savage, a wealthy Muslim *Aku* for example, brought his own ship to Sierra Leone, which was used to transport many *Aku* Muslims to Yorubaland. The *Aku* Muslims from Sierra Leone travelled with copies of their Quran to Badagry, with their main destination being Lagos.<sup>337</sup> Also, the Yoruba Muslim repatriates who came from Brazil, were referred to as the Aguda and settled in Ibadan, Ilesa, etc.<sup>338</sup>

The *Aku* Muslims who came from Sierra Leone were sometimes referred to as the Saro group and included Abdallah Cole, Amodu Carew, Muhammada Savage, Umar and Williams. They settled at Olowogbowo and in Isale Eko areas, and built their first mosque in Olowogbowo in 1861.<sup>339</sup> Most of the *Aku* Muslims from Brazil and Sierra Leone were skilled in carpentry, baking, tailoring, etc., and their skills enabled them to be directly involved in the formation and development of the respective societies in which they found themselves. In August 1845, when Kosoko took over power in Lagos, he encouraged Muslims to worship openly. The survival of Islam in Lagos from the 1840s to 1862 was due to the preaching efforts of certain great personalities, who were immigrants in Lagos. The immigrants were Chief Imam Salu, Imam Nafiu Gana and others who were exiled together with Kosoko. These immigrants, together with some *Aku* Muslims, believed “Western education”<sup>340</sup> to be a means of fostering the growth of humanity and development of Islam in Yorubaland. The *Aku* Muslims incorporated Islam together with western education, in much the same way Christians did. As Gbadamosi explains:

Yoruba Muslims were initially averse to Western education because of its Christian monopoly and tinge, but the Muslims from overseas were conspicuous among those who, in later years,

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<sup>336</sup> Fyfe said that the government in Sierra Leone was suspicious of *Aku* Muslims. A lawyer by the name of W.H. Savage fought for the rights of the *Aku* Muslims to live in Fourah Bay and to return to their countries of origin whenever they wished to do so. Fyfe noted that many Christians did not like *Aku* Muslims, and that in 1839, a riot broke out between *Aku* Muslims and Christians. The riot led to the demolition of the Fourah Bay mosque (C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 54).

<sup>337</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 32.

<sup>338</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 26-31.

<sup>339</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 32.

<sup>340</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 26-31.

were instrumental in making the Muslims adopt and support Western education. They constituted one factor which set Islam in Yorubaland along paths of 'modernity'.<sup>341</sup>

From the 1840s to the 1860s, Islamic preaching was carried out by local Yoruba Muslims. Though Muslim foreigners (like one identified as the "White Arab", Sheikh Ali Muhammad al-Mekkawi, a Moroccan), mostly from Arab nations, were involved in evangelism, their stay in Yorubaland was often temporary.<sup>342</sup> The Hausas, most of who were found in Badagry, Ijaye, Abeokuta, Iseyin, etc, also contributed to Islamic preaching during this period (1840s to 1860s). In the 1860s, most of the Yoruba Muslims in Yorubaland belonged to the orthodox Islamic group (Sunni).<sup>343</sup> The Sunnis strictly observe the five pillars of Islam: daily prayer, Zakat, the Ramadan, beliefs in Mohammed as the only Messenger of Allah, the beliefs in Angels and in Resurrection.<sup>344</sup> Yoruba scholars were also trained in Arabic by Muslims from Borno.<sup>345</sup>

Gbadamosi described the period from 1861 to 1894 as the "era of consolidation" of Islam in Yorubaland, particularly in the Old Oyo-speaking towns.<sup>346</sup> Some of the factors which lead to the collapse of the Oyo and the rise of the Oyo diaspora included; the quest for leadership among Oyo indigenes, the desire to reduce Oyo influence over other parts of Yorubaland, and the prohibition of the slave trade. During the Oyo diaspora, residents fled from Oyo forming settlements in other parts of the Yorubaland.<sup>347</sup> Since the establishment of the Oyo diaspora of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Ife had to host more Oyo-speaking refugees, who became known as the Modakeke. Some of the Modakeke were Muslims and they lived peacefully with the Ife people who hosted them. After the Kiriji War of 1897, in which Ibadan gave support to Ife and to Modakeke, Islam was restricted to the extent that open air preaching was banned and most able-bodied men from Ibadan were sent to war by their superiors. In the 1880s, Ife changed sides and

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<sup>341</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 32.

<sup>342</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 34.

<sup>343</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 35.

<sup>344</sup> T. Adamu, lectures on "Christianity and Islam from 622-1453," Bukuru, The Theological College of Northern Nigeria, 10<sup>TH</sup>-19<sup>TH</sup> March 2002.

<sup>345</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 35-36. Most Yoruba towns like Ilorin was under the control of Oyo until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Yoruba Wars started

<sup>346</sup> The Oyo diaspora led many Oyo indigenes to leave Oyo and seek refuge in other Yoruba towns because of the many attacks against Oyo (cf. T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 34).

<sup>347</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Introduction from Recapturing the past: Samuel Johnson and the History of the Yoruba (Ph.D dissertation; Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1994), 1-2.



supported Ekiti against Ibadan, while Modakeke remained loyal to Ibadan. After the 1840s, Modakeke was a separate kingdom, particularly at the time of Oni Adegunle Abeweila.<sup>348</sup> While Islam continued to grow in other parts of Yorubaland, the case was different with Ife, which led to the signing of Treaty of Peace between Ife and Modakeke in 1886. The treaty encouraged the separation of Ife from Modakeke as Johnson wrote:<sup>349</sup>

According to the Treaty of 1886, Modakeke was to be removed from Ife soil, and rebuilt in a place between the Rivers Osun and Oba, and the Ibadans were to see that this was carried out. That portion of the Treaty was galling to the Ibadans, the Modakekes simply would not hear of it, but the Ifes were jubilant, and were determined to see it carried out<sup>350</sup>

However, some Muslims were not contented with the treaty, so they began leaving Modakeke for other towns like Odeomu, Ipetumodi, Ikire, Gbongan Ago-Owu and some other section of Ife after 1886.<sup>351</sup> Despite all the internal conflicts in some parts of Yorubaland, the growth of Islam in Yorubaland from 1861 to 1894 was enormous and multisided. For example, in 1862, there were approximately 3000 people in Lagos, of which an estimated 800 of them were Muslims. By 1871, the Muslim population in Lagos colony grew up to 10,595 individuals. By 1881, the Muslim population had grown to 21, 108. The building of mosques and the supply of material-support among Muslims contributed to the growth of Islam in the Lagos colony.<sup>352</sup>

The construction of additional mosques (e.g. Iseyin mosque) in various Yoruba communities and the emergence of influential leaders, such as Muhammad Latosisa and the Are-Ona Kakanfo who became Muslims, consolidated the development and growth of Islam in Ibadan in 1871. Latosisa became a great military man and bolstered the military strength of Ibadan during his wars with Ijebu, Egba and Ekiti during the Ekiti Parapo war. Latosisa loved Christians, but he held great faith in Islam and prayed as a Muslim.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>348</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 49-51. Oni Adegunle Abeweila started to reign in 1839.

<sup>349</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 646-647.

<sup>350</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 646.

<sup>351</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 50.

<sup>352</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 51.

<sup>353</sup>T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 65-66.

The formation of Muslim groups in Yoruba towns, such as the women group called *Egbe Binukonu* in Oyo and Osogbo led by Olori Alaslatu, the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society and the Nawair Ud-Deen Society, greatly helped in the propagation of Islam. These Muslim societies helped Muslims to unite and to assist those in need. They also promoted the celebration of Muslim festivals in extravagant fashion and greatly enhanced the administrative functions of mosques.<sup>354</sup>

The period from 1861 to 1894 also witnessed the emergence of Islamic scholars. Within this period, some Muslims were against Islamic orthodoxy while others were open to the idea of adapting to Yoruba culture together with modern knowledge. Koranic schools were formed and some Muslims trained abroad to face Christian controversialists. Open air debates between Muslims and people of other faiths were encouraged, which boosted the popular growth of Islam. Muslims travelled within Yoruba regions to preach and as a result, many Yoruba leaders were converted to Islam.<sup>355</sup> For example, from 1861 to 1894, many politicians in Yorubaland were Muslims and helped to promote Islam.<sup>356</sup>

In addition, pilgrimages to Mecca were encouraged. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the pilgrim route to Mecca was overland, but later that century; the sea route became the main passageway.<sup>357</sup> Gbadamosi stated that pilgrims found the overland route to be lengthy, taking the average traveller nearly 18 months to arrive at Mecca. In addition, insecurity within the war-ton Yoruba territories forced people to travel in groups. Long journeys, influenced by wars and many other uncertainties, caused numerous pilgrims destined for Mecca to never return to Yorubaland.<sup>358</sup> From 1861 to 1894, Islam became a morally acceptable or legalised religion in all of Yorubaland, resulting in continuous growth. The persecution of Muslims was now lessened, as Islam was recognised by Yoruba people as one of the religions in Yorubaland.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 53-54.

<sup>355</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 55-57.

<sup>356</sup> Y. Sadiq, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 137-137; T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 65-66.

<sup>357</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 61.

<sup>358</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 61-62.

<sup>359</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 68.

From the information outlined above, it can be suggested that Islam was consolidated in Yorubaland by 1894. Gbadamosi described the period 1892 to 1908 as a period of rapid growth of Islam in Yorubaland.<sup>360</sup>

Many Hausa slaves, who became domestic workers among the families of influential Yoruba, were Muslims and their contribution to the spread of Islam in Ijebu cannot be over-emphasised. While at work, they preached and promoted Islam among many influential Yoruba families. In fact, the Hausas are regarded as the first to practice Islam in Ijebu areas like Operu, Sagamu, Ikene and Ijebu-Ode.<sup>361</sup> The rise and growth of Islam in Ijebu was unique because of certain superstitious-beliefs among the Yoruba. Gbadamosi divided Islamic evangelisation in Ijebu into three agencies:

The first agency was that of "predestined" Muslims. Many Ijebu families consulted Ifa diviners who told them that their pregnant women would give birth to children who were destined to be Muslims; hence the parents trained their children according to the tenets of Islam. Parents of the said predestined children handed their so-called predestined children over to Muslim Mallams (teachers), so that their children would be nurtured in the knowledge of Islam. One such child grew up to be an influential person; Iperu Asana, the mother of a chief Imam. A similar figure of great influence in Odowa was Kasumu Ojeneiye.<sup>362</sup>

The second agency for the promotion of Islam in Ijebu was the presence of Muslims who travelled abroad for various reasons. Upon their return home, they continued to preach Islam in every nook and cranny of the Yoruba communities in which they found themselves.

The third agency of Islamic evangelisation in Ijebuland was personified by those Muslims who were converted to Islam because the faith was preached to them in Ijebu.<sup>363</sup> The ties between Hausa Muslims and other Yoruba Muslims in Ijebuland were so amiable, that some Yoruba pagans mocked the Yoruba Muslims who associated with Hausa Muslims, labelling them as *esin Gambari* ("worshippers of Hausa religion").<sup>364</sup> Despite the persecution faced by some Muslims in Yorubaland, Islam continued to grow. In

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<sup>360</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 84.

<sup>361</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 86.

<sup>362</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 92.

<sup>363</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 92.

<sup>364</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 94.

order to resist the growing trend of Islam in Yoruba after 1892, opposition groups to Islam, including traditional authorities like the Oro Worshipers and the Yoruba who were Masqueraders (such as Olissigun Adeoro and Jobielu), complained to the Yoruba chiefs about the growth of Islam and the building of mosques by Muslims. In spite of opposition, wealthy Muslims insured the survival of Islam by using their wealth and political influence to ensure the sustained impact of the religion in Ijebu, Iperu and other parts of Yorubaland.<sup>365</sup>

One unique aspect that allowed Islam to grow exponentially in Yorubaland during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the fact that many Yoruba Muslims believed that Islam did not condemn the practice of Yoruba traditions. This view pleased many Yoruba people, who decided to accept Islam as a noble faith. Opeloye went even further to suggest that the contemporary devaluation of Yoruba culture among Yoruba people should be blamed on Christianity and not on Islam. Opeloye believed that Islam and Yoruba culture correlated, except for a few Yoruba cultures which contradicted the Islamic faith:

The White people who brought Christianity to Yorubaland introduced more of the Western cultural values to the people than Christian values. They contemptuously looked down upon the indigenous cultural values which they regarded as incompatible with the Christian values. The result is that the Yoruba (Christian and Muslim alike) became more European than African.<sup>366</sup>

Opeloye echoed the need to revive Muslim values among the Yoruba. He thought that reviving Muslim values will at the same time enhance the practice of Yoruba culture, especially the specific Yoruba cultures which did not contradict the Islamic faith.<sup>367</sup> The Yoruba culture<sup>368</sup> that contradicted the Islamic faith is the main reason that led to the persecution of Muslims in some parts of Yorubaland in the middle and in

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<sup>365</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 90.

<sup>366</sup> M.O. Opeloye, *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 3.

<sup>367</sup> Y. Sadiq, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 137-137 cf. M.O. Opeloye, *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 3.

<sup>368</sup> Some Yoruba culture, which did not correspond with Islamic teachings, include the worship of ancestors, the belief in reincarnation and the worship of images (cf. O. C. Omobola, "Influence of Yoruba Culture in Religion Religions Worship," *International Journal of Social Science & Education*, 4 (3), [2014], 586-587.

the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the challenges, Islam grew exceptionally in Yorubaland<sup>369</sup> during the time of Samuel Johnson (1846-1901).

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<sup>369</sup> Sadiq, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 137-137.

# CHAPTER THREE

## SAMUEL JOHNSON, THE MAN

### 3.1 The life of Samuel Johnson

Samuel Johnson stands among the greatest African people; a man whose contribution to the unity of the Yoruba people, and the study of Yoruba history and anthropology, requires greater attention than it is currently bestowed. Even though he is now regarded as one of the greatest Yoruba intellectuals, his contribution to humanity is clearly not receiving deserved recognition; hence the need for embarking on this research.<sup>370</sup> More so, Johnson's attitudes of writing more about the Yoruba than about himself suggest that the Yoruba people hold a podium position in his heart. However, Johnson's restricted documentation of his own life is a great disadvantage to researchers, as we lack insight into his thoughts about himself, his work and what motivated him. A negative result of this situation is that there has been much speculation about him and his intentions. Even in his book, *The History of the Yorubas*, Johnson never gave his autobiography.

The section in the introductory chapter of his book, which contains his journals and diaries, is closely relied upon in obtaining information about his lifestyle and private life, as they were written by Johnson himself. The journals and diaries are part of the appendices which are further divided into Appendix A and Appendix B in *The History of the Yorubas* (refer to Appendix C of this thesis for an extract).<sup>371</sup> Appendix A is a collection of treaties signed by different governments at different times in order to limit the effects of the Yoruba Wars. More so, the first section of Appendix A is a treaty signed to end the Abeokuta war on 18 January 1893. The treaty was signed between the governor and commander in chief of Lagos colony, G.T. Carter, together with certain representatives of Yoruba communities like Osakalu, Osundale and

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<sup>370</sup>It is pertinent to consider the contribution made by Falola, Olabimtan and Doortmont regarding the transcription of Samuel Johnson's history. These authors have written extensively about the various aspects of Johnson's life. However, more needed to be researched regarding Johnson and this is so because none of these authors have been able to say everything about Johnson.

<sup>371</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the beginning of the British protectorate*, O. Johnson (ed.), (Abuja: CSS, 1921), 667-671.

Onlado who represented the king of Alake.<sup>372</sup> The other treaties are those of Oyo, Ibadan, Egba, Abeokuta Railway and Ibadan Railway. Other treaties in Appendix A are the agreements which banned the practice of human sacrifice, some of which were signed at Ijesa and Ekiti on 29 September 1886 and at Ile Ife on 10 August 1889. Articles IV and V were also signed to end the involvement of Porto Novo in Yoruba Wars.<sup>373</sup> Appendix B is a list of Yoruba kings and also notes prominent Yoruba events.<sup>374</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to note that one of Johnson's journals talks about some of the places he visited, the people he met and the locations he preached at. Doortmont, a leading researcher on Samuel Johnson, said that one of Johnson's journals records his visits of 1870. On details concerning his 1870 visit, Johnson described Ikoyi from his own perspective during his first catechetical visit to the Ikoyi quarter of Ibadan:

Ikoyi is a royal city, captured by the Filatahs some seventy or eighty years ago. But yet to keep their nationality distinct they resigned a King at Ibadan who is honoured in the quarter. His jurisdiction of course extends not farther than five compounds. This King died some years ago.<sup>375</sup>

Another fact obtained from Johnson's journal has to do with the founding of Modakeke, a popular Yoruba city. One popular author that wrote about Johnson is Michel Doortmont. While doing his research, Doortmont collected archival information on Samuel Johnson from the CMS<sup>376</sup> archives of the Sierra Leone and Yoruba Missions. He held correspondence between CMS missionaries in West Africa and the

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<sup>372</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 651-652.

<sup>373</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 667. Historians might have relied on some of the dating's contained in the treaties to write about Samuel Johnson. Johnson was personally involved in peace negotiation during some of the Yoruba Wars of the 19th century, and he might have obtained copies of some of the treaties as a result of his involvement in negotiating for peace.

<sup>374</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 651-671.

<sup>375</sup> M. R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian," (1991), 175. This paper is a preliminary study for the forthcoming Ph.D. thesis on Samuel Johnson. The PhD thesis was finally published in 1994 at Erasmus University Rotterdam. The quotation on Johnson's visit to Ikoyi was originally obtained from "CMS, CA2/0 58/1, S. Johnson, Journal Extracts, 1870-1873" (M.R. Doortmont, Samuel Johnson (1846-1901), 167).

<sup>376</sup>The Church Missionary Society or CMS is an institution of the Church of England which was founded in 1799. The purpose of the institution was to train missionaries to evangelise properly (C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 40).

CMS headquarters in London, where he was able to obtain journal extracts and reports of committee meetings from different missionaries under the same organisation.<sup>377</sup> Doortmont said that Johnson's description of his entry into Modakeke on 8 May 1882 contributed to the founding of this town near Ife. He further noted that the description of the entry is included verbatim in Johnson's book *The History of the Yorubas*.<sup>378</sup> In addition to this, and from a general point of view, Johnson seemed to have lived a very private life. It is therefore no surprise that his motivation behind writing the *The History of the Yorubas* had nothing to do with increasing his popularity in print, but rather to present a formidable record of Yoruba history succinctly.<sup>379</sup>

In popular opinion, Samuel Johnson believed to be a descendant of the 18<sup>th</sup> century popular king of Oyo, Alaafin Abiodun. Johnson's father, Henry Johnson, claimed ancestry to the Alaafin Abiodun of Oyo.<sup>380</sup> Samuel Johnson was born on 24 June 1846 in Hastings, a village in Freetown peninsula, to Henry Johnson and Sarah Johnson, both of whom lived in Hastings Sierra Leone.<sup>381</sup> It is important to note that his parents, Henry and Sarah, were Aku recaptive slaves (also referred to as repatriates or returnee slaves)<sup>382</sup> who were returned to Sierra Leone after the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament in 1807.<sup>383</sup> The Slave Trade Act 1807 (as it was also known) also empowered British naval ships to capture slave ships in Africa and its surrounding oceans. The slaves freed as a result of the Act were referred to as "recaptives" because they were firstly captured and enslaved, and then recaptured and made free. Most recaptives were not taken back to their respective countries of origin, but to Freetown in Sierra Leone. When

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<sup>377</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167.

<sup>378</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 175; See S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 230-231.

<sup>379</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yoruba*, x.

<sup>380</sup> "Johnson, Samuel (1846-1901)" *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1.

<sup>381</sup> The name Sierra Leone was used to describe only the mountainous peninsula of Sierra Leone until 1896, when the entire country's name became Sierra Leone. The British founded a colony for freed slaves in this mountainous peninsula around 1787, which it then used as a basis from which to extend their control over regions encompassing the peninsula. In 1896, the British gave the name Sierra Leone to the entire country, which remains in use to this day C.M. Fyle, *The history of Serra Leone: A concise introduction* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Limited, 1981), 5-6.

<sup>382</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 33.

<sup>383</sup> See B. Sundkler, & C. Steed, *A history of the Church in Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 947, 959.



Freetown was overcrowded with recaptives from various parts of the world, more recaptives were sent to newly established villages nearby Freetown.<sup>384</sup>

The recaptives lived in groups according to their countries of origin. For example, recaptives from Wolof and Bambara (in Senegal) formed Leicester village, and a group from the Congo went to Temne village in the hills west of Freetown. However, for their own convenience, the Congo recaptives decided to move to the waterside and built their own Congo Town by the shore. One group who spoke Portuguese established their own Portuguese Town on the outskirts of Freetown.<sup>385</sup> More recaptives were brought into Sierra Leone year after year. Fyfe said that by 1815, over six thousand recaptives were brought into Sierra Leone. Not all of them sent to villages. Some recaptives were enlisted to be part of the British army, while others served as workers or servants to wealthy settlers and Europeans in Sierra Leone. A group of recaptives that are particularly important for this research were the *Aku*. The Yoruba Wars had engulfed Yorubaland from the 1820s to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During these wars, thousands of Yoruba were enslaved and shipped for sale across the Atlantic. However, a number of them were rescued by British naval ships, with some brought to Sierra Leone. The Yoruba recaptives formed their own group in Sierra Leone and were described as *Aku*. The *Aku* represented the largest group of recaptives in Sierra Leone.<sup>386</sup>

Before the period 1840, not much was known about the history of Samuel Johnson's parents. What seemed certain to many historians is that Samuel Johnson's parents were both recaptive slaves who ended up in Sierra Leone during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to Yoruba internal wars.<sup>387</sup> As mentioned before, Henry Johnson was a grandson of King Abiodun, a popular king of the Oyo Empire, who reigned in the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from Samuel, Henry and Sarah had six other children: Henry (born in 1840), Nathaniel (born *ca.* 1843), Obadiah (born in 1849), Adolphus, Margaret Sarah and Rosaline (dates unknown).<sup>388</sup> Henry and Sarah were farmers and devoted Christians who lived in Hastings; a place which later became an *Aku* village. During this time, Christian organisations like the Church

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<sup>384</sup>C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 39-40, 48.

<sup>385</sup>C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 39-40, 48.

<sup>386</sup>C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 39-40, 48. Henry Johnson and Sarah Johnson were both *Aku*.

<sup>387</sup>M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167.

<sup>388</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167.

Missionary Society (CMS) and the Methodist Mission, together with settler preachers in Sierra Leone, contributed to converting many recaptives to Christianity.<sup>389</sup> Those recaptives who converted included Samuel's parents. The missionaries in Sierra Leone gave some recaptives new names, but most chose their own. The missionaries, together with the Sierra Leonean government under British rule, also built schools in the villages. In 1814, the CMS built a Christian Institution on Leicester Mount to train recaptive teachers and missionaries.<sup>390</sup> The CMS institution for training teachers was established at Fourah Bay in 1827. The first pupil to be trained was Samuel Ajayi Crowther,<sup>391</sup> an Aku missionary who helped tremendously in the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland.<sup>392</sup>

There are a number of reasons why some recaptives began to return to their respective countries of origin while others remained in Sierra Leone. One of the reasons why some recaptives returned home or to their countries of origin was the desire to evangelise the Christian faith. Also, some recaptives became rich and decided to return to their countries of origin to help their fellow countrymen. For example, in 1839, three rich *Aku*<sup>393</sup> combined their money and bought a ship, which they used to sail to Nigeria with other passengers. Two Hausa (from Northern Nigeria) recaptives, who returned from Brazil to Freetown, also decided to return to Hausa land where they originally belonged.<sup>394</sup> Poor economic opportunities in Sierra Leone in the 1840s also forced countless more recaptives to begin the homeward journey to their respective countries of origin.<sup>395</sup> Christianity also played a role in repatriation. For example, Christian missionaries, many of whom were evangelising in Freetown thought that Christianity, contributed to the abolishment of the slave trade. This was achieved, in part, by establishing missionary stations in some African territories, including certain parts of Yorubaland, from which they would preach not only the

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<sup>389</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 49.

<sup>390</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 42.

<sup>391</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 52.

<sup>392</sup> See chapter two of this research "the spread of Christianity in Nigeria."

<sup>393</sup> The names of three *Aku* have not been mentioned.

<sup>394</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 52.

<sup>395</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 168.

gospel, but also their critique of slavery.<sup>396</sup> The CMS, for example, set up a mission station in Badagry (in 1842), followed by those in Abeokuta (in 1846) and Lagos.<sup>397</sup>

Reverend David Hinderer played a great role in the establishment of the Christian mission in Yorubaland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Reverend David Hinderer originally came from Weisbuch, near Schondorf, in Württemberg, Germany and was born in 1819. Hinderer studied at Basel Seminary in Switzerland and attended the Church Missionary College in Islington, London, in 1846. After his ordination as a deacon on 19 December 1847, and after his consecration into the priesthood, he was posted by the committee of the CMS in London to serve as a preacher to the Hausa speaking peoples of the West African Interior (who had become Muslim). He first came to Badagry on 25 March 1849, carrying with him an extract of the New Testament translated into Hausa. The intention was for Hinderer to learn Hausa fluently in Badagry before relocating to Hausaland. However, many of the Hausas he met in Badagry were slaves whose masters refused to allocate them with enough free time to interact with Hinderer.<sup>398</sup>

Hinderer decided to move to Abeokuta, where a number of foreign missionaries already served among the Egba people. However, Egba was not peaceful during the time that Hinderer moved to Abeokuta, due to the influence of King Ghezo of Dahomey. King Ghezo was adamant to capture Abeokuta, a major part of Egba, by force. Henry Townsend, one of the leaders of the CMS missions in Nigeria, suggested in 1850 that witnessing to the Hausa people was "inappropriate" simply because missionary work in Yorubaland

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<sup>396</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans extended their territorial control throughout the world, including Africa and extended regions on the American continent. However, the majority of the Europeans did not travel outside of Europe and the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, except some of their traders, adventurers, and government agents. Europeans were involved in commercial farming since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Since the mechanisation of the agricultural sector only commenced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, labourers were still employed to tend farms manually. Much of the American territories settled by Europeans were sparsely populated. However, in the more populous parts of the Americas, European invaders killed many native inhabitants or infected them with a variety of diseases (such as bubonic plague, chicken pox, pneumonic plague, cholera, diphtheria, influenza, measles, scarlet fever, smallpox, typhus, tuberculosis, and whooping cough), which resulted to the death of thousands. Because of this, the settlers did not have enough indigenous American slaves to manage their plantations. Hence, the Europeans turned their focus on West Africa. For the European farmers, it was safer to import slaves from West Africa, as West African slaves were healthy, strong, and could not run away to their homelands, due to the long distance between America, Europe and West Africa. In addition, the expansion of manufacturing industries in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, also called for the import of West African slaves. Many African chiefs and kings were also involved in selling their people to the Europeans in exchange for weapons, cotton cloth, brass pans, glass beads and other commodities (C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 8-9).

<sup>397</sup>M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 168.

<sup>398</sup>K. Olabimtan,[2011a] "Hinderer, David 1819 to 1890," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-6.

had just begun and that the missions in Yorubaland required more attention. As a result, Hinderer was advised by Townsend to work within the Yoruba community.<sup>399</sup> In 1851, David Hinderer was posted to serve as a missionary in Ibadan was welcomed by its people, including the mayor (*Bale*) of Ibadan. Hinderer left Ibadan for England, but returned to Ibadan for missions in 1853. On his return to Ibadan, he came with his newly married wife Anna, whom he had married in England on 14 October 1852.<sup>400</sup>

Despite the challenges of internal conflicts, for example those waged between Alaafin Atiba and Are Kurunmi in 1855, Hinderer had some Christian converts and CMS missionary work continued to expand through other parts of the Yorubaland, including Oyo. In 1856, Hinderer left Ibadan for England, but planned future travels to Sierra Leone, with the aim of recruiting capable hands that could cope with the demands of missionary work in Yorubaland. Hinderer arrived in Hastings in November 1857, where he recruited Henry Johnson together with William Allen (a younger *Aku* and a schoolmaster). They all came to serve in Ibadan in January 1858 after receiving some missionary training.<sup>401</sup>

Following Hinderer's request during his visit to Sierra Leone, Henry Johnson and his entire family decided to emigrate to Yorubaland in December 1857, when Samuel Johnson was nearly twelve years old. Henry was recruited as an assistant to Hinderer and was particularly involved in Scriptures reading until his death in 1865. Hinderer's wife, Anna, managed a school in Ibadan where Samuel Johnson was enrolled as a student. As a result, his relationship with both Anna and David Hinderer solidified. The activities of both Hinderer and Henry Johnson as Church Missionary Society staffers exposed Samuel Johnson to mission work in Ibadan, where he remained until 1862.<sup>402</sup> Because the Hinderers believed in liberal education through the study of good writing and arts, they influenced Samuel Johnson to follow suite. Hinderer can

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<sup>399</sup> K. Olabimtan,[2011a], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-6.

<sup>400</sup>K. Olabimtan,[2011a], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-6.

<sup>401</sup>K. Olabimtan,[2011a] "Hinderer, David 1819 to 1890" *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-6. In 1854, Rev. David Hinderer struggled to establish a fruitful or rewarding mission station in Ibadan, so he requested that Henry Johnson should serve as a teacher at the mission station (T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34). This request was made when David Hinderer visited Sierra Leone to recruit missionary staffers in November 1857 (M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 168). Henry Johnson was a dedicated member of the CMS who later became a leader of the CMS church in Hastings. He diligently served under a CMS missionary, J. J. Thomas (the first black minister in Hastings). After returning to Nigeria, Henry served as a Scripture reader in Ibadan under the leadership of Hinderer (M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 168).

<sup>402</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34.

be viewed as a godfather or mentor, not only to Samuel Johnson, but also to Samuel Johnson's parents.<sup>403</sup> It is therefore no surprise that Johnson dedicated his book *The History of the Yorubas* to him:

To the Revered memory of The Rev. David Hinderer, the pioneer missionary of C.M.S. in Yorubaland Proper – whose untiring energy, self-denying devotion, and determination of purpose (in spite of privations and bodily infirmities) will ever remain a model of true missionary enterprise, and a record of labour hitherto unsurpassed in the country-these lines are inscribed by a former pupil.<sup>404</sup>

In 1862, another clergyman, Gotlieb Bühler, made a huge impact in the life of Samuel Johnson<sup>405</sup>. Born on July 3 1829 at Adelberg in Württemberg, Germany, Bühler was first trained as a schoolmaster, serving at multiple institutions in Germany, before he finally enrolled for training at the Missionary College at Basel in 1851. The Missionary College at Basel started in 1816 with an emphasis on Blumhardt's philosophy of missions; according to which indigenous cultures, including their languages, were expected to be fully respected when doing missions. This philosophy emerged in response to an early 18<sup>th</sup> century and late 19<sup>th</sup> century German theory on language and nationality, mainly propagated by Johann Gottfried and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Both scholars believed that national identity was rooted in people's culture. Both Johann Gottfried and Friedrich Schleiermacher emphasised that people's language could not be duplicated in another language, hence the need to enhance, to nurture and to cultivate indigenous cultures. Bühler enrolled at the Missionary College in Basel during a time of transition, which marked ideological transformation in response to Germany's intended colonial expansion during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19<sup>th</sup></sup>.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>403</sup>David Hinderer experienced little to no success in doing missions beyond Ibadan. The Egba people were less receptive of him, probably due to his involvement in peace negotiation. It is possible that they wrongly perceived him as supporting one Yoruba region instead of the other. Hinderer sougled for peace and encouraged the Yoruba people to live in harmony. The achievements of Samuel Johnson, one of Hinderer's pupils, have been attributed to the motivations created by Hinderer. Olabimtan cited an example of a conversation between Hinderer and one of his friends, Dr. Edward Irving. Hinderer is quoted as saying: "from the little tales which one gathers I believe a book full of touching interest might be written on the late Yoruba and Egba wars..." (Originally in D. Hinderer, journal entry, December 15, 1854, CMS C/A2/O/49/110). The wishes of David Hinderer became a reality when Johnson wrote his book *The History of the Yorubas*. A discourse on Yoruba Wars dominates the contents of this book (K. Olabimtan, [2011a] "Hinderer, David 1819 to 1890," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 5-7).

<sup>404</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, v.

<sup>405</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 33-34.

<sup>406</sup>K. Olabimtan [2011c], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5,

Joseph Josenhans, who led the Missionary College at Basel until 1849, encouraged the missionaries to promote German-Swabian civilisation and not the culture of the people they preached to. However, the establishment of Blumhardt's more culturally inclusive philosophy was achieved in 1850, when Joseph Josenhans took over management of the College. After his three-year training at the College, Bühler attended the Church Missionary College in Islington, where he received training in English language proficiency. After his ordination on June 3, 1855 by the bishop of London, Bühler joined the Yoruba Mission of the CMS on October 24 1855 and arrived in Lagos towards the end of the same year. He was posted to Abeokuta until 1856, when he travelled to Ibadan to relieve the Hinderers who went to England for medical reasons. CMS had been struggling to establish the Abeokuta Training Institution since 1853, and in 1859, Bühler took charge of the institution from Maser. Bühler led the institution and was involved in church work at Ake, in Abeokuta, until he was ordained by Bishop Bowen of Sierra Leone on Sunday, 20 March 1859. Bühler was married in 1860 to his first wife, Sophia Mary Jay, whom he brought to live with him in Abeokuta on December 8<sup>th</sup> of that year. She died of fever shortly thereafter on 4 January 1861. He remarried Miss Annie Norris in 1863, who came to live with him.<sup>407</sup>

Bühler contributed to the development of the Abeokuta Training Institution by developing a robust school curriculum. In his first six months, he introduced Scripture reading in the Yoruba language and introduced English, geography (especially biblical geography and the geography of Europe), philosophy, history, and diversity of the animal kingdom, arithmetic and teaching practices into the institute's curriculum of the Abeokuta Training Institution. Two years later, he introduced the histories of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, the Jews, and Alexander the Great to his general history class. In his geography lesson, Bühler incorporated African geography and in science, he introduced elementary astronomy, electricity and mammology. In the arts, he introduced singing, calligraphy and orthography. His interest in teaching liberal arts to his students, and his emphasis in teaching Yoruba language, indicates that he aimed to strike a balanced between Blumhardt's philosophy of mission and Josenhans' ideology of the expansion of German civilisation.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>407</sup>K. Olabimtan [2011c], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5.

<sup>408</sup>K. Olabimtan [2011c], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5.

Bühler first visited Ibadan to participate in negotiating peace during the Ijaye War. At this stage, Samuel Johnson remained in Ibadan longer than expected, as the on-going conflict made it near impossible for him return to his parents. The Ijaye War was so turbulent at that time, that David and Anna Hinderer kept Samuel in Ibadan, as they were concerned about the safety of Henry Johnson and his family. During Bühler's visit to Ibadan, David Hinderer asked Bühler to take Samuel Johnson along with him.<sup>409</sup>

Bühler, who was also the principal of the Abeokuta Training Institution, took Samuel Johnson with him and enrolled him at the Abeokuta Training Institution.<sup>410</sup> The Abeokuta Training Institution had been founded in Abeokuta in 1853 by Henry Venn, the then secretary of CMS, with the purpose of training African schoolmasters and catechists, mainly for the Yoruba Mission.<sup>411</sup>

Between 1863 and 1865, Samuel Johnson remained a student at the Institution where he received formal training in general education, Greek, Latin, English language, philosophy, history and mathematics. In 1865, Johnson graduated from the Abeokuta Training Institution and became a qualified school teacher. Afterwards, he was posted to the Ibadan CMS mission<sup>412</sup> and also worked at Aremo and Kudeti (both in Ibadan) schools respectively.

Another person that influenced Johnson was Daniel Olubi, a staff member of the CMS.<sup>413</sup> Olubi hails from Egba, one of the regions that fought against Ibadan during the Yoruba Wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Olubi led the CMS Ibadan missions during the political upheavals between Egba and Ibadan. The CMS began work

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<sup>409</sup>T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa* (New Jersey: African World Press, 1999), 33-34.

<sup>410</sup>T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34, 40.

<sup>411</sup>M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 169.

<sup>412</sup>Olabimtan believed that Bühler's emphasis on liberal education would break the chains of superstitions beliefs among his students, which would in turn lead to the development of more receptive individuals when it came to the task of enhancing Christian ministry. Olabimtan also noted that one of the best ways to identify the impact of Bühler's ideology on mission, was to observe the lives and works of his most prominent students; one of which was Samuel Johnson. It may be recalled that after Bühler's visit to Ibadan, he encouraged Johnson to return with him so that the latter could be enrolled at the Abeokuta Training Institution in January 1863. Johnson lived with the Hinderers before resuming studies in Abeokuta in January 1863. After Johnson completed his studies at the Abeokuta Training Institution in 1865, he return to Ibadan and was recruited as a schoolmaster. It is clear that Bühler is one among many that influenced Johnson's thoughts. Johnson was quoted to have said "...Rev. G.F. Bühler ... told much on me..." K. Olabimtan [2011c], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5, quoted originally in S. Johnson to Secretaries, January 16, 1885, CMS C/A2/O 1885/67).

<sup>413</sup>T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34, 40.

in Abeokuta town in 1846 and Olubi, a devotee of the Yoruba traditional religion, was converted to Christianity through the street preaching of Rev. J.C. Muller in 1848. After his conversion, he was baptised by Muller at the Ake Church. When David Hinderer started his mission work in Osielle, near Abeokuta in 1849, Chief Ogunbona (the uncle of Daniel Olubi) allowed him to work for David Hinderer as a house servant. The twenty years Olubi spent with Hinderer<sup>414</sup> broadened his understanding of Christian ministry and prepared him for the ministry ahead. When Hinderer started his work in Ibadan in 1853 and married Anna, Olubi moved with them to the Ibadan mission station. Doing missions required a schoolmaster and seeing as Hinderer needed one when he travelled to Ibadan, Olubi took the position in December 1853. In addition to his work as schoolmaster, he continued to assist the Hinderers as a house servant.<sup>415</sup>

Following rivalry issue among some Yoruba, Hinderer decided to visit the Alaafin Atiba of Oyo in 1856, accompanied by Hardesty, (another CMS missionary who was set to begin mission work in Oyo). However, Hardesty was soon relieved by Olubi. In May 1856, Hinderer replaced Olubi with another missionary, George Williams, thus leading to Olubi's return to Ibadan. In addition to Williams's appointment, another possible reason for Olubi's return to Ibadan was the Hinderers' planned visit to England for medical check-ups. Sometime around 1852, Olubi married Susanna, one of the Hinderers' domestic staff members. After their marriage, they continued to work in Ibadan.<sup>416</sup> Olubi worked tirelessly in building peace between the people of Abeokuta and their Ibadan adversaries to such an extent that Olubi was hailed for the success of the missions in Ibadan. After Hinderer's retirement in 1867, he handed the Ibadan mission over to Olubi. Olubi was ordained into fulltime priesthood on 6 February 1876 by the Bishop of Sierra Leone.<sup>417</sup>

Olubi tutored Johnson during the latter's early years in Ibadan. Together, they visited Yoruba chiefs, preached and did other catechetical work in churches. Johnson's first visit to Oyo was initiated by Olubi in 1873, when he asked him to go to Oyo and donate money towards the construction of new chapel, and

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<sup>414</sup> K. Olabimtan 2011b, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-7.

<sup>415</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167-168; K. Olabimtan 2011b, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-7.

<sup>416</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167-168.

<sup>417</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167-168; K. Olabimtan 2011b, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-7.



to deliver clothes donated to new converts by the Ibadan Christians.<sup>418</sup> It was customary for missionaries to visit local chiefs during their first visits to any mission station in Nigeria, so it is possible that Johnson visited the Alaafin of Oyo during his visit to the mission station in Oyo, even though there is no direct evidence of such a visit.

In 1867 when Daniel Olubi became a deacon, he appointed Johnson as one of his assistants. Johnson continued to serve Olubi (who had become his mentor) until 1875, when he himself became the catechist of Aremo Church. Through his service with Olubi, Johnson met with many chiefs and Yoruba kings on the recommendations of Olubi. Johnson preached in places, performed catechisms and associated peacefully with the young, the old, Christians and non-Christians alike winning many into the service of Christ.<sup>419</sup> Olubi happily coached and passed on the mantle of leadership to Johnson. With this blessings bestowed upon Johnson, he became the “recognised”<sup>420</sup> historian of the Yoruba.

It is not known precisely when Johnson’s interest in writing the history of the Yoruba people developed, but his exposure to various kinds of people combined with his perception of the Yoruba Wars, might have influenced his conviction over the need to document Yoruba history. In the 1870s, Johnson became interested in obtaining knowledge regarding local Yoruba politics. His interest led him to meet great Yoruba chiefs like Are Latosa (great leader of Ibadan in the 1870s and 1880s). By the 1880s, Johnson became one of the most influential Christian leaders, mainly due to his involvement in the search for peace during the many Yoruba Wars that engulfed the Yoruba during his lifetime.<sup>421</sup> Johnson thought that it was barbaric for one Yoruba group to engage another Yoruba group in war. Concerning Johnson, Falola said:

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<sup>418</sup>M.R. Doortmont, “Samuel Johnson (1846-1901),” 167-168; K. Olabimtan 2011b, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-7.

<sup>419</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34, 40.

<sup>420</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34, 40.

<sup>421</sup>Ibadan and Ijaye were both under the control of the Old Oyo Empire and it worried Johnson that the two regions had fought each other during the 1860s. Johnson also blamed the Fulanis, who came from Northern Nigeria, for the wars and for their capturing of Ilorin, which became dominated by Islam due to their influence. Johnson’s interest for peace among the Yoruba might have motivated his interest for local politics and in writing history. For example, in October 1881, Olubi, assisted by Johnson and other Christian leaders, were involved in a discussion which proposed the possible intervention of the British government over certain wars in Yorubaland. Johnson then led a delegation to Lagos to air the views of the Alaafin of Oyo over the wars. The Alaafin of Oyo requested for the British to intervene in the Yoruba Wars. Since 1881, Johnson served as a negotiator between the British and Yoruba local chiefs, all in an effort to stop the wars (M.R. Doortmont, “Samuel Johnson (1846-1901),” 171-172).

By the 1880s he had become one of the most influential Christian leaders and was involved in the search for peace, because he felt it destructive for one Yoruba group to attack another. As Samuel made it clear in his book, he became himself a principal figure in the major peace efforts by serving as the liaison between the British and the chiefs of Ibadan and Oyo. This diplomatic career, combined with his missionary work, made him popular figure in many circles.<sup>422</sup>

Johnson's popularity increased after his ordination in 1875 and also when he was appointed a pastor at Oyo in 1887. Johnson married Lydia Okuseinde, the daughter of James Okuseinde, a catechist in Oke Ogunpa in 1875, but lost her in 1888.<sup>423</sup> Johnson was remarried to Martha Garba in 1895.<sup>424</sup> Johnson suffered a prolonged illness and died on 29 April 1901 at the age of 55, leaving behind his wife, five children and his unpublished manuscript on Yoruba history. Johnson is deified by many as a great Yoruba hero, with the *Lagos Weekly* newspaper publishing the following obituary about his life:

His services in connection with the peace negotiations which terminated the 17 years' war in the Yoruba country are well known. His knowledge of the country and the manners and customs of the various tribes was unrivalled. He had collected a large amount of information relating to the history of the Yoruba country of which the manuscript exists. He was... distinguished for his devotion to duty, well-known for his liberality and open-heartedness, and for urbanity, self-abnegation and patriotism.<sup>425</sup>

Despite the support Johnson received during his lifetime, he also faced a lot of resistance from certain Yoruba chiefs and ordinary people who did not like his role in, and love for British rule, and his involvements in peace negotiations during the wars. For example, in May 1887, after his transfer to Oyo mission, Balogun Nofowokan (his elderly friend) notified him of the hate the Ijebus harboured towards him and about the threat to kill him. The Ijebus accused Johnson of not being on the side of peace but

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<sup>422</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34.

<sup>423</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 170.

<sup>424</sup> "Johnson, Samuel (1846-1901)" *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1.

<sup>425</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 35; originally from J.O. Olorunyomi, *Isin Ofosi no Igbede* (Ilorin, self-published, 1914).

war. The Ijebus also accused him of contributing to the construction of the Alaafin of Oyo's palace, whom they believed preferred war over peace. They also accused Johnson of supplying him with ammunition and weapons of war in order for him to destroy Ibadan. The Egba people were also unimpressed by Johnson's continued support of British imperials in their efforts to bring about a peaceful coexistence between the Egbas and Oyo Empire.<sup>426</sup> In spite of adversity, he remained committed to the completion of his manuscript. More so, his commitment to writing his book suggests that he was patient and willing to empower the younger generation in their understanding Yoruba history. Until the publication of Johnson's book, very little documentation existed on. Even today, Samuel Johnson's book is still regarded the most prolific and extensive on Yoruba history.

## 3.2 Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*

### 3.2.1 *The writing of The History of the Yorubas*

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, not much was written on the origins of the African people, especially by Africans themselves. Johnson's effort to write his book, *The History of the Yorubas*, was a significant milestone in African historiography. However, Johnson's theories, as outlined by his book, are highly contested amongst anthropologists, sociologists, linguists and most importantly, historians. One of the main reasons for this contestation, primarily voiced by historians, is that the book combines a number of fields of study regarding the Yoruba people, their culture and the socio-religious and political context of Yorubaland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. More so, the book has information on Yoruba culture, Yoruba origins, and the history of the Yoruba Wars as well as the role of the British government in putting a stop to the wars. It is on this note that Olabimtan wrote:

The wide range of fields in which Johnson's life and work have attracted interest attests to his place in the evolution of modern African intellectual tradition. Fields as wide apart as literature and history, as well as the cognate disciplines of anthropology and sociology have

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<sup>426</sup>K.O., Olabimtan [2009] "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," (PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal), 112-114.

fed on the man, his thought and his style. It was the historians, however, who have had a field day exploring the influences that shaped him and are either affirming or contesting his submissions on Yoruba history.<sup>427</sup>

Despite critique, many people, especially the Yoruba themselves, have described Johnson as a historian. Johnson's intellectual prowess, especially in terms of his ability to convert oral histories and oral traditions into writing, has been commended by historians like Ajayi and Robert July.<sup>428</sup> Olabimtan mentioned that Robert July described Johnson as a moralist who turned historian.<sup>429</sup> Moreover, due to the various fields of knowledge discussed in his book, which encompasses history, conflict management and anthropology, Johnson's book is regarded as one of the best and most comprehensive on Yoruba history. The book "remains a source of overwhelming importance, and the framework within which we study Yoruba history."<sup>430</sup> Doortmont also described Johnson book as "one of the best known works ever published on Nigerian history..."<sup>431</sup> On the "Publisher's note" in Johnson's book, it reads:

*The History of the Yorubas* remains the most comprehensive, most authoritative and easily the most ready reference text on the origin, features and spread of the Yoruba people. Since its first appearance in 1921, the volume has always been sought after by scholars who are genuinely interested in getting an authentic account of the phenomenon of the Yoruba race.<sup>432</sup>

Since the 1950s, hardly any books written on Yoruba history have omitted discussions (either dismissing or approving) surrounding Johnson's theories. Local Yoruba people respect him and his ideas as presented in his book. The Yoruba that respected Johnson's works seemingly regarded his views as sacred; sacred in

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<sup>427</sup> K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 22.

<sup>428</sup> K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 23. Examples of historical works by July and Ajayi are: Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 255 and Ajayi, Jacob F.A. *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*. Essex: Longman, 1965.

<sup>429</sup>K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 23, originally from Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 256.

<sup>430</sup>K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 24.

<sup>431</sup>M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 167.

<sup>432</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, vii.

a sense that they do not want to argue against his views. In other words, the Yoruba are not keen on contesting Johnson's views. They regard what he said as true, despite the many ideological and chronological limitations in his suggestions, especially with regard to the Yoruba origins. Falola expatiated:

Many Yoruba, including knowledgeable traditional historians, treat Johnson's book as a Bible and disparage wisdom from other sources. Even in cases where academic scholars have been able to use other sources to question Johnson or correct such thing as his dates and chronology, their revisions and reasoned suggestions are generally ignored by the local audience. It is an article of faith for many of its readers that Johnson is always right.<sup>433</sup>

There are two major reasons that motivated Johnson to commence his documentation of Yoruba history. Firstly, he was concerned that the Yoruba elders, who preserved Yoruba oral history, were dying without their knowledge being transcribed, and that their history might be lost as a result.<sup>434</sup> Secondly, he was concerned that the educated Yoruba possessed more knowledge of European history than their own Yoruba history.<sup>435</sup> Johnson himself stated:

What led to this production was not a burning desire of the author to appear in print – as all who are well acquainted with him will readily admit- but a purely patriotic motive, that the history of our fatherland might not be lost in oblivion, especially as our old sires are fast dying out. Educated natives of Yoruba are well acquainted with the history of England and with that of Rome and Greece, but of the history of their own country they know nothing whatever! This reproach it is one the author's objects to remove.<sup>436</sup>

Johnson admired the Yoruba people. The nationalist spirit, which sparked Johnson's concern over the preservation of Yoruba oral history, made him to document their history. It is in this regard that

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<sup>433</sup>T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 32.

<sup>434</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>435</sup> The introduction of Yoruba language into the curriculum of the Abeouta Training Institution by Bühler deserves commendation.

<sup>436</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

Doortmont described Johnson as one who was aware of the needs of the Yoruba people as a whole. He added:

As a missionary and representative of the European powers in the region on one hand and an educated Africans of Sierra Leonian birth and Yoruba descent on the other hand, he was prompted to promote the social and moral uplift of what he considered to be 'his people'.<sup>437</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, any document directed towards the writing of Yoruba history would have been of a great significance to the Yoruba people. As Johnson saw that not much was written on Yoruba history, he grasped the opportunity to write about them in great detail.<sup>438</sup> Johnson relied on information he received from Yoruba people, whom he met with in order to document Yoruba history. During this process of interaction, it is likely that the view, beliefs and opinions of his informants might have influenced Johnson's own thoughts.<sup>439</sup>

Johnson's sources of information and also his methodology of writing Yoruba history can be challenged. For example, he relied on the royal bards, who lived in royal palaces, to obtain information on Yoruba mythology. From generation to generation, the bards were responsible for storing information on royalties and culture through the preservation of oral traditions.<sup>440</sup> In terms of personal experience, Johnson himself witnessed some of the events he wrote about, especially those pertaining to Yoruba internal wars. Yoruba Wars, for example, the memories of the Ibadan-Ilorin war were still fresh in the minds of many Yoruba when Johnson came to Ibadan in 1857. It is no surprise then that he kept telling the Yoruba people that war was evil: "[t]ime and again he took the opportunity to tell the people (and his superiors in Lagos and London) that war was evil, producing only hardship and scarcity."<sup>441</sup> Johnson also depended on receiving information from many other prominent Yoruba and eye witnesses, like David Kukomi, a common soldier who participated in some of the wars that engulfed the Yoruba nation.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>437</sup>M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 175.

<sup>438</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>439</sup>Some of Johnson's informants were Lagunju, Josiah Oni and David Kokumi.

<sup>440</sup>Cf. S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>441</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 171,

<sup>442</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii

Kukomi, who later became a patriarch of the Ibadan church, was a youth at the time of the reign of King Abiodun and was able to give a balanced account to Johnson on some of the events that transpired in Yorubaland. Another source of information for Johnson was Josiah Oni, an intrepid trader and excellent observer who was well-informed about the Yoruba people. His highness the venerable Lagunju the Timi of Ede, a gifted historian, also fed Johnson with relevant information on Yoruba oral history and oral tradition.<sup>443</sup>

After he completed the writing of his manuscript in 1897, a laborious effort which took about twenty years, Johnson never saw his book in print.<sup>444</sup> In 1899, the manuscript was forwarded for publication in England through the CMS but it got lost. In 1900, Obadiah Johnson (see Appendix B, Figure2), the elder brother of Samuel Johnson, travelled to England to see the publisher (whose name is not known) and enquire about the whereabouts of the manuscript, The publisher reported that the manuscript was misplaced and that he was willing to refund the author.<sup>445</sup> Obadiah and his contemporaries, who were interested in the publication of the manuscript, suspected foul play from the publisher. In the following year (1901), Johnson passed away. Obadiah felt compelled to rewrite the book: "... and it has now fallen to the lot of the editor [Obadiah] to rewrite the whole history anew, from the copious notes and rough copies left behind by the author."<sup>446</sup> At present, it is not known whether, or to what extent, the Church and School Supplies (CSS) (who finally published *The History of the Yorubas*) influenced the book. In the editor's preface, it is said that the editor curtailed and amplified certain chapters written by Johnson.<sup>447</sup>

Obadiah was initially reluctant to rewrite the book, mainly due to the laborious task involved in compiling the manuscripts left behind by his brother, coupled with the fact that he was a medical doctor who had a busy schedule. But Obadiah reflected on the years Samuel has spent writing the book. He thought that his brother's efforts need not go to waste. After some further reflection, he decided to rewrite the book:

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<sup>443</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, vii. Detailed information regarding some of Johnson's informants, like Josiah Oni, David Kukomi and Lagunju are scanty.

<sup>444</sup> K.O., Olabimtan, "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 118.

<sup>445</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix. The specific individual described in the text as the one who lost the manuscript is not known. The book became finally published by the CSS limited.

<sup>446</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix. See the concluding section of this chapter for further information on the role of Obadiah in Johnson's writing of *the History of the Yorubas*.

<sup>447</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix.

“some chapters has (sic) to be rewritten, some curtailed, others amplified, and new ones added where necessary.”<sup>448</sup>

After rewriting the manuscript, Obadiah forwarded it to be published in England and the manuscript was dispatched from Lagos on 2 January 1916. However, the manuscripts did not reach its indented destination, as it was captured by a raider named Moewe and later rediscovered in America, from where it was forwarded to England. For close to two years, Obadiah once again received no news about the manuscript until it was finally delivered for printing in England: “[t]he manuscripts were forwarded to a well-known English publisher through one of the great Missionary Societies in 1899 and – *mirabile dictum* – nothing more was heard of them!”<sup>449</sup> Sadly, after World War I, there was a scarcity of paper in England and as a result, the manuscript had to be returned to Nigeria at the request of Obadiah. In order to avoid any further disappearance of the manuscript, Obadiah decided to type out the manuscript. However, the scarcity of paper was also a reality in Nigeria, this impeding Obadiah’s quest to complete his typewriting. After a while, the book was finally published by CSS Limited, after which Obadiah, as editor, released it for public use.<sup>450</sup>

The introductory section of *The History of the Yorubas* is a discourse on the Yoruba people, their geography, language, religion, government, land laws, manners and customs. In it, Johnson discussed Yoruba grammatical constructions whereby Yoruba alphabets, vowel sounds, consonant sounds, accents, single words, compound words, parts of speech, nouns, verbs, adjectives, reflexives, tenses, adverbs are well-articulated (pp. xiv-iv). After giving a background study of the Yoruba people, their culture and geography, Johnson went on to address the issues relating to the origin of the Yoruba and their early history. It in this first chapter, that Johnson proposes Egyptian origins for the Yoruba, while later also stating that he dissociated himself from the Arabian and/or Islamic theory of the Yoruba origins.

Chapter One of Johnson’s book, which associated the Yoruba origins with Egypt, is the focus of the research presented within this thesis. Although *The History of the Yorubas* consists of over 700 pages, the

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<sup>448</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix.

S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix-x.

<sup>449</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, x.

<sup>450</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, x.



section outlining the theory of Yoruba origins from Egypt is limited to five pages (pp. 3-7). It is not clear why Johnson did not provide extensive details on the Yoruba-Egyptian connection in the same way he did on the Yoruba Wars or the Yoruba culture. In Chapter Two, the history of Yoruba tribes like the Ijebus, Ijesa, Ekiti and the Ondos is discussed. Chapter Three addressed issues of Yoruba religion and worship. The Yoruba believed that every activity on earth was controlled by the gods who are assigned different responsibilities. Some of the deified images of worship among the Yoruba are the Kori, Orisala, Ori, Ogun, Esu, Sopona, Egungu, Oro, Ifa, Sango (god of thunder) and many more.<sup>451</sup>

In Chapter Four, the nature of Yoruba government and the roles of Yoruba chiefs like the Alaafin, who was the head of other Yoruba kings and princes is explained. Yoruba rituals like coronation, funerals and the public appearance of kings are also discussed in chapter four. Chapter Five presents a discourse on Yoruba names and their significance, while Chapter Six focuses on Yoruba towns, villages and cities. Chapter Seven is on Yoruba law and Chapter Eight is a discourse on Yoruba dressing, manners, customs and appearance. Chapter Nine focuses on Yoruba marriage, customs of remarriage, widowhood, trade and the value of specific professions in Yoruba societies. Issues on education, wealth, debt, war and funerals are also discussed. The second part of the book deals with Yoruba mythological kings. Specific heroes like Oduduwa, Oranya, Sango and Ajaka, deified by the Yoruba, are discussed. The influence of prominent kings like Aganju, Kori, Onigbogi, Ofinran, Oloaso, Ajiboyede and many more on the Yoruba are also outlined in detail. The following chapter is a discourse on Yoruba Wars. Some of the wars are Ijaye war, Kirigji war, the coming of Dahomey to Yoruba land and many more (pp. 141-507).

The Yoruba wars occupy a large portion of Johnson's book (pp. 188-637).<sup>452</sup> The aim of discussing the wars might have been to highlight the roles of certain Yoruba leaders in the Yoruba Wars. The war at Ilorin and the fall of Ofa, as well as the liberation of the Egbados, are also discussed (pp. 561-642). The last chapter, titled "the Sequel", is a discourse on how various Yoruba people resettled after the wars and details certain aspects of the history of the Yoruba after 1901 (pp. 643-650). The book ends with two appendices;

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<sup>451</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 26- 39; cf. S.S. Farrow, *Faith, fancies and fetich or Yoruba paganism: Being some account of the religious beliefs of the West African Negroes, particularly of the Yoruba tribes of southern Nigeria*, (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 65-82.

<sup>452</sup> K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 235.

one deals with treatise and agreements, while the other is a table listing Yoruba kings, rulers and chiefs.<sup>453</sup> The book also includes an index and a map of the Yorubaland.<sup>454</sup>

### 3.2.2 *The debates on the authorship of The History of the Yorubas*

After Samuel Johnson's death and the disappearance of his manuscript in England, Obadiah took it upon himself to rewrite *The History of the Yorubas*. As editor, Obadiah claimed that he collaborated with Johnson to rewrite, amplify and curtail some chapters:

When all this had to be done with the daily exactions of a busy profession, and other demands on his time, friends will judge the editor leniently for having taken such a long time to repair the loss sustained many years ago. Some chapters has (sic) to be rewritten, some curtailed, others amplified, and new ones added where necessary.<sup>455</sup>

Obadiah's extensive contribution to the book's content, not just his editing tasks, made other writers feel like the writing of *The History of the Yorubas* should be credited to both Johnson and Obadiah.<sup>456</sup> Falola is

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<sup>453</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 651-671

<sup>454</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 673-686.

<sup>455</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix.

<sup>456</sup> One of the earliest scholars to raise the issue of authorship (of *The History of the Yorubas*) is Michel Doortmont. Doortmont stated that the authorship of those chapters in Johnson's book, which related to events from 1870s onward, is not known: "[f]or the chapters on contemporary matters say from the 1870s onward, we cannot be so sure about the actual authorship." Doortmont believed that the chapters detailing events from the 1870s was journalistic in character and that it differed from the earlier sections of the manuscript. Though he claimed not to have known the author, he suggested that Obadiah might have been the rightful author of those chapters (M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 177). Doortmont did not provide any further explanation for his assumption. However, it is very important to note that Johnson was still active in the 1870s onward, and that he may have written the chapters relating to the events of the 1870s onward, with the exception of the last chapter of the book. It may be recalled that Johnson was ordained as a pastor in 1887, got married in 1875, the same year he was ordained and remarried in 1895. He travelled to different places afterwards (cf. "Johnson, Samuel (1846-1901)" *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1). These activities carried out by Johnson shows that Johnson was active and might have continued to receive information and continued to write his book during and after the 1870s. The lessons Johnson received in English language and in literary study at the Abeokuta Training Institution ought not to be underestimated in enhancing his abilities to write properly thus Johnson could have been the rightful author of his book.

among those who discussed the debates regarding the authorship of *the Histroy of the Yorubas*.<sup>457</sup> Another problem is that the CSS Limited, who published the book, placed a photograph of Obadiah and not of Johnson on the frontispiece of *The History of the Yorubas*.<sup>458</sup> Both these factors have contributed in raising questions surrounding the book's authorship.

The level of influence Obadiah had over *The History of the Yorubas* is difficult to ascertain, especially since we have no way of comparing Obadiah's edited manuscript with the lost original penned solely by Johnson. However, some elements regarding Obadiah's background could be used to evaluate the role he played in compilling, rewriting and in publishing the manuscript.

Firstly, Obadiah had often been described by Falola as someone who seemingly had a negative perception of, and objection against, British rule in Yorubaland. However, Samuel Johnson desired the opposite; the advancement of British rule in Yorubaland.<sup>459</sup> It is likely that Johnson believed that civilisation, Christianity and British rule are aimed at general human development. According to Falola, *The History of the Yorubas* is more lenient towards British rule in Yorubaland, which suggests that Obadiah, who was known to be intolerant to British rule, might not have been the rightful author of the book, nor did his editorship significantly alter the original political slant of the book. Falola stated that one of Obadiah's main reasons behind his intolerance of British rule in Yorubaland, was that Obadiah was once denied a top medical position by the British government in Lagos because he was an African.<sup>460</sup> Falola states:

Given the hostility of Obadiah to the colonial government and his own experience with racism, having been denied a senior position in the colonial medical service on the flimsy excuse, a book by him would have been far more angry in tone, perhaps condemnatory of the British, or probably reflecting his own experience of race relations. *The History of the Yoruba* is a calm book, sympathetic to the British rule and devoid of racial tension, all

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<sup>457</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 36.

<sup>458</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 36.

<sup>459</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 36

<sup>460</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

characteristics far more consistent with the experience and feelings of Samuel than of Obadiah.<sup>461</sup>

Secondly, Falola added that Obadiah's Christian-Yoruba character contradicted the basic teaching of the early missionaries who arrived in Yorubaland. For example, the missionaries who worked in Yorubaland objected to polygamy. Obadiah, on the other hand, defended the practice of polygamy as an established Yoruba practice. Falola states that:

In spite of his unquestionable Christian background and monogamous relations, he [Obadiah] defended polygamy as an established Yoruba practice, arguing against those who were opposed to it on the basis of Christian teaching and western culture.<sup>462</sup>

In contrast to his brother, Johnson complied with the command of marrying only one wife.<sup>463</sup> Obadiah would not have been lenient towards such western ideas as monogamy in his authorship.

Thirdly, Falola mentions that when Johnson was sick, Obadiah visited him in Oyo and together they discussed the manuscripts. Yet no one is sure of the specific advice Obadiah gave to Johnson during the visit. In 1897, Samuel requested permission to travel to Lagos, to discuss some aspects of the book with Obadiah.<sup>464</sup> The visit indicated that Obadiah might have had some knowledge of the contents of Johnson's manuscripts before he died. However, the nature and extend of of Obadiah's knowledge cannot be determined at this stage.

Fourthly, *The History of the Yorubas* contains extensive information on Yoruba culture. Falola notes that the discussion of the Yoruba culture in within the book could be likened to Johnson's background. He noted that although Obadiah loved the Yoruba people and their culture, the depth of Johnson's knowledge and his love for the Yoruba people far exceeded that of Obadiah. He added that Samuel spent most of his lifetime interacting with prominent Yoruba people, and these interactions might have given

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<sup>461</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

<sup>462</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 37.

<sup>463</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 37.

<sup>464</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 37.

him an “in depth” knowledge and understanding of Yoruba culture. Falola proposes that the book’s extensive and detailed descriptions of Yoruba culture therefore supports authorship by Johnson.<sup>465</sup> In addition, Bishop Oluwole, a ministry colleague of Johnson, testified to Johnson’s passionate interest on the Yoruba people and their culture. In 1896, Johnson accompanied Oluwole on a tour round the Ibolo district in Yorubaland. Doortmont described the tour:

I have to acknowledge the valuable services rendered to me by the Rev. S. Johnson during this journey; the purity of his Yoruba, his thorough knowledge of the manners and customs of the people, their character, religious rites and ceremonies, all made him a useful companion indeed and enabled him to put our message before the people everywhere in a way in which I could not have done. As we receive much hospitality everywhere, his advice in the matter of return presents was valuable...<sup>466</sup>

Fifthly, Obadiah was a busy medical doctor and his interest in history was likely not as extensive as that of his brother, Samuel.<sup>467</sup> Adeloye notes that Obadiah spent much of his time researching West African traditional medicine while Obadiah wrote his medical degree thesis on “West African therapeutics.”<sup>468</sup> This might have limited his interest in history compared to Samuel’s”. In addition, it took Obadiah a very long period of time to commence with his compilation and rewriting of the manuscripts, indicating that he was reluctant about compiling the manuscripts.<sup>469</sup> This reluctance, in combination with the sheer amount of time it required Samuel to compile the original manuscripts, suggests that Obadiah could not have been the original author of the manuscripts. Furthermore, Dr. Adelola Adeloye, a neurological surgeon, described Obadiah as a pious Yoruba man who was determined to get his brother’s book *The History of the Yorubas* published.<sup>470</sup> He noted:

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<sup>465</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 37.

<sup>466</sup> M.R. Doortmont, “Samuel Johnson (1846-1901),” 177. Originally from CMS, G3A2/0 1896/74, “A brief report of an itinerancy by Bishop Oluwole and the Rev. S. Johnson in the Ibolo District of the Yoruba country from Jan. 14021, 1896.”

<sup>467</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

<sup>468</sup> A. Adeloye. 1974. “Some early Nigerian doctors and their contribution of modern medicine in West Africa,” *Journal of Medical History* 18(3); 275-293.

<sup>469</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

<sup>470</sup> A. Adeloye, “Some early Nigerian doctors...,” 284.

His love of the Yorubas, his anxiety to get his brother, Samuel's work published, and his own intrinsic scholarship, all made possible this monumental monograph on the origin and customs of the Yorubas. The original manuscript compiled by Samuel Johnson was sent to an English publisher..."<sup>471</sup>

Adeloye's statement suggests that Samuel might have been the original author of the book.

Sixthly, the book may not have been written in full by two authors because Samuel clearly mentioned his personal interactions with his sources of information.<sup>472</sup> There is no place in the book where it is clearly stated that Obadiah himself also interacted with the bards or with individuals like David Kokumi, Josiah Oni or Lagunju. Johnson personally interacted with all of the aforementioned leaders,<sup>473</sup> and interviewed the bards.<sup>474</sup> Doortmont believed that despite Obadiah's strong credentials, he is not responsible for writing the first part of the book, which is a discourse on Yoruba people, their culture, languages and geography.<sup>475</sup> He stated:

We can of course never be sure about the extent of Obadiah's original contributions as editor of the work without having access to either the notes he worked from or the original manuscript, but we can make some comments here. Those parts of the book dealing with language, the origins and early history, religion, and manners and customs can be safely ascribed to Samuel Johnson. He was the expert here, and what is more, the person who had the opportunity to collect the material for this part of the book.<sup>476</sup>

Seventhly, part two of the book is a discourse on certain aspects of the Yoruba Wars. There are clear indications that Samuel Johnson was in Yorubaland when some of these wars took place. For example, his

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<sup>471</sup> A. Adeloye, "Some early Nigerian doctors..." 284.

<sup>472</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 177.

<sup>473</sup> Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, vii.

<sup>474</sup> S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, viii. No one knows the names of specific bards interviewed by Johnson, but his visit to Royal chiefs as indicated in the book's preface shows that Johnson did interview a number of bards.

<sup>475</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 177.

<sup>476</sup> M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901)," 177.

prolonged stay in Ibadan before he went to study at the Abeokuta Training Institution was a direct consequence of the Ijaye war.<sup>477</sup> His involvement in peace keeping allowed him to obtain extracts of the treatise signed between Yoruba leaders and the British government in Nigeria.<sup>478</sup> Based upon the dominations of information pertaining to Yoruba Wars,<sup>479</sup> Coupled with the inclusion of the treaties in the book, strongly suggest that Johnson wrote those chapters pertaining to the wars.<sup>480</sup>

Furthermore, it is never mentioned in the book that Obadiah was involved in peace keeping during the Yoruba Wars. Obadiah also did not state within any part of the book that he undertook the difficult task of collecting information concerning the writing of the book.<sup>481</sup> Rather, he gave full credit to his brother for the years he spent writing the book. According to Falola, Obadiah himself confirmed his brother as the author of the book: "...and he appropriately called his brother [Samuel] the author."<sup>482</sup> In addition, the fact that the book is dedicated to David Hinderer suggests that Samuel would have been the rightful author of the book, as Hinderer was Samuel's mentor and had influenced Samuel into joining missions. He also introduced Samuel to Bühler for further academic training. Nowhere in the book does it state that Hinderer mentored Obadiah. Falola states that after Samuel Johnson died, Obadiah was invited to the Lagos Institute to deliver a lecture on Yoruba history. His message was centred on Samuel's manuscripts and Obadiah accredited to writing of the book to Samuel.<sup>483</sup> Falola thought that:

The best way to resolve this debate is to see Samuel Johnson as the principal author of the book and Obadiah as revising it very slightly (and updating the final chapter, titled "the Sequel," on the establishment of British rule, because some of the events narrated there-in

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<sup>477</sup> K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 235.

<sup>478</sup> Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 651-668.

<sup>479</sup> K.O., Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 235.

<sup>480</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 651-669.

<sup>481</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

<sup>482</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38. Although not quoted verbatim, Falola obtained the above information from the "editor's preface" of *The History of the Yorubas*, p. ix (T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 50). The information which described Samuel Johnson as the author of the book might have been obtained from "the editor who was all along in collaboration with the author had...." (S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ix).

<sup>483</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

occurred after Samuel's death). With regard to the revisions, Obadiah provided some footnotes where he wanted to explain or add to what his brother said.<sup>484</sup>

Obadiah did not want his brother's efforts in writing the manuscripts to be in vain, so he ensured its publication. One of his personal motivations in getting the job done was to avoid: "the almost criminal disgrace of allowing the outcome of his brother's many years of labour to be altogether lost."<sup>485</sup>

Scholars like Falola and Olabimtan consider Samuel Johnson to be the rightful author of the book, despite the contribution made by Obadiah. More so, considering the background of Samuel Johnson, I argue that his socio-political and religious context influenced his theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. I propose that Johnson's Christian background as a missionary directly influenced him to associate the origins of the Yoruba with the Coptic Church. I contend that his role in resolving Yoruba conflicts motivated him to advance the theory that the Yoruba people originated from one source, namely Egypt. Perhaps he envisaged that a narrative which highlighted the shared origins and identity of the Yoruba, would help to unite a people separated and estranged by war.

In my view, Obadiah may not have possessed the amount of historical knowledge needed, especially when considering classical cultures, to propose a connection between the Yoruba, the Greco-Roman Empire or Egypt. In contrast, Samuel possessed the necessary amount of historical insight, gained through years of formal training that included history, to make such a connection. In my next chapter, I will extrapolate more on the idea that Samuel Johnson's belief in an Egyptian-Yoruba origin could help to prove that he is the rightful author of *The History of the Yorubas*.

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<sup>484</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 38.

<sup>485</sup> *The history of the Yorubas*, ix.



### 3.3 Samuel Johnson and the Yoruba Wars

As noted before, Johnson played a significant role in bringing about peace during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba Wars. In order for us to better understand the influence these conflicts had over Johnson's writing of *The History of the Yorubas*, we now turn to a more focused discussion over his involvement of, and subsequent narration of, the Yoruba Wars.

Modern-day Yoruba enjoy peace among themselves regardless of their individual states of origin<sup>486</sup> and regard themselves as a people of one ethnic group. This was not the case in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, many Yoruba sub-ethnic groups fought against each other. On other occasions, the conflict would take place between Yoruba geographical regions. It may be noted that the Yoruba were and still are divided into sub-ethnic groups, despite the fact that they understand one another's dialects.<sup>487</sup> Yoruba unity is attributed to the similarities of their culture and of their understanding that all Yoruba originated from a common ancestor, who originally came to Ile Ife.<sup>488</sup> During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Yoruba sub-ethnic groups dedicated their complete loyalty to their respective ethnic leaders; not one individual regarded himself/herself as the leader of all Yoruba.<sup>489</sup> The Yoruba used to live in separate communities and each community regarded their specific leaders associated cultures as supreme. They also believed that their individual ethnic group superseded other Yoruba ethnic groups.<sup>490</sup> On this subject, Omolewa said:

The Yoruba did not always see themselves as belonging to one group with a common destiny and aspirations. They were divided up into strong sub-ethnic groups amongst which were the Akoko, Eghba, Eghado, Ekiti, Ijebu, Ijesa, Ondo, Owo and Oyo. In spite of the acceptance by

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<sup>486</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1.

<sup>487</sup> Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Yoruba were divided into various sub-ethnic groups such as the Oyo, the Egba, the Eghado, the Ijebu, the Ekiti, the Ondo, the Akoko, the Ikale and many more. Each Yoruba group developed its own dialect, culture and sometimes specific traditions. However, there remained a strong unity and bond in Yoruba culture and dialect. The Yoruba knew that their original ancestor, Oduduwa, originated from Ile Ife (T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 1-3).

<sup>488</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 1-3.

<sup>489</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124.

<sup>490</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124.

all these groups that the Yoruba derived from Ile –Ife, and despite the fact that they all understood each other’s dialect, loyalty to the existing sub-ethnic groups was strong. The Oyo and the Ife rulers often showed concern for the presence of peace and harmony in Yorubaland and were willing to support efforts to reach negotiated settlements for conflicts and disputes in the land. However, for most of the 19th century the Yoruba were at war with each other.<sup>491</sup>

Yoruba sub-ethnic divisions in the early 19th century, together with a specific foreign invasion from the Dahomey region of West Africa, caused the Yoruba people to start fighting among themselves. The conflict lasted for about 28 years.<sup>492</sup> Some of the Yoruba Wars are: The Owu war, the Lasinmi war, the Kanla war, the Gbogun war, the Pole war, the Ogele war, the Mugba mugba war, the Ijaye war, the Opomu war, the Owiwi war, the Erumu war, the Gbanamu war, the Omyefun war, the Jabara or Arakanga war, the Onidese & the Oke Isero wars, the Iperu war, the Abemo war, the Osu war and many more.<sup>493</sup> Omolewa listed certain reasons as the main causes of the Yoruba Wars, while he together with Gbadamosi and Doortmont, also highlighted specific features of the Yoruba Wars.<sup>494</sup>

Omolewa stated that the wars did not affect all of the Yorubaland. For example, during the Owu war, which began from 1817 to 1824, only Owu town were affected by the war.<sup>495</sup> Some Yoruba were against the Ile Ife people and this also contributed to igniting the wars. For example, Apomu was regarded as a region that belonged to Ile Ife, yet Owu attacked Apomu. The Ijebu and the Oyo warriors, who had fled south of Ile Ife and who loved adventure, supported Ife and supported them in their siege at Owu until they managed to destroy the town of Owu. The Oyo warriors attacked the Egba people with equal force, whom they accused of supporting Owu.<sup>496</sup> The focus of the Owu war was the struggle for the control of the town market in Owu. The Ijaye and Kiriji wars were also centred in major Yoruba towns.<sup>497</sup> During the

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<sup>491</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124.

<sup>492</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124.

<sup>493</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 188-636.

<sup>494</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124-125.

<sup>495</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124.

<sup>496</sup> Cf. S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 209-210; M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 129

<sup>497</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 130.

Yoruba Wars, most traders and women were often not affected, as they were allowed to go about their daily activities.<sup>498</sup>

Omolewa noted that the Yoruba Wars were not aimed at destroying one specific Yoruba sub-ethnic group: “there were times when it was a coalition of sub-ethnic groups against one or another coalition.”<sup>499</sup> Sometimes the cause of invading Yorubaland could be foreign. For example, during the Dahomey war with Egbedo land, the Egba people who settled in Abeokuta began to desire territorial expansion. Their desire for land appropriation and territorial control brought them into conflict with the Ijebu people who were also interested in capturing Abeokuta. This rivalry between Egba and Ijebu led to the Owiwi war, which was won by the Ijebu in 1832.<sup>500</sup> It is important to note that firearms and sophisticated weapons were not used during Yoruba Wars. Rather traditional medicines, charms, amulets and traditional weapons were used. From the 1840s, the intensity of the wars increased due to the availability of firearms, as certain European groups exchanged guns with locally manufactured goods and slaves in the coastal parts of Yorubaland.<sup>501</sup>

More so, some of the wars like the Egba-Dahomey wars were caused due to shortage of leadership by Oyo, the known supervising authority over all of Yorubaland.<sup>502</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Oyo Empire was responsible for imposing peace and for supervising other Yoruba regions, until their leadership was challenged in the early 19th century<sup>503</sup> When Dahomey revolted against Oyo. Afonja, the Are Ona Kankafu while in Ilorin, also revolted against Oyo rule.<sup>504</sup> The Egba people murdered an *Ijari* (an Oyo agent who managed traditional activities). Around the early 19th century, the various attacks against Oyo made the Alaafin flee from his capital Oyo Ile to Ago (in the southern part of the Old Oyo). Because the Alaafin could not get the supply of horses which he used to get from Hausa traders, he fled from Oyo Ile.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 126.

<sup>499</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 126.

<sup>500</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 126.

<sup>501</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 124-125.

<sup>502</sup> M.R. Dortmoont “Introduction, recapturing the past: Samuel Johnson and the history of the Yoruba,” (Ph.D. dissertation; Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1994), 2.

<sup>503</sup> S. Stevens, ‘The Yorubas and Early Missionary Work among them,’ 2.

<sup>504</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 9-10.

<sup>505</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 128.

Another reason for the outbreak of the Yoruba conflict was the Fulani invasion of Oyo, which caused many Yoruba, who felt they were well-trained as warriors, to violently engage any invader. The strength of these warriors needed to be tested, but the absence of the Alaafin of Oyo who normally supervised all Yoruba regions, created a void in which many more conflicts among the Yoruba arose.<sup>506</sup> Also, the Oyo warriors required new settlements, which they preferred to obtain by force in a test of their strength. They raided weaker neighbouring Yoruba towns like Kuwo and Igboho to obtain slaves.<sup>507</sup> Hausa slaves, who were brought to Yorubaland, also participated in the wars.<sup>508</sup> Insecurity, political pressure, economic challenges and the presence of the Hausas who fled Northern Nigeria because of dan Fodio's jihad, had contributed to fuelling the Yoruba Wars.

An important point to note is that the Yoruba Wars started long before 1846, or the birth of Samuel Johnson, but continued throughout Johnson's time. For example, Dahomey, now the Republic of Benin, was a former part or colony of the Old Oyo Empire.<sup>509</sup> Despite Dahomey's political independence between 1818 and 1822, it had little peace, mainly due to the economic depression that engulfed the small kingdom. The abolition of the slave trade had weakened the economy of the region, as the ships meant for conveying slaves to and from Dahomey were not patronised as it used to be. More so, the income generated by palm oil plantations in the kingdom of Dahomey decreased due to soil infertility and as a result, King Gezo of Dahomey turned to the eastern frontiers of Egbado, Ketu and Abeokuta (all in Yorubaland) in an attempt to revive the economy of his country. In the process, Gezo trained women militant fighters, who attacked Otta (now Ogun state) in 1845 and captured the town in 1848. Also, in

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<sup>506</sup> M.R. Dortmoont "Introduction, recapturing the past: Samuel Johnson and the history of the Yoruba" (Ph.D. dissertation: Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>507</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 128 cf. T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 12.

<sup>508</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 12. Omolewa attempt to describe the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba Wars as non-violent and seemed not to blame the Yorubas for the wars (Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 126-127). Funso S. Afolayan discussed that the Yoruba Wars were mainly instigated by some Yoruba who were unwilling to abolish the slave trade (F.O. Afolayan, "Reconstructing the past to reconstruct the present: The Nineteen century wars And Yoruba history," from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/passes/4761530.0006.008/-->, [1993] 1-7). Robert Smith reviewed the book *Revolution and Power in Yorubaland 1840-1893*, written by Akintoye .S.A. in 1971. Robert Smith emphasised that even Akintoye admitted that the scramble for slaves in Yorubaland, by the Yorubas themselves, was the main reason for Yoruba Wars (R. Smith, "The Yoruba Wars of the Nineteenth century," from [http://journals.cambridge.org/data/firstABSTRACT/afh/afh14\\_01/s002185370001224...](http://journals.cambridge.org/data/firstABSTRACT/afh/afh14_01/s002185370001224...), 1.

<sup>509</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 127.

1851, when Ibadan was engaged in a war with Ijesha, Gezo grasped the opportunity and attacked Abeokuta which, at that time had a weak defence.<sup>510</sup>

The Christian missionaries and the British government in Nigeria were not happy with the victory of Dahomey against Abeokuta.<sup>511</sup> The missionaries in particular were concerned because Abeokuta was the mission headquarters of the entire Yorubaland<sup>512</sup> and the missionaries believed that King Gezo had not abandoned the practice of slave trading. They provided logistics and moral support to the Egba forces and the British consul, John Beecroft, provided arms and ammunition to Egba. This logistical support gave Abeokuta the ability to repel the attacks against her territories.<sup>513</sup> In 1864, Dahomey attempted another attack against Egba but was unsuccessful and as a result, the Dahomey forces proceeded to attack Ketu between 1883 and 1886. The wars between Egba and Dahomey are popularly referred to as the *Egba-Dahomey wars*.<sup>514</sup>

Another Yoruba War, which had a serious impact on the life of Samuel Johnson, was the Ijaye war (1860-1865). The Ijaye war began because Kurunmi, the leader of Ijaye, was a dictator who wanted to control the upper side of Ogun against the wishes of the Alaafin of Oyo. The Alaafin of Oyo decided to support Ibadan in secret against Ijaye, as Ibadan was an arch rival of Ijaye. Near Ijaye, the Egba gathered at Abeokuta from where they planned to control Egbado for political and economic reasons. The war began after the death of Atiba the Alaafin of Oyo. Atiba's son, Adelu, was expected to be buried together with his father, as custom demanded, but Adelu refused and became king in 1859. Kurunmi, the leader of Ijaye, refused to recognise Alaafin Adelu as king. Egba and the Ijebu supported Kurunmi, while Ibadan supported Adelu, the Alaafin of Oyo. War ensued between Ijaye and Oyo in 1860 and Ijaye was defeated and totally destroyed in March 1862.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 127.

<sup>511</sup> The displeasure expressed by the missionaries over Gezo's attack on Abeokuta can be viewed as a natural reaction, as many Christian mission organisations made Abeokuta their headquarters during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 138-139).

<sup>512</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 139.

<sup>513</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 129.

<sup>514</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 129; S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 313.

<sup>515</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 67-68; M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 130.

The Ijaye war led to the abandonment of the missions at Ibadan, as the road to Abeokuta was closed to traffic. Also, the road from Remo to Lagos was not secured and as a result, the missionaries' work in spreading the gospel was strained.<sup>516</sup> It was during the Ijaye war that Bühler enrolled Johnson at the request of Hinderer so that Johnson could study at the Abeokuta Training Institution. It is at this time that Johnson had to stay with Hinderers for longer than expected, until the Ijaye war subsided.<sup>517</sup> Olabimtan notes that the experiences of Johnson with the Hinderer's during the Ijaye, can be seen as a blessing in the sense that Johnson's ambition for writing Yoruba history, along with his commitment to peace negotiation, was kindled by it:

Waiting at home while the war lasted meant sharing in the deprivations that the missionary household suffered during the war. In the long run, however, it turned out to be a blessing when, in the closing decades of the century, Samuel Johnson considered it worthwhile to write *The History of the Yorubas*. For from this time, he began to witness live aspects of the war-filled account of contemporary Yoruba history.<sup>518</sup>

Another Yoruba war, which saw the involvement of Johnson in negotiating for peace, was the Kiriji or Ekiti Parapo war (1877-1893). The war concentrated on the Ibadan people. After the Ijaye war, Ibadan grew and began to seek territorial expansion, and as a result, Ibadan had to fight Ijesa. Ijesa initially wanted to incorporate Igbajo into her empire. In 1877, Ibadan attacked both Ijebu and Egba because together they controlled the trade routes that boosted Ibadan's economy. Ibadan then levied heavy taxes in all her controlled territories including Ijebu and Egba.<sup>519</sup> These actions of the Ibadan people against Ijebu and Egba angered other Yoruba territories and in 1878, Ekiti, Ijesa, Akoko and Igbomina gathered themselves together into the Ekiti-Parapo confederation and revolted against the influence of Ibadan. The Ekiti-Parapo confederation, together with Ilorin, prevented Ibadan from importing arms through the Egbado

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<sup>516</sup>An Egha by the name of Daniel Olubi, had to assist in negotiating for peace because of the tension that engulfed the Ibadan mission, which was at logger-head with the Egba people (K. Olabimtan [2011b], "Olubi, Daniel c. 1830 to 1912," in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2).

<sup>517</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 34.

<sup>518</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 69.

<sup>519</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 131.

and Porto Novo routes, thus resulting in the *Kiriji wars*.<sup>520</sup> Johnson was involved in negotiating for peace during and after the Kiriji wars, as well as other Yoruba Wars.<sup>521</sup>

From mid-1884 when Johnson accompanied Mr. Wood on his trip to the battlefield at Kiriji, until his ordination in January 1886, he was rarely at his base in Ibadan. He was often on the road carrying messages between the Colonial administration in Lagos and the authorities in the interior. His availability for ministry at Ibadan did not improve after his ordination. First, Archdeacon Hamilton requested his services at Christ Church, Lagos, pending the return of Mr. Harding to his duties there. Second, Governor Alfred Moloney also needed his services to renew negotiation with the chiefs in the interior on how to end the wars.<sup>522</sup>

When the Finance Committee of the CMS considered that Daniel Olubi, one of Johnson's mentors, was too old to carry further responsibilities in places like Oyo, Iseyin, Ogbomoso and Ilesha, Johnson was recommended for ordination to take his place. The recommendation was made by the Finance Committee of the CMS. After working with Olubi, Johnson met many chiefs and Yoruba people, who came to trust and have confidence in him. These experiences made Johnson a good negotiator.<sup>523</sup> For example, when Olubi himself failed to persuade Ibadan not to declare war in 1877, he sent Johnson as a missionary to Ilesha, and Olubi allowed Johnson to serve as an envoy to the British and the Yoruba chiefs. Through his experience in mediating between Yoruba chiefs and British authorities in Nigeria, Johnson might have seen a need to record Yoruba history.<sup>524</sup> Johnson's involvement in negotiations for peace is also elucidated by Falola, who noted that Johnson "mediated in the conflicts between the British and Oyo from 1893 to 1895."<sup>525</sup> During the Yoruba Wars, traders and missionaries were affected negatively and it is no surprise that Johnson supported British attacks against Ijebu, as the latter insisted in continuing with the wars in

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<sup>520</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 131-133.

<sup>521</sup>In May 1878, Johnson travelled to Ilesha, because it was rumoured that the Ibadan army was going to attack Ilesha, and met with the king of Ilesha in order to submit Olubi's letter. The letter expressed Olubi's motivation and sympathy to the king over the tension in Ilesha, which arose due to the rumour that Ibadan was going to fight Ilesha. From 1882 to 1886, Johnson was fully involved in negotiating for peace over the Ekiti-Parapo wars (M.R. Dortmoont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian", 172).

<sup>522</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 110-111.

<sup>523</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 110.

<sup>524</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 41.

<sup>525</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 53.

1892.<sup>526</sup> Olabimtan added that Johnson was not against British rule in Yorubaland because to him, British rule helped in enforcing peace and enhancing Christianity in Nigeria:

It is therefore evident that Johnson did not see the British colonial order encroaching on the beleaguered 19th century Yoruba land as a threat to the future of the people. Rather, he saw it as a local manifestation of a universal providence at work, reshaping the world as benevolent forces of good bring nations together in a universal commonweal through the triumph of Christianity, colonialism being a vehicle in the process just as the missionary movement had earlier been in the vanguard.<sup>527</sup>

Johnson's services, in connection with his peace negotiations in the Yoruba country, are well known by the Yoruba people. Johnson's knowledge of the Yoruba, including their manners and customs, was unrivalled. He had collected a large amount of information relating to the history of the Yoruba due to his involvement in peace negotiations.<sup>528</sup> Johnson's contact with the court historians of Oyo (*Arokin*), his relationships with the various chiefs and his vast knowledge of the Yoruba nation, customs and culture, enabled him to accumulate an extensive collection of Yoruba oral traditions. Hence, it is appropriate to note that the various Yoruba Wars influenced Johnson's decision to write *The History of the Yorubas*. It must have been disturbing for him that the same Yoruba people fought one another and he had to dedicate most of his lifetime negotiating for peace. These developments, especially those pertaining to the spread of Christianity, concerned Johnson considerably; after all, the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland was one of his priorities as a missionary. Johnson had to preach unity among the Yoruba so that Christianity could spread successfully. In order for Johnson to unite the Yoruba, and to encourage them not to fight one another, he saw a need to remind them that they all originated from one particular source. Johnson might have developed the theory of the Egyptian origins in order to encourage the Yoruba to unite as one people.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>526</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 53.

<sup>527</sup> K.O. Olabimtan, [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 253.

<sup>528</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 35.

<sup>529</sup> Through the influence of Bühler, Johnson learnt about Greek wars (M.R. Dortmoont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian," 176). It is likely that Johnson's knowledge on Greek wars influenced his tactics in negotiating for peace during the Yoruba Wars.



In conclusion, it can be proposed that Johnson's assertion that the Yoruba originated from a particular source, namely Egypt, could be linked to his quest for building unity among the Yoruba. His end-goal might have been to caution the Yoruba so that they may come to understand that there was no reason for them to fight among themselves, since they all originated from Egypt and came from a common ancestor, Oduduwa. Johnson thought that Christianity could help to end the Yoruba Wars, so he prayed:

But that peace should reign universally, with prosperity and advancement, and that the disjointed units should all be once more welded into one under one head from the Niger to the coast as in the happy days of ABIODUN, so dear to our fathers, that clannish spirit disappear, and above all that Christianity should be the principal religion in the land – paganism and Mohammedanism having had their full trial – should be the wish and prayer of every true son of Yoruba.<sup>530</sup>

Doortmoont added that “[t]ime and again he [Johnson] took the opportunity to tell the people [the Yorubas] (and his superiors in Lagos and London) that war was evil, producing only hardship and scarcity.”<sup>531</sup> It can therefore, be proposed that, one of the aims of writing *The History of the Yoruba* is to promote unity and tolerance among the Yoruba. Johnson achieved this goal by enhancing the tradition according to which the Yoruba originated from Egypt.

### 3.4 The Influence of Christianity and Islam on Samuel Johnson's view of the Yoruba origins

Johnson's Christian background and the spread of Islam in Yorubaland in the 19th century influenced his view of Yoruba origins. There is a need to discuss how Christianity and Islam influenced his thoughts. Johnson argued that, according to the Oduduwa myth, the ancestors of the Yoruba originated from Egypt and not Mecca or Arabia, as it had been alleged by Mohammed Belo.<sup>532</sup> Johnson believed that the ancestors of the Yoruba were rather Coptic Christians from Egypt and not Arabians or Muslims from

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<sup>530</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 642.

<sup>531</sup> M.R. Dortmoont, “Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian,” 171.

<sup>532</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

Mecca. Johnson believed that Mohammed Belo, the son of Uthman dan Fodio, influenced the Yoruba to believe that their ancestors were Muslims.<sup>533</sup> A British former envoy to Nigeria, Captain Clapperton, once met with Belo. He described Belo as an intelligent man:

He asked me great many questions about Europe, and our religious distinctions. He was acquainted with the names of the more ancient sects, and asked whether we were Nestorians or Socinians. To extricate myself from the embarrassment occasioned by this question, I bluntly replied we were called Protestants. "What are Protestant?" says he. I attempted to explain to him, as well as I was able, that having protested, more than centuries and a half ago, against the superstition, absurdities, and abuses practised in those day, we had ever since professed to follow simply what was written "in the book of our Lord Jesus," as they call the New Testament, and thence received the name Protestants. He continued to ask several other theological questions, until I obliged to confess myself not sufficiently versed in religious subtleties to resolve these knotty points, having always left that task to other more learned than myself.<sup>534</sup>

Johnson explained how Belo believed that the Yarba<sup>535</sup> were the remnants of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod:

The inhabitants of this province (Yarba) it is supposed originated from the remnant of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod. The cause of their establishment in the West of Africa was, as it is stated, in consequence of their being driven by Yar-rooba, son of Kahtan, out of Arabia to the Western Coast between Egypt and Abyssinia. From that spot they advanced into the interior of Africa, till they reached Yarba where they fixed their

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<sup>533</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5-6. Captain Clapperton visited one of Bello's courts and was impressed by his writings, especially the one that concerned British exploration in India. In 1826, Clapperton returned for a second visit, but Bello could not grant him permission to cross the border into Sokoto because of the warfare between him and the Bornu Empire. Bello wrote hundreds of texts on history, Islamic studies and poetry during his lifetime. He died of natural causes at the age of 58 on 25 October 1827 (B. Davidson, *African civilization: From antiquity to modern times* (Trenton: African World Press, Inc., 1998), 82.

<sup>534</sup>Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*, John Murray: London, 331-332.

<sup>535</sup>The dark skinned people of West Africa and the Yorubas in particular.

residence. On their way they left in every place they stopped at, a tribe of their own people. Thus it is supposed that all the tribes of the Soudan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them as also are the inhabitants of Ya-ory. Upon the whole, the people of Yarba are nearly of the same description as those of Noofee (Nupe).<sup>536</sup>

Johnson believed that the extract above sheds light on the myth concerning the origin of the Yoruba. He stressed that the popular Yoruba name Lamurudu (Namurudu), was a dialectical modification of the name Nimrod; a man whose descendants, the Phoenicians, were led in war to Arabia.<sup>537</sup> The descendants of Nimrod then fled religious persecution in Arabia and migrated to Yarba, their first permanent settlement. Johnson believed that Yoruba ancestors were originally Phoenician-Egyptians who became Coptic Christians in Upper Egypt (Nubia) or that Yoruba ancestors were Egyptians who had some distorted knowledge of Christianity, thus they were persecuted by other Egyptians who were not Christians. Johnson alleged that the persecuted Egyptians left Egypt and passed through Arabia, where they were equally persecuted before they migrated to West Africa. Therefore, the Yoruba ancestors were not influenced by Arabian or Islamic cultures.<sup>538</sup> Johnson thought that there was no Arabian record that proved that the Yoruba originated from Mecca and that “an event of such importance could hardly have passed unnoticed by their [Arabian] historians.”<sup>539</sup> He stressed that past Yoruba oral historians regarded Mecca as the “east” and that there was indeed a strong connection between the Yoruba and the east, but that the “east” meant “Egypt” and not “Mecca.” Johnson said: “The Yorubas came originally from the east there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove.”<sup>540</sup> A twenty-first century writer on Yoruba history, Folorunso, supported Johnson’s view and said that, when it comes to the history of Yoruba origin, “Mecca” or “East” meant Egypt and not literally East or Mecca.<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>536</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5-6, originally from *Vide Narrative of Travels and Discoveries*, by Major Denham and Captain Clapperton, 1826. Appendix XII, Sec IV. *A Tropical Dependency*, by Flora L. Shaw (Lady Lugard), 1905, pp. 227-228.

<sup>537</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

<sup>538</sup>Parrinder believed that the Arabs and Islam influenced Yoruba people more than any other culture (G. Parrinder, *West African psychology: A comparative study of psychological and religious thought*, (London: Lutterworth, 1951), 201-203. In principle, Johnson believed that Mohammed Belo associated Yoruba origins with Mecca to promote Islamic teaching among the Yorubas (cf. C.A Folorunso, ‘Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective’, in D. O’Connor & A. Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa* (London: UCL, 2003), 83.)

<sup>539</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>540</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>541</sup>C.A Folorunso, *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 83.

Johnson presented Belo as the first writer of Nigerian history who wrote and associated the Yoruba with Arabia.<sup>542</sup> Mohammed Belo was the son of Uthman dan Fodio's (the founder of Islamic jihad in Nigeria) fourth wife (Hauwa or Inna). After the death of Uthman dan Fodio in 1817, the military operations of dan Fodio's Islamic movement was handed over to Othman's brother, Abdullahi and to Uthman's son, Mohammad Belo. Belo led the military operations,<sup>543</sup> but he was also a brilliant thinker and writer. He established Islamic courts in Sokoto and, unlike his father, did not use weapons but diplomacy in resolving conflicts. He wrote extensively on general history, poetry and on Islamic studies. He also encouraged education for both men and women. He strongly encouraged the education of his siblings, which resulted in his sister, Nana Asmaau, becoming a poet and a teacher through Belo's influence. Nana liaised with rural women to encourage education for women. He Belo was a more accommodative administrator than his father. For example, when the Hausa scholar Abd al-Salam rebelled against the unfair treatment of the Hausa people by Islamic fundamentalists, who were trained by Uthman dan Fodio, Belo did not fight Abd al-Salam using weapons, rather he dealt with him tactfully.<sup>544</sup>

With regard to his writings, Belo also relied on information he received from Islamic traders and preachers who had come from Arabia, North Africa and Mali.<sup>545</sup> The activities of Belo as a jihadist, and as a writer who relied on Muslim traders to obtain information concerning some of his writings, suggest that he might have been influenced by Islam in his writings. However, there is no evidence to prove this assertion. Belo died in 1827.

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<sup>542</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5-6.

<sup>543</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 121-122.

<sup>544</sup>There was brief succession struggle between Bello and his younger brother, Atiku, but it came to a quick and bloodless end. In contrast to his father, Belo's administration was more permissive of many Hausa traditional religious systems. Bello also encouraged the permanency of many Fulani people, who were largely pastoral before the time of his father. Bello built more schools and mosques, designed ribats with schools, fortifications and other buildings. These actions by Bello ended much opposition, but Abd al-Salam and Dan Tunku (the leader of the emirate of Kazaure) continued to resist Bello's reform programs. Although Dan Tunku had fought on the side of his father in the Fulani war, when Bello named Ibrahim Dado the emir of Kano in 1819, Dan Tunku organised opposition forces in revolution. Bello assisted Ibrahim militarily to win victory over Dan Tunku and he erected fortresses where Dan Tunku once built his capital. After ending the opposition, Bello concentrated on consolidating his administration throughout the empire with significant construction, and settlement, coupled with a uniform systems of justice (cf. Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*); B. Davidson, *African civilization: From antiquity to modern times* (Trenton: African World Press, Inc., 1998), 75-85.

<sup>545</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 90-93.

The declaration of Islamic jihad in Nigeria on 21 February 1804 by Uthman dan Fodio, ensured a rapid spread of the Islamic faith in Nigeria. After 1812, some parts of Yorubaland, including Ilorin, were captured by Islamic jihadists.<sup>546</sup> As Samuel Johnson desired to limit the influence of Islam over the Yoruba, he dissociated Yoruba origins with Arabia and Islam. Johnson's continued association between the Yoruba, Egypt and Coptic Christians suggest that Johnson was Christocentric in his approach to writing Yoruba history.<sup>547</sup> In addition, it can be suggested that Johnson's Christian background influenced his association of the Yoruba origins with the Egyptians, particularly with the Coptic Church and his dissociation of Yoruba origin with Islam, Mecca and Arabia. Falola wrote that Johnson's role as a missionary and peace maker in Yorubaland was mainly to promote his faith in Christianity: "his greatest wish was to see the triumph of Christianity over other religions."<sup>548</sup> Johnson seemed to have regarded Christianity as a religion that united people; hence he associated the Yoruba origins with Christianity. In direct contrast to his view of Christianity, Johnson believed that Islam contributed to the rise and continuation of the Yoruba Wars. He blamed the fall of the Old Oyo Empire and of the capturing of Ilorin by the Hausa/Fulani's on Islam.<sup>549</sup> Johnson's attitude towards Islam as an uncivilized religion might have influenced his dissociation between the Yoruba origin and Mecca, Arabia and Islam in general.

In terms of the association between Yoruba origins and the Coptic Church in Egypt, it is important to note that the persecution faced by the early Coptic Church around 300 AD did not give them enough opportunities to travel and preach outside of Egypt. Instead, they devoted their time to developing sophisticated liturgical orders within Egypt,<sup>550</sup> which in itself raises questions about the theory that the ancestors of the Yoruba were Coptic Christians. It is also important to note that Christianity only emerged in Yorubaland sometime around the early 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. If the Coptic Church actually entered Yorubaland earlier, then Christianity would have been visible in Yorubaland long before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Christianity is said to have entered into Nigeria. There is no record at present that proves that the

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<sup>546</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 111-112, 117.

<sup>547</sup> J. K. Olupona, 'The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective,' *NUMEN*, 3(40), (1993), 242.

<sup>548</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 46.

<sup>549</sup> M.R. Dortmoont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian," 171.

<sup>550</sup>L. Sanneh, *A history of ancient Egypt*, 7-8. The Romans persecuted the Coptic Church. For example, the edict of 202 CE decreed that Egyptians should not be converted to Christianity. Also, the edict of 250 CE decreed that every Roman and Egyptians citizen must carry a certificate indicating that he or she had offered sacrifices to the Roman gods. Emperor Diocletian (284-305 CE) also executed many Coptic Christians (M.A. Marcus, 'History of the Coptic Orthodox Church,' 5).

Coptic Church in Egypt had any remnant in Yorubaland. There is also no evidence of religious organisation in Yorubaland which practiced Christianity the same way the Coptic Church does.

Furthermore, it may be recalled that from the period 1867, when Johnson became one of the ministers of the Church Missionary Society, until 1875, when he became a catchiest of the Aremu Church,<sup>551</sup> his priority had been to evangelise his faith in Christ to the Yoruba people. He might have believed that the Yoruba people should rather be Christians than Muslims, a belief that could have influenced his decision to dissociate Yoruba origins from Islam. To add to Johnson's concerns, the period from 1861 to 1894 has been described by Gbadamosi as a period of Islamic consolidation in Yorubaland.<sup>552</sup> It was a period when Islam was gaining ground among the Yoruba people. Because of this, Yoruba Christians were expected to preach Christianity to the people with serious drive and conviction.<sup>553</sup> In general, the 19th century marked a period during which both Islam and Christianity made efforts to develop enduring foundations in Yorubaland.<sup>554</sup> Johnson and other Christians trained in Sierra Leone, felt a strong obligation to preach Christianity. Johnson himself had preached and converted many Muslims to Christianity.<sup>555</sup>

At this stage, I am not agreeing or disagreeing with either of the two views; that the Yoruba ancestors were Muslims from Mecca or Coptic Christians from Egypt. Rather, the research aim to showcase that the both religions, Islam and Christianity, influenced Johnson as some level to associate the Yoruba origin with Egypt and to dissociate the Yoruba origin from Mecca or Arabia or Islam.

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<sup>551</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 33-35.

<sup>552</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 95-51.

<sup>553</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 84.

<sup>554</sup> T.G.O., Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba*, 124.

<sup>555</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 18.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## SAMUEL JOHNSON'S VIEWS ON THE EGYPTIAN ORIGINS OF THE YORUBA

### 4.1 European perceptions of Egypt in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increased interest in the study of Egypt in Europe. Anything information about Egypt or knowledge derived from Egypt fascinated Europeans.<sup>556</sup> The archaeological discoveries in Egypt especially after Napoleon's expedition of 1798 to 1801 promoted European interest in Egypt. Napoleon's initial invasion of Egypt in 1798 opened the doors of archaeological discovery and since then, numerous archaeologists and expeditions have visited Egypt for archaeological research.<sup>557</sup> The archaeological discoveries in Egypt seemed to amaze Europeans at a constant rate. It seemed as though the more information became available about Egypt, the more Europeans desired to know even more. The archaeological finds in Egypt during the 19<sup>th</sup> century stirred the emotions of Europeans and inspired many to formally study Egyptian history and culture.<sup>558</sup> Jason Thompson of the American University in Cairo said:

It may be said of some very old places, as of some very old books, that they are destined to be forever new. The nearer we approach them, the more remote they seem; the more we

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<sup>556</sup>Tyldesley noted that European interest in Egypt resulted in the rise of Egyptology (the study of ancient Egypt using various theories, methods and techniques) (J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 7-8). It is not known precisely when the formal study of Egyptology began, but Napoleon's invasion of Egypt boosted its popularity from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, 22).

<sup>557</sup>D.T. Adamo, "The African wife of Jeroboam (ano): An African reading of 1 King 14:1-18," *Theologia Viatorum*, 37(2),[2013], 73. Professor Adamo is a leading 21<sup>st</sup> century scholar in Old Testament studies. His area of academic interest is in defining the role of Africa in Old Testament studies. He has published extensively on the relationship between ancient Africa and the Ancient Near East. A former deputy vice chancellor of the Kogi State University, Nigeria, Adamo is currently a research associate in the Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies at the University of South Africa.

<sup>558</sup> J. Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology 1 from antiquity to 1881*, 1.

study them, the more we have yet to learn. Time augments rather than diminishes their everlasting novelty; and to our descendants of a thousand years hence it may safely be predicted that they will be even more fascinating than our selves. This is true of many ancient lands, but of no place is it so true of Egypt. ... The Interest never flags – the subject never palls upon us – the mine is never exhausted.<sup>559</sup>

This “Egyptomania” owed its origins to Napoleon Bonaparte, who at the age of 29 was appointed by the Directory, a body of Revolutionary France, to lead an army meant to invade Britain. Instead of invading Britain directly, Napoleon thought it wiser to destroy a major aspect of Britain’s economy by capturing Egypt, thereby cutting off England’s land route to India. On 19 May 1798, he, alongside 17, 000 troops, 700 horses and about 150 scientists and engineers, together with 300 Maltese, sailed for Egypt and arrived at Alexandria on 1 July 1798.<sup>560</sup>

The French were fiercely resisted by the Mamelukes, but the French were victorious.<sup>561</sup> During the campaign, a number of archaeological discoveries were made. Napoleon then ordered the establishment of a library as a base from which to gather and study all objects they excavated and found in Egypt. Objects of interest included monuments, hieroglyphs, plants remains, artefacts and many more. Napoleon founded the *Institut d’Egypte* on 21 August 1798, the first Egyptological society in the world, aimed at the scientific study of all things ancient Egyptian. The society was grouped into four areas of specialisation: mathematics, physics, political economy and arts.<sup>562</sup> An Egyptologist, B. Brier, stated that Napoleon’s

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<sup>559</sup>J. Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology 1 from antiquity to 1881*, 1, originally from Amelia Edwards, *Pharaohs, Fellahs and Explorers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), 3-4.

<sup>560</sup> J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, 43-44. Included in Napoleon’s civilian team was *Commission des Sciences et Arts d’Egypte*, an illustrious band of 167 scholars made up of : 52 engineers; 11 surveyors; 8 surgeons; 7 chemists; 6 interpreters; 5 architects; 5 designer 5 printers; 4 mineralogists, 4 astronomers and 4 economics; 3 botanists, 3 zoologists, 3 pharmacists, 3 painters, 3 archaeologists, 2 writers, and 2 musicians; 1 engraver, and 1 sculptor and many students (J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, 47).

<sup>561</sup> The word *Mamelukes* means “bought man” or “slave” in Arabic. Around the year 1230, the Ayyubite sultan, who ruled Egypt, brought 12 000 youths from the Caucasus Mountain so that they could serve as his army. The status of the *Mamelukes* was more than those of slaves because they were allowed to carry weapons, unlike some free-born Muslim who were not such freedoms. The *Mamelukes* were trained in the art of warfare and their needs were well-cared for. When the *Mamelukes* matured, they decided to kill the sultan and took power from him. They ruled Egypt until the Turkish conquest of 1517. The *Mamelukes* became a nominal vassal of the Turks and gave the Turks only a small portion of the tax they collected from peasants (B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 46).

<sup>562</sup> J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, 49.



initiatives, which initiated scientific studies of ancient Egypt, marked the beginning of formal Egyptology: “[i]t was a severe case of Egyptomania, but even more important, it marks the beginning of scientific Egyptology.”<sup>563</sup> On 23 August 1799, Napoleon left Egypt for France after suffering a defeat from Britain and Ottoman rulers in Egypt.<sup>564</sup> Another event which brought fame to Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign was the discovery of the Rosetta stone in July 1799 in the Nile Delta.<sup>565</sup> The Rosetta stone was compiled in 196 BCE and boasts an inscribed note of thanks from the priests of Egypt to Pharaoh Ptolemy V, who subsidised the taxes which Egyptians were expected to pay.<sup>566</sup>

One of Napoleon’s staffers, Denon Vivant, returned to France and published his *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* in 1802 (with editions in other languages). Brier applauded the artist, stating that “the drawings Denon had made provided the first accurate depiction of Egypt that Europe had ever seen.”<sup>567</sup> The scientists and architects that worked for Napoleon did so with precision. Thirty-four of Napoleon’s soldiers died in Egypt, but those who returned to France worked tirelessly to produce *Description de l’Egypte*.<sup>568</sup> Although *Description de l’Egypte* (“A description of Egypt”) was first published in 1809, the entire book was only completed in 1828, seven years after Napoleon’s death on his island of St. Helene.<sup>569</sup> The book was so voluminous and expensive; it represented the first of its kind to ever be published. The book contained the first comprehensive map of Egypt including illustrations and notes on ancient monuments, natural history and modern Egypt in the 1800s. The book was printed in one thousand sets of 21 volumes. Each volume of the book contains about 1 000 large gravures (a form of printed engraving). The gravures alone cost about 600 000 Francs, as the process of creating copies by means of etched plates or cylinders was technologically advanced for its time and therefore expensive. The book’s description of

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<sup>563</sup> B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 50.

<sup>564</sup> J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, 46.

<sup>565</sup> The Rosetta stone contained a trilingual inscription of the same message in Hieroglyphic, Demotic and Ancient Greek. The study of the inscriptions enabled scholars for the first time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be able to decipher hieroglyphics (J. Jones, “Egypt and Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” [courses.wcupa.edu/jones/his312/lectures/Egypt.htm](http://courses.wcupa.edu/jones/his312/lectures/Egypt.htm). (2014), 1.

<sup>566</sup> B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 56-57.

<sup>567</sup> B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 60.

<sup>568</sup> B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 60.

<sup>569</sup> Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 61-64.

Egyptian temples and tombs, and especially its paintings of Karnak and Luxor temples, attracted the attention of the Europeans, who grew to love everything about Egypt even more.<sup>570</sup>

But it was the *Description* that opened European eyes to Egypt's archaeological potential, and sparked a Europe-wide fashion for anything and everything with 'Nile-Style'. Suddenly, the biblical stories, and the stories of the classical authors, had become real, and genuine Egyptian antiquities were in demand.<sup>571</sup>

During the second half of the 19th century,<sup>572</sup> formal education in Egyptology was in such great demand in Europe, that an increasing number of institutions of learning introduced the subject of ancient Egypt as a significant aspect of human history.<sup>573</sup> In the 19th century, as more Europeans loved and visited Egypt, more books and travel/tour guides concerning Egypt were written. People took photos, made paintings and drew whatever objects of interest they came across during their travels. In fact, photography, literature and arts dominated Egyptians studies in the 19th century:<sup>574</sup> "to a considerable degree, Egyptology is art history because so much of the primary evidence falls within the province of the art history yet is pertinent to almost every aspect of Egyptology."<sup>575</sup>

The discovery of the somewhat marred mummy of Ramses II, signalled another great discovery. It was discovered by Gaston Maspero on 5 July 1881 and is currently housed by the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (see Appendix B, Figure 5).<sup>576</sup> According to Scheffler, the information obtained on the stele of Merneptah

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<sup>570</sup>B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 61-64.

<sup>571</sup>J. Tyldesley, *Egypt: How a lost civilization was rediscovered*, 50.

<sup>572</sup> Gaston Maspero found the mummy of Ramses II on 5 July 1881. This finds have also contributed in stirring interest for the study of Egypt among the Europeans (cf. E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 121).

<sup>573</sup> J. Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology 1 from antiquity to 1881*, 2.

<sup>574</sup> J. Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology 1 from antiquity to 1881*, 243-261.

<sup>575</sup> J. Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology 1 from antiquity to 1881*, 242,

<sup>576</sup> Gaston Maspero was born in Paris on 23 June 1846, the same year as Samuel Johnson. Maspero taught the Egyptian language at Paris from 1869 until 1874, when he was appointed a professor at the College de France. At the order of the French government, he led a team of archaeologists into Egypt in November 1880 so that they could develop French research endeavours in Egypt. This move led to the formal institutionalisation of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology. Maspero contributed immensely to the collection of many antiquities from Egypt. His collections, together with those of his predecessor, Auguste Mariette, have become the focus of the Egyptian Museum. Maspero also made a great contribution to the formation of the Egyptian Museum, which was founded in

(1236-1223 BCE) suggests that Ramses II was a Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus<sup>577</sup> and was the father of Merneptah.<sup>578</sup> Ramses II, who reigned around 1304-1237 BCE was known to be a great builder who constructed more temples and other monuments in his own honour than any other Pharaoh.<sup>579</sup> Ramses II had many wives and it is believed that he fathered up to 195 children.<sup>580</sup> The mummy of Ramses II was not the only mummy found by Maspero in the cliffs near Dayr al-Bahri. There were many inscribed sarcophagi, funerary artefacts and a total of forty mummies found. Some of the mummies included those of pharaohs Thutmose III, Amenhotep I, and Seti I.<sup>581</sup>

In terms of Johnson's own experience of ancient Egyptian culture, we have to consider the two major influencers in his life: David Hinderer and Gotlieb Bühler.<sup>582</sup> Hinderer was originally a German who received his theological training at Basel Seminary in Switzerland and in the Church Missionary College in London in the 1840s.<sup>583</sup> Bühler was also born in Germany in 1829 and studied at the Missionary College at Basel in 1851.<sup>584</sup> Bühler taught Johnson liberal arts, including the histories of the Ancient Near East: Assyria, Babylon, Persia, the Jews, and the history of Alexander the Great.<sup>585</sup> The study of these ancient regions and civilisations often bears some connection with Egypt. For example, Alexander the Great regarded himself as a pharaoh after his defeat of Egypt.<sup>586</sup> O'Connor and Reid said that Egypt used to be regarded as part of the Ancient Near East.<sup>587</sup>

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1902. Maspero died on 30 June 1916 (E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 121 cf. The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Gaston Maspero," from <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Gaston-Maspero>, 1).

<sup>577</sup> Exodus 1:11.

<sup>578</sup> E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 121.

<sup>579</sup> E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 121.

<sup>580</sup> E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 121.

<sup>581</sup> The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Gaston Maspero," 1.

<sup>582</sup> See subchapter 3.1 for information on Hinderer and Bühler.

<sup>583</sup> K. Olabimtan, [2011a] "Hinderer, David 1819 to 1890" *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-6.

<sup>584</sup> K. Olabimtan [2011c], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5.

<sup>585</sup> K. Olabimtan [2011c], *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 1-5.

<sup>586</sup> B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, 20.

<sup>587</sup> D. O'Connor & A. Reid, "Locating ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern theories, past realities," in D. O'Connor & Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (London: UCL, 2003), 1-5; T.D. Adamo, "Teaching the history of ancient Israel from an African perspective: The invasion of Sennacherib of 701 B.C.E. as an example," *Old Testament Essays*, 23(3), (2010), 475.

Hinderer and Bühler, both of whom were trained in Europe, might have contributed to Johnson's interest in the history and culture of ancient Egypt. The main purpose of this discussion is to suggest that both Hinderer's and Bühler's upbringing in Europe might have been influenced by popular interest in Egyptian studies and institutionalisation of Egyptology throughout much of Europe during the 19th century. This speculation is crucial in discerning why Samuel Johnson associated the Yoruba with the Egyptians. Johnson's knowledge of the Phoenicians, the Coptic Church and of the Egyptians was surely fueled by the teachings of Ancient Near Eastern history and culture by Hinderer and Bühler. Johnson's comparison of the Yoruba sculptures, known as the "Ife Marbles",<sup>588</sup> with that of the Egyptians, suggest that Johnson had some knowledge of Egyptian art and statuary.

There is no indication that Johnson ever travelled to Egypt. It therefore makes sense to suggest that what he knew and understood about Egypt was influenced by Hinderer and Bühler. Johnson mentions that the Ife Marbles share striking similarities to those of the Egyptians (the latter which can be found in the Egyptian Court of the British Museum).<sup>589</sup> Likewise, there is no indication that Johnson ever travelled to the British Museum in order to observe Egyptian sculptures and to compare them with their supposed Yoruba counterparts. One thing that is clearly known is that Johnson had good relationships with the foreign missionaries who came to Yorubaland and with the British colonial government who ruled Yorubaland in the 19th century.<sup>590</sup> Johnson might have read or learned about Egypt from his mentors, from the many missionaries he came in contact with, or even from the British leaders he associated with in Yorubaland.

Another factor that might have influenced Johnson's association between the Yoruba and the Egyptians is the ideology of the Egyptian civilisation, which was popular in both Europe and Africa during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, due to "Egyptomania". Though many archaeological excavations were conducted in Ile Ife, they were only done after the death of Johnson in 1901.<sup>591</sup> However, it is possible that Johnson himself

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<sup>588</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

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<sup>590</sup> T. Falola & M.M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 53.

<sup>591</sup> T. Shaw, "Prehistory," in O. Ikime (ed.). *Groundwork of Nigerian history*, (Jos: Heinemann Educational Books, 2004), 47.

might have come across some historical Yoruba arts and crafts (some even archaeological in nature) since he himself worked directly with traditional chiefs, village rulers, oral historians and bards.<sup>592</sup> These groups of people were all custodians or preservers of Yoruba culture, including Yoruba arts and other material culture. Johnson's comparison of the Ife Marbles with those of the Egyptians<sup>593</sup> suggests that he had a good knowledge of Yoruba arts, crafts and culture.<sup>594</sup> Many Yoruba artefacts were often kept in the king's palace by the king's workers, some of whom Johnson met during his several visits to Yoruba kings and chiefs.<sup>595</sup> Sometimes, the artefacts were preserved by being buried, only to be brought out during certain Yoruba festivals and ceremonies.<sup>596</sup>

Johnson wrote extensively on Yoruba festivals and ceremonies.<sup>597</sup> He might have had a good knowledge of Yoruba artefacts and understood the popularity of Yoruba arts or artefacts. It seems as though these objects were popular among the many Europeans and other foreigners visiting Yorubaland, even before Johnson was born and throughout his life time. Despite the internal conflicts among the Yoruba, Johnson knew that with regard to technology, the Yoruba had reached a high degree of social organisation and that political stability could enhance their civilisation, as with the cases he observed in the histories of Egypt and Rome.<sup>598</sup> Falola stated that Johnson was also familiar with the Greek Civil Wars,<sup>599</sup> which might have influenced him in negotiating for peace during the Yoruba Wars.

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<sup>592</sup>Cf. M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian, 176; S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>593</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>594</sup> Doortmont said that Johnson had access to the *Arokin*, an official court historian in Oyo (M.R. Doortmont, "Samuel Johnson (1846-1901): Missionary, Diplomat, and Historian," 177).

<sup>595</sup>Cf. S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>596</sup> Cf. D. Lange, 'Ife and the Origin of the Yoruba: Historiographical,' 44-46.

<sup>597</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 98-140.

<sup>598</sup>See subchapter 3.1 for information; (K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal).

<sup>599</sup> T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, (New Jersey: (African World Press, 1999), 40.

Furthermore, Johnson's interest in Philosophy, Greek, History and Latin might have exposed him to a wider understanding of the Egyptians and the construct regarding their fame. The Egyptians were famous because of the archaeological finds in Egypt.<sup>600</sup>

During the late 19th century, the construct of Egypt as a "cradle of human civilisation" was popularised and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more archaeological discoveries were made in Egypt. Johnson admired the achievements of the Egyptians, which were popularised by the theories that postulated that the Egyptians civilised other Africans, including the Yoruba.<sup>601</sup> He compared the Yoruba sculptures with those of the Egyptian civilisation. Falola said that Johnson attempted "to create a link between the Yoruba and the great civilisations of Egypt and Greece."<sup>602</sup> Therefore, Samuel Johnson's association of the Yoruba origin with Coptic Egypt might have been influenced by the ideology of the civilisation of the Egyptians which gained a global popularity especially during his lifetime. One of the purposes of Johnson's writing of the *The History of the Yorubas* could be Johnson's desire to associate the Yoruba with the ideology of the eye-catching or conspicuous civilisation of the Egyptians. The construct regarding the civilisation of the Egyptians was based on the archaeological discoveries in Egypt especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> and in the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeological finds in Egypt also promoted the construct which proposed that the Egyptians were among the most civilised peoples on earth.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>600</sup>K. Olabimtan [2011c], "Bühler, Gottlieb Friederick (1829 to 1865)," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2-4; T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 33-37.

<sup>601</sup> E. Reynolds, E., 2012, "The African Origin of Ancient Egyptian Civilisation,"1.

<sup>602</sup>Falola, *Yoruba gurus: Indigenous production of knowledge in Africa*, 33-37; J.D. Clark, *The prehistory of Africa: Ancient peoples and places*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), 214-216.

<sup>603</sup> In 1925 Archaeologists uncovered the tomb of Hetepheres, the mother of King Cheops. The tomb contained a calcite chest with some bandaged packages of visceral matter, soaked in a diluted solution of natron (a chemical used for mummification). The body of Hetepheres found is a typical example of the Fourth Dynasty Period mummification method (T.G.H. James, *An introduction to ancient Egypt*, 157). Some of the greatest archaeological discoveries in Egypt include those artefacts found in ancient Thebes (located on the west bank of the Nile River) by Howard Carter, a British Egyptologist. The Carter's research stretched between 1922 and 1923. The valley in which most of the exploration took place, is popularly referred to as the *Valley of the Kings*; due to the large number of burial tombs belonging New Kingdom Pharaohs (E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 117). Carter broke through one of the sealed tombs and discovered the mummified remains of a Pharaoh Tutankhamen, who died at the age of 19 after ruling Egypt for a period of nine years (between 1361 and 1352). The tomb boasted over 2000 items including three golden funerary couches in the shape of animals, boxes of funerary figures, ivory game boards, and two statues representing the Pharaoh's *Ka* (one of the five aspects of the human soul). Inside the burial chamber were four shrines covering a three-tiered sarcophagus, with each individual coffin made of gold in the image of Tutankhamen. Next to the burial chamber was another room guarded by Anubis (a jackal-headed god who protected the deceased). (E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 117, 119; E.A. Bernstein, *The formation of hell: Death and retribution in ancient and early Christian worlds*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

## 4.2 Bello's views on a Muslim origin of the Yoruba

There is therefore a need to inquire who Belo was and why he associated the Yoruba origins with Mecca. Mohammed Belo was the son of Uthman dan Fodio, the founder of Islamic jihad in Nigeria. Mohammed Belo was born as the fourth son of Uthman dan Fodio on 3 November 1781,<sup>604</sup> to the fourth wife of dan Fodio, Hauwa or Inna.<sup>605</sup> Belo grew up developing close relationships with his immediate and with his extended family members. He studied classical Islamic systems, Arabic, rhetoric, the Quran and the Hadith under the leadership of his uncle Abdullah Fodio, his elder brother Muhammad Sa'd and his own father, Uthman.<sup>606</sup> Belo supported his father in the cause of jihad and after the death of Uthman dan Fodio in 1817, the military operations of dan Fodio's Islamic movement were handed over to Uthman's brother Abdullahi and to Uthman's son, Mohammad Belo. Belo led the military operations of the jihadists' movement in Nigeria.<sup>607</sup> To consolidate the achievement of his late father, Belo established more Sharia courts within the regions of the Sokoto Caliphate, comprising of the regions in Northern Nigeria.<sup>608</sup> Just before his death in 1837, Belo extended the jihad movement to some of parts of West Africa including Northern Cameroun, Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso.<sup>609</sup> Mohammed Belo was buried in Wurno in Sokoto state of Northern Nigeria.<sup>610</sup>

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1993), 13; S. Wayne & D. Simonis, *Egypt and the Sudan*, 17). Among the finds was a gilded box, guarded by the Egyptian goddesses Serket, Isis, Nephthys and Neith, which contained canopic jars (containing the mummified entrails of the deceased). One of the most profound items found was the beautiful funerary mask that covered the face of Tutankhamen. The mask is made up of beaten gold, measured at about 54 x 39 cm and weighed 11 kg. On the mask was a necklace collar containing rows of lapis lazuli, coloured glass beads, quartz and amazonite. The eyes of the mask are made of quartz and obsidian while the eye-lids are of inlaid blue glass. The rim of the headdress depicts a vulture and a cobra, which symbolises a unified Upper and Lower Egypt. The mask also boasts a plaited beard which turns up at the end and consists of coloured glass held in place by a framework of gold.<sup>603</sup> Brier said that the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun contributed immensely in opening up the floodgates of Egyptomania and Egyptology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 117, 119; B. Brier, *Egyptomania: Our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs*, xii).

<sup>604</sup> Y.A. Quadri, "An appraisal of Muhammad Bello's Infaqul-Mansur Fi Tarikhi Bildadi T- Taktur," *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 3: [1986], 53.

<sup>605</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 121-122.

<sup>606</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 53.

<sup>607</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 121-122.

<sup>608</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 53.

<sup>609</sup> Y. J. Amy, "Sultanate of Sokoto (Sokoto Caliphate)" from <http://www.blackpast.org/gah/sultanate-sokoto-sokoto-caliphate>, [2016], 2.

<sup>610</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 54.

Professor Y.A. Quadri said that one of Uthman dan Fodio's main reasons for favouring Bello over the rest of his children was that Bello was the second person (probably after Abdullah) that gave Uthman full support in the cause of jihad since 1804. Uthman dan Fodio officially declared jihad over the infidels or unbelievers in Hausaland in 1804.<sup>611</sup> However, after 1817, there was a brief succession struggle between Bello and his younger brother Atiku, but it was resolved quickly and bloodlessly. In contrast to his father, Bello's administration was more permissive of many Hausa traditional religious systems. Bello encouraged the permanency of many Fulani people, who were largely nomads in Sokoto prior to the time of his father. Bello built more schools and mosques, designed ribats (hostels/hospices in Islamic architectural designs) with schools, fortifications and other buildings. He regarded the Hausa tradition, according to which the Hausas are naturally intelligent, as a superstition. Rather, he encouraged all people, especially the Fulanis and the Hausas to study, and not just those who were deemed "naturally intelligent by others."<sup>612</sup> Bello was a brilliant thinker and writer. He did not use weapons but diplomacy in resolving conflicts. He wrote extensively on general history, poetry and on Islamic studies. He also encouraged education for both men and women. He encouraged the education of his siblings; an act which encouraged in his sister, Nana Asmaau, to become a teacher and poet. Nana then furthered her brother's cause by liaising with rural women and encouraging their education.<sup>613</sup>

Bello wrote many books in Arabic, some of which have not been found.<sup>614</sup> Some of the documents that have been discovered include: *Tibbul-ayn*, which is a discourse on the subject of the disease of the eyes; *Kitab ff ilmil-jumal*, which discusses the science of grammar; and *al-Qawlul-man'ut*, which is a discourse on the ways in which wives ought to be treated. However, the book that carries the most historical significance is the one he called *Infaqul-maysur fi tarich biladit-Takrur or Infaqul-Maysur*.<sup>615</sup> The book was

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<sup>611</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 53.

<sup>612</sup> Cf. Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 54

<sup>613</sup> Y. J. Amy, "Sultanate of Sokoto (Sokoto Caliphate)," 1-3 ; Cf. Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 54

<sup>614</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 54.

<sup>615</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 54.



written in Arabic and the exact date in which it was written is not known.<sup>616</sup> Some scholars, like Dierk Lange and Quadri, believed that the book might have been written in 1812.<sup>617</sup> The book is mainly dedicated to the recording of jihad history.<sup>618</sup> Quadri stated that the book contains some brief information about the history of other ethnic groups, especially the Fulanis and some towns in Takrur.<sup>619</sup> Takrur was a popular name given by the Arabs to describe a region comprising of the lower Senegal River, which flourished in trade around 1000 AD.<sup>620</sup> Although the book is not strictly about the origin of the Yoruba, Belo dedicated a brief mention of their origins:

The Yoruba were remnants of the Canaanites of the tribe of Nimūd who were expelled from Iraq by Yaʿub b. Qahtān and who fled to the west before they proceeded via Egypt and Ethiopia until they came to Yoruba.<sup>621</sup>

When associating the Fulani and the Yoruba origin with the Ancient Near East, Belo might have relied on information he received from Islamic traders and preachers who had come from Arabia, North Africa and Mali to Northern Nigeria.<sup>622</sup> In other words, the association between the origins of many West African ethnic groups and the Semitic peoples is an old oral tradition documented by the Arabs since the 9th century AD. Prominent among some of the Arab writers, who were mainly geographers and not historians, and who documented West African history, include the Iraqi born al-Yaʿqūbī, who completed his acclaimed *Taʾrīkh* (history book) in 873, the 9th century Ibn Qutayba, and the 10th century al-Masʿūdī. Lange quoted al-Yaʿqūbī, who associated the migration of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples to West Africa:

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<sup>616</sup> The Book *Infaqul-Maysur* can be found in Sokoto Divisional Library, the National Archives of Nigeria in Kaduna and the Department of Antiquities in Jos, Nigeria. Quadri emphasised that there is a need to translate the book into other languages, especially English (Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 62).

<sup>617</sup> D. Lange, "Origin of the Yoruba and 'The Lost Tribes of Israel,'" *Anthropos*, 106 [2011], 583; Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 62.

<sup>618</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 55-56.

<sup>619</sup> Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 55-56.

<sup>620</sup> U. Al-Naqar, "Takrur the History of a Name," *The Journal of African History*, 10:3; [1969], 365.

<sup>621</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583, originally from Gummi Abu Bakr (ed.), *Infāaq-maysūr*, Cairo: Darwa-matabi al-shab, [WR 1812], P. 48.

<sup>622</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 90-93.

The people of the progeny of Hām, son of Noah, left the country of Babel, went to the west, crossed the Euphrates, continued to Egypt and thence moved to East and West Africa of the Nile the Zaghawa settled in Kanem, next the Hausa (text: HWDN), then the Kawkaw and finally the people of Ghana.<sup>623</sup>

The literatures of early Arab writers since the 9th century might have influenced Arab traders and preachers who travelled to West Africa since the 11<sup>th</sup> up-to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>624</sup> Due to his interest in history, together with his position as a political leader and Islamic leader of the Muslims in Northern Nigeria, Belo might have had contact with Arab preachers and traders in Northern Nigeria. For example, in 1824, as an exercise of his political influence, he approached Captain Hugh Clapperton to discuss how the Sokoto Caliphate could stop both the local and Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Captain Clapperton, a British envoy to the Sokoto, helped to ensure that local Nigerians relinquish the practice of slave trade.<sup>625</sup> According to Clapperton, Belo asked “What can I give that is most acceptable to the King of England?” And Clapperton replied:

The most acceptable service you can render to the King of England is to co-operate with his Majesty in putting a stop to the slave trade on the coast: as the King of England sends every year large ships to cruise there, for the sole purpose of seizing all vessels engaged in this trade, whose crews are thrown into prison; and of liberating the unfortunate slaves, on whom lands and houses are conferred, at one of our settlements in Africa.<sup>626</sup>

This suggests that influential leaders, traders or preachers, who worked in Northern Nigeria, and especially around the Sokoto Caliphate, were expected to consult with the king or leader. Belo was the renowned leader of the Sokoto Caliphate since his father died and this position made it possible for him to meet with Arab traders and preachers, to study their books and to meet with the representatives of

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<sup>623</sup>D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 580, originally from Levtzion and Hopkins 1981:21.

<sup>624</sup>T. Falola & M.M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29; M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 90-93.

<sup>625</sup>F.J. Kolapo, “The Southward Campaigns of Nupe in the Lower Niger Valley,” in Lovejoy, P.E., (ed.) *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, Markus Wiener Publisher, Princeton.

<sup>626</sup>Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*, John Murray: London, 339.

the British government in Nigeria. Lange described Mohammed Belo as the first author to precisely document the origin of the Yoruba people and the first to associate the Yoruba origin with the Ancient Near East and particularly Iraq.<sup>627</sup>

Mohammed Belo clearly associated the Yoruba origin with Babylon, which forms a major part of modern-day Iraq.<sup>628</sup> Babylon, located in western Asia, was a famous region of the Ancient Near East.<sup>629</sup> The Sumerians occupied Babylon as early as 3000 BCE and the Akkadians around 2000 BCE.<sup>630</sup> Pate and Hays,<sup>631</sup> together with Oates,<sup>632</sup> believed that it was in Babylon that ancient civilisation started and spread to other parts of the world. These scholars called Babylon the “cradle of civilisation.”<sup>633</sup> Pate and Hays added:

The Sumerians developed writing, and they used it extensively for recording government activities and even mundane business transactions. The clay tablets they used for writing have been preserved through-out the ages and during the last one hundred years, archaeologists have recovered more than a quarter million clay tablets inscribed in the Sumerian language. Besides writing and government documentation, many other developments that were critical to the rise of civilization have been attributed to the Sumerians: the city-state, the accumulation of capital, the wheel, the potter’s wheel, monumental architecture, the number system based on the number 60 (we still use this for time as well as for geometry, i.e., 60 minutes in an hour, 360 degrees in a circle, etc.), schools and the cylinder seal.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 582.

<sup>628</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583.

<sup>629</sup> Cf. P. Johnson, *The civilization of ancient Egypt*, 11-15.

<sup>630</sup> M.C. Pate & J. Hays, 2003, *Iraq: Babylon of the end-times?* (Grand Rapids: Bakerbook, 2003), 21-22; J. Oates, *Babylon with 137 illustrations: Ancient peoples and places*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 11.

<sup>631</sup> M.C. Pate & J. Hays, *Iraq: Babylon of the end-times?* 21-22.

<sup>632</sup> J. Oates, *Babylon with 137 illustrations: Ancient peoples and places*, 11.

<sup>633</sup> J. Oates, *Babylon with 137 illustrations: Ancient peoples and places*, 11; M.C. Pate & J. Hays, *Iraq: Babylon of the end-times?* 21-22.

<sup>634</sup> M.C. Pate & J. Hays, *Iraq: Babylon of the end-times?* 21-22.

Babylon prospered and became a very popular nation during the time of the Akkadians and the Sumerians.<sup>635</sup> The name Babylon also suggests fame, luxury, wealth and a land of attraction and the centre of human civilisation.<sup>636</sup> Lange said that Belo did not associate the origin of all West African ethnic groups with the Ancient Near East, except for those he respected. In other words, Belo associated the Fulani and the Yoruba origins with Babylon or Iraq, but not that of the Hausa, as he held a deep respect for the Fulni and Yoruba.<sup>637</sup> Although the origin of the Hausa people is also linked to Babylon or Bagdad in Iraq,<sup>638</sup> it was not Belo who proposed such a theory.<sup>639</sup> Iraq was captured by Islamic forces in 637 AD and since then, it became a dominantly Muslim country.<sup>640</sup> Belo's association of the Yoruba origin with Iraq, a Muslim country, might have been initiated or promoted in order to associate the Yoruba with Islam, in similar fashion but contrary to Johnson's association between the Yoruba origins and Christianity. Belo was trained as an Islamic scholar and a jihadist while Johnson was trained as a missionary and a Christian preacher. These backgrounds might have influenced the thoughts of these two writers. It is no surprise that Johnson presented Belo as the first writer of Nigerian history who associated the Yoruba with Arabia or Mecca and with Islam: "[t]he only written record we have on this subject is that of the Sultan Belo of Sokoto, the founder of that city..."<sup>641</sup>

The Arabs have contributed immensely to the development of a tradition, according to which many West African ethnic groups originated from the Ancient Near East or the Middle East (now a region dominated by Muslims). Belo mentioned that the Yoruba in particular originated from Iraq. This suggests that Belo was instrumental in the development of the tradition of Muslim origins of the Yoruba. Samuel Johnson might have been influenced by the tradition of Arabian or Muslim origins of the Yoruba, as he made mention of the tradition that some ethnic groups in West Africa, including the Ga of Ghana, believed that

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<sup>635</sup> M.C. Pate & J. Hays, *Iraq: Babylon of the end-times?* 21-22.

<sup>636</sup> C. Garriott, "Living in Babylon," from <http://www.centralpc.org/sermons/2002/s021215.htm> (2002), 2; K. Hall, *Life for the Babylonian exiles in Biblical illustration*, vol. 33, in G. B. Hawell and B. Bruce (eds.), (Nashville: Lifeway, 2006), 43.

<sup>637</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583.

<sup>638</sup> D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, (J.H.Roll: Dettelbach, 2004), 216.

<sup>639</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583.

<sup>640</sup> Cf. Skolfield (E.H. Skolfield, *The false prophet: Who is behind Middle East terrorism?* (Florida: Fish House Publishing, 2001), 142-143).

<sup>641</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

they originated from Iraq or the Middle East, but that their ancestors firstly landed in Ile Ife before they migrated to Ghana.<sup>642</sup>

This also accounts for the tradition that the Yoruba sway once extended as far as Ashanti and included the Gas of Accra, for the Gas say that their ancestors came from Ile Ife; and the constitution of the Ga language is said to be more like Yoruba than like Fanti, the language of the Gold Coast, and the area in which that language is spoken is strictly limited. And, certainly, until comparatively recent times the Popos and Dahomians paid tribute regularly to Oyo as their feudal head....<sup>643</sup>

The tradition of Arabian or Muslim origins of the Yoruba might have been ignited or initiated by Arab traders and preachers. I am not dismissing the possibility that the Yoruba themselves initiated the tradition and told it to the Arabs, to Belo or to other West Africans. The availability of documents which support the idea that the Yoruba initiated the tradition of a Muslim origin of the Yoruba is scant or completely non-existent. It is likely that Belo consolidated the tradition, which might have been orally told to the Yoruba before the 19th century.

### 4.3 Johnson's views on Islam as developed in *The History of the Yorubas*

This subchapter focuses on Johnson's perception of Islam and how it may have influenced his views of the Yoruba origin.

In *The History of the Yorubas*, Johnson states that the Yoruba do not possess a written history of their origin. Instead, they relied on carefully handed down oral traditions, one of which pertained to Oduduwa. The Oduduwa myth is a Yoruba oral tradition according to which the original ancestor of the Yoruba Oduduwa originated from Mecca and migrated to Yorubaland.<sup>644</sup> Johnson pointed out that the Yoruba in the 19th century relied on the family members of the Kings of Oyo as custodians of Yoruba history. The

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<sup>642</sup>S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 15.

<sup>643</sup>S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 15.

<sup>644</sup> S. Johnson, *the History of the Yorubas*, 4.

families who were descendant of the kings of Oyo, sometimes acted as the king's bards, drummers, and cymbalists. On this fact Johnson said: "It is on them we depend as far as possible for any reliable information we now possess."<sup>645</sup>

Within the same extract of his book, Johnson introduced the tradition according to which the Yoruba sprung from Lamurudu, one of the kings of Mecca, who gave birth to Oduduwa. The two sons of Oduduwa, whose names were not given, are said to have ruled over Gogobiri and Kukawa, two Hausa states in Northern Nigeria.<sup>646</sup> Johnson explained how Oduduwa left Mecca and landed in Ile Ife.<sup>647</sup> He also dissociated himself from the idea that the Yoruba came from Mecca. Johnson states that the notion of associating the Yoruba with the East was popular, but that the "East" did not mean Mecca, literally:

that the Yorubas came originally from the east there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habit, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove.... the Yorubas are certainly not of the Arabian family, and could not have come from Mecca universally known in history, and no such accounts as the above are to be found in the records of Arabian writers of any kings of Mecca....<sup>648</sup>

Johnson said that Mohammed Belo was one of the earliest writers who wrote on the origin of the Yoruba,<sup>649</sup> but never cited the materials he used to obtain information regarding Belo. He said that:

The only written record we have on this subject is that of the Sultan Belo of Sokoto, the founder of that city, the most learned if not the most powerful of the Fulani sovereigns that ever bore rule in the Soudan.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 3 cf. B. Davidson, *African civilization revised: From antiquity to modern times*, (African World Press: Trenton, 1998), 83.

<sup>646</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 3.

<sup>647</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>648</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>649</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>650</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

In *Infāqul-Maysur* written in 1812,<sup>651</sup> Belo mentioned that the Yoruba ancestors were migrants who left Iraq for Yorubaland:

The Yoruba were remnants of the Canaanites of the tribe of Nimūd who were expelled from Iraq by Yaʿub b. Qahtān and who fled to the west before they proceeded via Egypt and Ethiopia until they came to Yoruba.<sup>652</sup>

In addition, Johnson said that Captain Clapperton was acquainted with Belo: “Capt. Clapperton (*Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, 1822-1824*) made acquaintance of this monarch.”<sup>653</sup> Clapperton might have been aware of Arabic views regarding the Yoruba origin, as he also visited the *Yarba* (Yoruba).<sup>654</sup> Clapperton described how he met one Mohamed Gomsoo, after his visit to sultan Mohamed Belwhom he described as the chief of the Arabs in Sokoto, o. Sokoto was a province governed by Mohamed Belo. Clapperton said that Gomsoo associated the inhabitants of *Youri* (land occupied by the Yoruba) with Tripoli in North Africa: “[h]e also told me, and his account was confirmed by others, that the sultan of Youri was a native of Sockna in the regency of Tripoli, and prided himself extremely on his birth.”<sup>655</sup>

Captain Clapperton was born on 18 May 1788 and at the age of 13; he worked as a cabin boy on an Atlantic trader. He also worked with the Navy in the East Indies and in Canada. Clapperton’s first visit to West Africa came about when he joined the British explorers Dixon Denham and Walter Qudney on an expedition.<sup>656</sup> Clapperton had his first view of Lake Chad in 1823, together with Qudney and Denham. Clapperton and Denham returned to England in 1825 after the death of Qudney, who had died during

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<sup>651</sup> D. Lange, “Origin of the Yoruba and ‘The Lost Tribes of Israel,’” *Anthropos*, 106 [2011], 583; Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 62.

<sup>652</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583, originally from Gummi Abu Bakr (ed.), *Infāq-maysūr*, Cairo: Darwa-matabi al-shab, [WR 1812], P. 48.

<sup>653</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>654</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>655</sup> Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*, John Murray: London, 339.

<sup>656</sup> G. Manton, “Captain Hugh Clapperton, 1788-1827. African explorer,” from <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/object/PG1114>, p. 1. The Clapperton’s journeys are recorded in his *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the Years 1822-1823, and 1824*. The book was published in 1828. Richard Lander, Clapperton’s assistant, also published *Records of Captain Clapperton’s Last Expedition to Africa in 1830*.

their journey. In December 1825, Clapperton returned to the Bight of Benin and left for Northern Nigeria via the River Niger. Together with his assistant Richard Lander, they crossed the Niger River and travelled to Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Sokoto. Captain Clapperton died of diphtheria near Sokoto on 13 April 1827.<sup>657</sup>

Clapperton had established a good rapport with Belo for administrative reasons.<sup>658</sup> Johnson also said that Capt. Clapperton and Belo had a good relationship,<sup>659</sup> which suggests that they might have worked together, confirming Kolapo's view of the rapport between Belo and Clapperton. Clapperton said:

At noon we arrived at Sackatoo [Sokoto], where a great multitude of people was assembled to look at me, and I entered the city amid the hearty welcomes of young and old.... After breakfast the sultan sent for me; his residence was at no great distance. In front of it there is a large quadrangle, into which several of the principal streets of the city lead. We passed through three coozes, as guardhouses, without the least detention, and were immediately ushered into the presence of Bello, the second sultan of the Felatahs.... The sultan bade me many hearty welcomes, and asked me if I was not much tired with my journey from Burderawa.<sup>660</sup>

Johnson said that one of the views of the Yoruba origins was that the ancestors of the Yoruba were the descendants of Nimrod, who left Mecca for Arabia. He noted that these descendants of Nimrod were persecuted and chased out of Arabia towards the western Coast between Egypt and Abyssinia by Yar-ooba, son of Kahtan, the king of Arabia. From that position, they moved into the African interior until they reached the Yorubaland.

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<sup>657</sup> Cf. G. Manton, "Captain Hugh Clapperton, 1788-1827, African explorer," 1.

<sup>658</sup> F.J. Kolapo, "The Southward Campaigns of Nupe in the Lower Niger Valley," in Lovejoy, P.E., (ed.). *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, Markus Wiener Publisher, Princeton. 72.

<sup>659</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5. Information about Clapperton originally obtained from Vide, *Narratives of Travels and Discoveries*, by Major Denham and Capt. Clapperton, 1826, 1-307.

<sup>660</sup> Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, , *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*, 330-331. Davidson described Clapperton's meetings with Belo as friendly (B. Davidson, *African civilization revised: From antiquity to modern times*, 82 originally from H. Clapperton, *Journal of Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa from the Bight of Benin to Soccatoo*, London, 1829, p. 198).



The inhabitants of this province (Yarba) it is supposed originated [sic] from the remnant of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod. The cause of their establishment in the West of Africa was, as it is stated, in consequence of their being driven by Yar-rooba, son of Kahtan, out of Arabia to the Western Coast between Egypt and Abyssinia. From that spot they advanced into the interior of Africa, till they reached Yarba where they fixed their residence. On their way they left in every place they stopped at, a tribe of their own people. Thus it is supposed that all the tribes of the Soudan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them as also are the inhabitants of Ya-ory. Upon the whole, the people of Yarba are nearly of the same description as those of Noofee (Nupe).<sup>661</sup>

Johnson continued to discuss the connection between Nimrod, a Phoenician, and Lamurudu, also a Phoenician. He gave an etymology of Lamurudu: “[i]n the name Lamurudu (or Namurudu) we can easily recognise a dialectic modification of the name Nimrod.”<sup>662</sup> It is not known which Nimrod he described. He suggested that the story of the persecution of the descendants of Nimrod confirms the Yoruba myth according to which the Yoruba ancestors were persecuted in the East:

It is known that the descendants of Nimrod (Phoenician) were led in a war to Arabia, that they settled there, and from thence they were driven by a religious persecution to Africa... It is very curious that in the history of Mahomet we read of a similar flight of his first converts from Mecca to the East Coast of Africa (the first Hegira), due also to a religious persecution; this fact will serve to show that there is nothing improbable in the account as received by tradition. Again, that they emigrated from Upper Egypt to Ile Ife may be proved by those sculptures commonly known as “Ife Marbles,” several of which might be seen at Ile Ife to this day, said to be the handiwork of the early ancestors of the race.<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5-6, originally from *Vide Narrative of Travels and Discoveries*, by Major Denham and Captain Clapperton, 1826. Appendix XII, Sec IV. *A Tropical Dependency*, by Flora L. Shaw (Lady Lugard), 1905, pp. 227-228.

<sup>662</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

<sup>663</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

Johnson said that the Yoruba ancestors, who were chased from Canaan to Arabia, submitted to the Egyptian conqueror Nimrod (whose origin can be traced to the Phoenicians),<sup>664</sup> and that from Arabia, the Yoruba ancestors were driven out because they practiced either paganism or a corrupt form of Eastern Christianity, the latter which allowed images to be worshipped.<sup>665</sup>

According to the migration myth regarding Oduduwa; Lamurudu, one of the kings of Mecca or Yemen,<sup>666</sup> or the 'All black kingdom of Meroe,'<sup>667</sup> is the biological father of Oduduwa.<sup>668</sup> The Oduduwa explains that Oduduwa gave birth to the kings of Gogobiri and Kukawa, two kingdoms in the Hausa region of Northern Nigeria.<sup>669</sup> The migration theory concerning Oduduwa, according to Johnson, is that while in Mecca, Oduduwa became popular among the people of Mecca, due to the fact that he was bold enough to choose his own faith and, despise Islam, the religion of his ancestors. Oduduwa, a prince, wanted to change the state religion of Mecca to that of paganism or idolatry.<sup>670</sup> He even had the support of some Muslims. Oduduwa's priest, Asara, was an image-maker or a sculptor and he had a son called Braima. Braima was a committed Muslim unlike his father Asara.<sup>671</sup> Johnson interpretation of the myth is that Braima hated idols from childhood. As a child, Braima was asked by his father to sell idols, a job he hated but was forced to do. Braima invited customers to buy his father's handiwork by calling out "Who would purchase falsehood?"<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>664</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6. Johnson did not deny the Meccan or the Arab origin of the Yorubas; rather, he contested the tradition.

<sup>665</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

<sup>666</sup>Yemen used to be regarded as the "horn of Africa" (M. Le Roux, 'Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa' *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 90 (19), [2008], 15) and Ayandele said that some Yoruba historians associated Arabia, Mecca, Saudi Arabia or Egypt with Yemen, as if they were the same place (E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 122; S.M. Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behaviour," PhD Dissertation, Dept. of Communications, United State International University, [1971], 116).

<sup>667</sup> Originally quoted in Biobaku (1971:20).

<sup>668</sup>C.A. Folorunso, "Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective," in D. O'Connor & A. Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (London: UCL, 2003), 87. The precise date during which Lamurudu or Oduduwa lived is not known. As, Mecca, Yemen or Meroe was coined by the Yorubas as "Arabia" or "East", it explains why Oduduwa is associated with Arabia or the East.

<sup>669</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>670</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>671</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4 cf. A. Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture," 5.

<sup>672</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

In his quest for propagating idolatry, Oduduwa succeeded in converting one of the city mosques into a place of idol worship, but was opposed by Braima. Using his authority as a crown prince, Oduduwa ordered his followers to embark on a three day hunting expedition, in order to prepare themselves for one of their festivals aimed at appeasing their idols. While Oduduwa and his followers were away, Braima, who was old enough at this stage, went through the city of Mecca searching and destroying all the idols made by Oduduwa.<sup>673</sup> Braima used an axe to destroy the idols, leaving behind the axe on the neck of one of the major idols worshipped by Oduduwa and his followers.<sup>674</sup> On their return, the followers of Oduduwa were furious at the actions of Braima. They asked who the perpetrator was and when they discovered that it was Braima, they captured him. Braima asked the followers of Oduduwa to ask the idol itself who destroyed it. The men then asked “Can he speak?,” to which Braima replied “Why do you worship things which cannot speak”?<sup>675</sup> As a result, Oduduwa’s followers became angry and planned to burn Braima alive. This resulted in a revolt between Oduduwa followers and the majority of Muslims in Mecca. During the revolt, Lamurudu was killed and his children, including Oduduwa, were extradited and exiled from Mecca.<sup>676</sup>

Oduduwa, his children, together with some of his adherents, went eastward to Ife Ife, taking two idols with them.<sup>677</sup> Sahibu (one of the Islamic loyalists) and his army, came with a copy of the Koran from Mecca and followed Oduduwa in order to subdue him, but were defeated and the Koran was taken away from Sahibu.<sup>678</sup> Johnson said that the myth he received concerning Oduduwa, was that the Koran was then taken to the temple in Ile Ife, where it was venerated and later worshipped. To this day, it is called *Idi*, meaning something tied up. According to Johnson, it took Oduduwa ninety days to travel from Mecca to Ile Ife, where he met with Agbo-niregun (or Setilu), the founder of Ifa worship.<sup>679</sup> The other two children

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<sup>673</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>674</sup> cf. S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4 cf. A. Ojo, “Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture,” 5

<sup>675</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>676</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4-5 cf. A. Ojo, “Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture,” 5.

<sup>677</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>678</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>679</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

of Oduduwa, who became kings of Gogobiri and Kukawa, went further westward.<sup>680</sup> Although no one is sure of the Oni (King) at that time, the Yoruba tradition emphasised that long before Oduduwa, a monarchical government existed in Ile Ife. This theory caused some writers like Ayandele to believe that the Oduduwa myth was not connected to the origins of the Yoruba, but that it rather portraying a kind of political dispensation that flourished before and during Oduduwa's time in Ile Ife. No one knows exactly when Lamurudu or Oduduwa's reign began, but it is generally believed to be sometime after the rise of Islam.<sup>681</sup>

One of the Yoruba traditions proposes that when Oduduwa was in Ile Ife, he swore revenge against the Muslims who had expelled him from Mecca, but he died in Ile Ife without fulfilling his plan of vengeance. Oduduwa's eldest son, Okanbi, also called Idekoseroke, died in Ile Ife, leaving behind seven princes and princesses. It is believed that the Yoruba tribe came into being from these seven princes and princesses.<sup>682</sup> The first princess married a prince and later became the mother of Olowu, the ancestor of the Owus, and the second princess became the mother of Alaketu, the ancestor of the Ketu people. The descendant of the third princess became the king of the Benin people<sup>683</sup> and the fourth, Oranyan, became the king of Ila at Ila Orangun.<sup>684</sup> The fifth, Onisabe became the king of Sabe in the present day Benin Republic, the sixth became the king of Popos and the seventh Oranyan (Odede) was the ancestor of the Oyos (people of Oyo origin). Johnson said that Oranyan was the youngest and the richest of them all.<sup>685</sup> Oranyan set out to travel to Mecca to wreak revenge on those who had killed his great-grandfather. On Oranyan's way to

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<sup>680</sup> A. Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture," 5.

<sup>681</sup> E.A. Ayandele, "Yorubaland up to 1800," in I. Obaro (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, (Jos: Heinemann Educational Books, 2004), 123.

<sup>682</sup> This ideology has some connection with the myth surrounding the origins of the Hausa people, through the Bayajidda legend, by which seven Hausa states were created (*Hausa bakwai*) (D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, Dettelbach: J.H. Roll, 2004), 176-180).

<sup>683</sup> There is a Benin version of the Oduduwa legend according to which Oduduwa intentionally sent his children Oranmiyan and Owomika (Eweka) to rule Benin. The Obas (kings) of Benin have accepted Ile Ife as their place of origin and they still pay homage to the Ooni (king) of Ile Ife. Many contemporary Yoruba do not agree that their version Oduduwa is responsible for establishing the Benin race. Therefore, the Benin version of Oduduwa legend is still contested and generally not accepted by some Yoruba (L.A. Adetunji, *The glory of Yoruba nation*, (Lagos: Lichfield Nigeria Limited, 1999), 6-10).

<sup>684</sup> A. Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture," 4-5.

<sup>685</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 11.

Mecca, he stopped and built the city of Oyo, which is today known as the town of Oyo Ajaka. <sup>686</sup> He could not continue his journey to Mecca, but remained in Oyo and continued to communicate freely with Ile Ife, while his descendants spread across the east, west and south-western parts of Nigeria.<sup>687</sup> There is no certainty concerning the number of old Yoruba kingdoms,<sup>688</sup> and the connection between the Oduduwa, who came from Mecca, and the above mentioned Yoruba kings, cannot be proven.<sup>689</sup>

Prominent Yoruba writers like Johnson, Lucas, Folorunso and many more, believed that the association of Oduduwa with Islam is not a true representation of the history of the Yoruba origins. But even if it was, the portrayal of Oduduwa as one who hated Islam, suggests that Oduduwa might not have been a Muslim. For example, Johnson argued that the Yoruba and their ancestor(s) were not of Arab or Meccan or of Islamic descent. He believed that there is no Arabian record that proves that the Yoruba originated in Mecca and that “an event of such importance could hardly have passed unnoticed by their [Arabian] historians.”<sup>690</sup> Johnson stressed that past historians (especially Nigerian oral historians) regarded the “East” as Mecca, and that there was indeed a strong affinity between the Yoruba and the East, but that the “East” implies Egypt and not Mecca in a literal sense. Folorunso agreed with Johnson’s view and said that “Mecca” or the “East”, with reference to Yoruba origin implies Egypt and not Mecca or Arabia.<sup>691</sup> Johnson believed that Mohammed Belo influenced the Yoruba in believing that their ancestors were originally Muslims.<sup>692</sup>

It is not explained why Oduduwa converted a Mosque into a place of idol worship, but the myth, as explained by Johnson, suggests that Oduduwa preferred idolatry to Islam. This might have influenced Johnson to dissociate the Yoruba origin from Islam and associate Oduduwa with Christianity. It is important to note that Johnson did not deny that the Yoruba ancestors lived in Mecca or Arabia; he rather

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<sup>686</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 11.

<sup>687</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 10-11; cf. A. Ojo, “Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture,” 4-5.

<sup>688</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>689</sup> The listing of the Yoruba kings made by Ojo is obtained from S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7-14.

<sup>690</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>691</sup> C.A. Folorunso, “Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective,” in D. O’Connor & A. Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (London: UCL, 2003), 83.

<sup>692</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5-6.

seemed to challenge the domineering influence of Islam in explaining the Yoruba origins. At the close of 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Fulani and the Hausa jihadists from the Sokoto Caliphate captured Ilorin a Yorubaland, and extended their jihad to Osogbo, Ijesa and Ekiti, but were repelled by the inhabitants of these Yoruba regions.<sup>693</sup> Muslim converts continued to preach to the Yoruba, many of whom were traditionalists in the 18<sup>th</sup> and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Johnson complained about the fact that the Yoruba accepted Islam and regarded it as a superior religion over paganism: “[i]t is now embraced by thousands, as it appears to be a superior form of religion to the paganism of their ancestors.”<sup>694</sup> Johnson generally thought that associating the Yoruba origin with Islam gives a bad image of the Yoruba. This is an indication that Johnson held a high level of appreciation for Christianity and the missionaries who preached to him and his family in Sierra Leone and in Nigeria. This could be one of the reasons why he preferred to associate the Yoruba origins with Christianity in general and Coptic Christianity in particular.

#### 4.4 Johnson’s views on the Coptic tradition as developed in *The History of the Yorubas*

Samuel Johnson contested the Oduduwa myth, according to which the Yoruba ancestor Oduduwa originated from the East; the East which was associated with Islam or Muslims.<sup>695</sup> The Oduduwa myth which associated the Yoruba origin with Mecca or Arabia seemed to suggest that the Yoruba ancestors were Muslims. Johnson on the other hand associated the Yoruba origin with Christianity and with the Coptic Church in particular. The association of the Yoruba origin with the Coptic Church enhances Johnson’s view of the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba. There is a need for further enquiry into why Johnson associated the Yoruba origin with the Coptic Church. Did some members of the Coptic Church, or other Egyptian Christians like the Nubians, actually migrate to Yorubaland and preach there?

In the entire book, *The History of the Yoruba*, which is divided into two parts, it is only in Chapter One that Johnson discussed the origins of the entire Yoruba people, and it is only in this chapter that Johnson associated the Yoruba with the Egyptians. The chapter is entitled “Origin and Early History” and only

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<sup>693</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 38.

<sup>694</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 39.

<sup>695</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

covers 12 pages. However, the author did not explain at length the association of the origins of the Yoruba in connection with the Egyptians; this explanation was limited to a mere three pages. In other words, Johnson's views on the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba are basically presented over three pages out of a 760 paged book *The History of the Yorubas*. The Part 1 of the book comprises of seven sub-chapters and it is only in chapter 1 that Johnson gave his own views regarding the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba ethnic group.

The chapter 2 of *The History of the Yorubas* is entitled "The Origin of the Tribes" and the chapter is about the origins of the various Yoruba tribes such as the Egbas, the Ijebus, the Ekitis, etc. The chapter does not discuss the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba, but rather focuses on the distribution of the various Yoruba tribes from Ile Ife to other parts of the Yorubaland. On the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba and their association with the Coptic tradition, Johnson said that the Yoruba probably originated from Egypt:<sup>696</sup>

1. That they sprung from Upper Egypt, or Nubia.
2. That they were subjects of the Egyptian conqueror Nimrod who was of the Phoenician origin, and that they followed him in his wars of conquest as far as Arabia, where they settled for a time.<sup>697</sup>

Johnson also stated that the Yoruba creation myth and the Yoruba views on Moremi, the wife of one of the unknown heroes in Ile Ife, correlates indirectly with some biblical stories, which suggest that the Yoruba ancestors might have been Christians:

It might probably then be shown that the ancestors of the Yorubas, hailing from Upper Egypt, were either Coptic Christians, or at any rate that they had some knowledge of Christianity. If so, it might offer a solution of the problem of how it came about that traditional stories of the creation,<sup>698</sup> the deluge, of Elijah, and other scriptural characters are current amongst them, and indirect stories of our Lord, termed 'son of Moremi.'<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6. Johnson did not deny the Meccan or the Arabian origin of the Yoruba, but he did contest the overall theory.

<sup>697</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

<sup>698</sup> The Yoruba creation contends that a monotheistic god by the name of Olodumare (or Olorun) was responsible for all of creation and that he rules the world.

<sup>699</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

A Yoruba legend regarding Moremi and her only son, Olurogbo (or Ela) states that the people of Ile Ife were troubled by the Igbos, who were regarded by the Yoruba as spirits or demi-gods. Moremi sacrificed her only son Olorogbo to the Igbo spirits in order to free Ile Ife from constant attacks.<sup>700</sup> Johnson might have related this legend to the Christian narrative, in which God sacrifices his only son, Jesus Christ, for the redemption of the world.<sup>701</sup>

Furthermore, in his effort to further Christianise the origins of the Yoruba, Johnson added that the sacred relic called *Idi*, which Oduduwa and his adherents came with from the East into Yorubaland, could not have been the Koran, but rather a Christian Holy Scripture in scrolls, similar to the form in which ancient manuscripts were preserved.<sup>702</sup> Johnson believed that an Egyptian conqueror Nimrod was a Phoenician who persecuted the original ancestors of the Yoruba in Upper Egypt or in Nubia, and that this persecution caused the Yoruba to migrate to West Africa.<sup>703</sup> He said that the Yoruba ancestors "...were subjects of the Egyptian conqueror Nimrod who was of Phoenician origin..."<sup>704</sup> It is not known precisely which Nimrod Johnson wrote about, but his comparison of the Yoruba creation myth with biblical stories prompts the need to associate the Nimrod Johnson mentioned, with the biblical Nimrod. Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, 'Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.'<sup>705</sup>

It is written in the Hebrew Bible that Noah was the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth, and that Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan were the sons of Ham. Cush fathered Nimrod.<sup>706</sup> Lange said that the myths

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<sup>700</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 147-148.

<sup>701</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>702</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7. The hypotheses of Lucas, Folorunso, and especially Johnson, dissociate Yoruba origins from Islam. It can therefore be proposed that both Islam and Christianity played a role in influencing the writing of Yoruba history.

<sup>703</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7. Johnson never provided dates or time periods for the arrival of the original Yoruba ancestors, who migrated from Upper Egypt or Nubia to West Africa. His association between Yoruba origins and the Coptic Egyptians suggests that Johnson could have estimated a date of migration sometime after 68 CE. This date roughly corresponds with John Mark's introduction of the Gospel to Egypt and his subsequent martyrdom (M.A. Marcus, "History of the Coptic Orthodox Church," from [www.stmary-ottawa.org](http://www.stmary-ottawa.org). [2011], 4. cf. A. Osman, "The origins of the ancient Coptic Church of Egypt," 1).

<sup>704</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

<sup>705</sup> Genesis 10:8:9.

<sup>706</sup> Genesis 10:1-10.



regarding the origins of the West African people linked them with the Ancient Near East, and particularly with Nimrod of Mesopotamia. He said that the people of Kanem and Kebbi in Northern Nigeria identified Nimrod with Sargon of Akkad (2334-2279 BCE). Lange said that in the Yoruba myth, Nimrod, or Sargon of Akkad, is identified as Okanbi.<sup>707</sup> According to the Yoruba myth, Okanbi is the eldest son of Oduduwa and is often referred to as Idekoseroke. Okanbi died in Ile, leaving behind seven princes and princesses.<sup>708</sup> In a biblical commentary edited by Robert G. Hoerber, the editor pointed out that the Nimrod described in Genesis 10 is a possible Hebrew name for Sargon 1, a ruler of Akkad. Hoerber noted that the Hamites lived in Asia and in northeast Africa<sup>709</sup> and that Cush is located in the Upper Nile region, south of Egypt.<sup>710</sup> It seems as though Johnson associated three kinds of people with the Yoruba origin. Firstly, he described the Yoruba ancestors as a people ruled by Nimrod, an Egyptian conqueror who had a Phoenician origin. This idea links the Yoruba origin with the ancient Egyptians. Secondly, Johnson associated the Yoruba origin with the Coptic Church, which suggests an association of the Yoruba ancestors with Christianity. Thirdly, Johnson associated the Yoruba origin with the Nubians.

Ancient Nubia comprised of the region from Aswan in the southward direction through the modern-day Khartoum in Sudan (see Appendix B, Figure 4), and it was occupied by dark skinned people.<sup>711</sup> Samuel Johnson might have had little knowledge of the Nubian Christians, but this assertion cannot be proven. This lack of knowledge during the time of Johnson is attributed to the fact that archaeological discoveries only highlighted the existence of a Nubian Christians during the 1930s.<sup>712</sup> Thus said, before the 1930s, knowledge of Nubian Christianity was scarce and scanty.<sup>713</sup> Johnson categorically mentioned the Coptic

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<sup>707</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 580, 583.

<sup>708</sup> D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 176-180).

<sup>709</sup> Geographically, Egypt is located in northeast Africa (O'Connor, D. & Reid A., "Locating ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern theories, past realities," in D. O'Connor & Reid (eds.) *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (UCL: London, 2003), 11).

<sup>710</sup> R.G. Hoerber, et al (eds.) *Concordia self-study Bible* (NIV), (CPH: Saint Louis, 1984), 21.

<sup>711</sup> P. Bowers, "Nubian Christianity: The neglected heritage," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4:1 [1985], 3. Two reasons exist for the ancient Egyptians' classified as dark-skinned people. The first is cultural similarity between the Egyptians and other African groups. The second is the geographical location of Egypt within Africa (D. O'Connor & A. Reid "Locating ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern theories, past realities," in D. O'Connor & Reid (eds.) *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, pp. 1-21, (UCL: London, 2003), 11). Adamo and Eghubare also refer to the ancient Egyptians as dark-skinned people (T.D. Adamo & E.F. Eghubare, "The African Queen: Queen Sheba," *Journal for Semitics*, 19(2), 2010, 415).

<sup>712</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 2.

<sup>713</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 2.

Church as a possible influencer of the Yoruba origin, but not the Nubian Christians.<sup>714</sup> Johnson's suggestion that the Yoruba ancestors might have originated from Nubia, suggests that he might have had little or some oral information about the Nubians, but he did not categorically mentioned the Nubian Christians.

The Byzantine missionaries contributed to the spread of Christianity in Nubia around 540 CE. However, their efforts in spreading the Gospel were interrupted by Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which strategised take-over of Nubia.<sup>715</sup> Johnson stated that the ancestors of the Yoruba were persecuted because they practiced paganism or another form of Eastern Christianity (which allowed the veneration of images- a taboo in Islam), or that they were Coptic Christians.<sup>716</sup> Islamic forces attacked the Coptic Church around 642 CE; however, the Copts still exist until today. Since 642 CE, Islam continued to spread in Egypt, capturing one tribe after the other, so that by 702 CE, all the tribes in Egypt, including the Berber, were converted to Islam.<sup>717</sup>

The theory of a possible migration between Egypt and West Africa at the time of the rise of Islam around the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE is still under study.<sup>718</sup> A specialist on the history of African Christianity, Paul Bowers, mentioned that after the 1930s, archaeologists have discovered the remains of a Nubian monastery in western Sudan near the Chadian border, and Nubian artefacts were also found towards the north of Lake Chad.<sup>719</sup> Paul Bowers wrote about a Franciscan missionary in Tripoli, who was rumoured by caravans in the 1700s, that there were Christians in the south of the Hausa and Borno state of Northern Nigeria.<sup>720</sup> Some Franciscan missionaries decided to go to Katsina state in Northern Nigeria to find out if there were Christian kingdoms in Hausa states as rumoured. But their mission was not completed because the missionaries succumbed to diseases in Northern Nigeria.<sup>721</sup> Paul Bower also said that "Christian symbols

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<sup>714</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

<sup>715</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 2, 6.

<sup>716</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

<sup>717</sup> E.H. Skolfield, *The false prophet: Who is behind Middle East terrorism?* (Florida: Fish House Publishing, 2001), 142-143).

<sup>718</sup> J.M. Agai, "An investigation into the ancient Egyptian cultural influences on the Yorubas of Nigeria," *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), [2013], 9-10.

<sup>719</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

<sup>720</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

<sup>721</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

were reported in the last century among the royal regalia of a tribal kingdom on the Benue, south of Hausaland, though the religious meaning of the symbols had been forgotten.”<sup>722</sup> Contrary to the popular notion that Christianity only started in Southern Nigeria around 1515<sup>723</sup> and in Northern Nigeria around 1841,<sup>724</sup> Bowers attempted to show that Christianity might have started in Northern Nigeria long before 1515 through the influence of the Nubian Christians.<sup>725</sup>

While it may be argued that either Nubian or Coptic Christianity influenced Northern Nigeria, it is not clear how Christianity spread from Northern Nigeria to the Yorubaland, or vice versa, in the periods before 1515. However, it is possible that the Nubians and the Coptic Egyptian traders, who were Christians from Egypt, travelled to the western parts of the Sudan (now Chad),<sup>726</sup> and they might have preached Christianity at their respective destinations.<sup>727</sup> There was trade between Chad and Hausaland, including Borno, long before the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and the traders were mostly Muslims. The Muslim traders preached about their faith in Hausaland.<sup>728</sup> The Hausaland and the Yorubaland also traded between each other. They traded in exchange for food, clothes and kola nut around 1300.<sup>729</sup> Lucas said that many Muslims from Borno visited and even settled in Cairo during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and that thousands of pilgrims from West Africa also settled in the Egyptian Sudan. He noted that the Egyptian adventurer, Rabeh, visited Borno in 1870 and that he subsequently chased away the Sultan of Borno 1893.<sup>730</sup> Perhaps the Nubians or Copts, whose influences were felt in the Lake Chad region, also directly or indirectly, influenced both the Hausaland and the Yorubaland; yet this cannot be proven. Samuel Johnson relied on oral tradition to write about the origin of the Yoruba. Johnson might have heard about a possible influence of the Nubians

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<sup>722</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

<sup>723</sup> M. Omolewa, M., 2008, *Certificate history of Nigeria* (Ikeja: Longman, 2008), 136

<sup>724</sup> Both Omolewa and Ume stated that Christianity was founded in Nigeria around the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Portuguese missionaries, who discovered Nigeria through the support provided by Portuguese explorers (M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 140-141; Ume, K.E., *The rise of British colonialism in southern Nigeria, 1700-1900: A study of the Bight of Benin and Bonny*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1980), 74).

<sup>725</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

<sup>726</sup> J.E. Lavers, ‘Kanem and Borno to 1800’ in I. Obaro (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian history*, pp. 187-209, (Heinemann Educational Books: Jos, 2004), 187.

<sup>727</sup> P. Bowers, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 4.

<sup>728</sup> T. Falola & M.M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29 cf. M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 90.

<sup>729</sup> M. Shinnie, *Ancient African kingdoms*, (Edward Arnold: London, 1965), 81.

<sup>730</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, (n.p. Lagos, 1970), 400-401.

or the Copts, who might have migrated to Hausaland or to Yorubaland, or have influenced the Yoruba who had contact with traders from Egypt, Sudan, Lake Chad or Hausaland.

There are no specific peoples or cultures that are regarded as direct remnants of the Egyptian people or culture left behind in Yorubaland in particular.<sup>731</sup> Almost every version of the Oduduwa migration theory supposes that there were people living in Yorubaland before the arrival of Oduduwa from the East.<sup>732</sup> While the identities of these people are not known, Ayandele said that there were speculations that the people Oduduwa met in Yorubaland were the Yoruba themselves,<sup>733</sup> but Afolayan said they might have been the Igbos.<sup>734</sup> The implication is that many Yoruba regard Oduduwa as a male and as the first king of Ile Ife, or the originator of the Yoruba kingdoms, to the point that various sacrifices are still made in his honour.<sup>735</sup> Questions are raised on whether Oduduwa was an actual historical person, and whether he/she should be regarded as the founder of Yoruba kingdoms or the progenitor of the Yoruba race, especially since people were already living in Yorubaland before the arrival of Oduduwa. The identity of the people Oduduwa met in Yorubaland is still not known.<sup>736</sup> Another point of contention exists surrounding the period or date during which the supposed migration of Oduduwa to Yorubaland took place. Afolayan suggested that Oduduwa might have migrated to Yorubaland around 1100 CE,<sup>737</sup> while Oyeade believes it was sometime between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>738</sup> Perhaps Johnson thought that the rise of Egyptian Christianity in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was associated with the period during which Oduduwa migrated to Yorubaland. This speculation is important, as Johnson associated the Yoruba origin with Egyptian Christianity. Johnson did not specify the period or the time at which Oduduwa and his followers

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<sup>731</sup> J.M. Agai, *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, [2013a], 9-10.

<sup>732</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>733</sup> E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 123.

<sup>734</sup> F. Afolayan, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 32 cf. A. Oyeade, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 57-58.

<sup>735</sup> L.A. Adetunji, *The glory of Yoruba nation*, (Lagos: Lichfield Nigeria Limited, 1999), 1-2.

<sup>736</sup> S.A. Akintoye, "From early times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century," in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>737</sup> F. Afolayan, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 33.

<sup>738</sup> A. Oyeade, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 53.

migrated to Yorubaland. Instead, he mentioned that it took 90 days for the children of Oduduwa Kukawa and Gogobiri to travel from Mecca to Yorubaland.<sup>739</sup>

## 4.5 Johnson's views on culture as developed in *The History of the Yorubas*

Samuel Johnson, in *The History of the Yorubas*, discussed the Yoruba culture, including the Yoruba religion extensively, but he did not discuss the connection between the Yoruba culture and that of the Egyptians.<sup>740</sup> He might have been interested in the Jewish and Christian elements in the Egyptian culture. In Chapter Three, Johnson said that the Yoruba were basically traditionalists before Islam and that Christianity dominated the Yorubaland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>741</sup> He further stated that the Yoruba believe in one Supreme God *Olorun*, who is also regarded as the Lord of Heaven. Other kings and spirits deified by the Yoruba are called *Orisas* and Johnson mentioned that the Yoruba believe in many *Orisas*.<sup>742</sup> Some of the *Orisas* mentioned by Johnson include *Ogun* (the god of war), *Kori* (an object of worship), *Orisala* (a co-worker with Olorun), *Ori* (god of fate), *Esu* (the Evil One), *Sopona* (sprayer of disease), *Egungun*,<sup>743</sup> *Adamuorisa* and *Gelede* (all of whom represented the spirit of the dead), *Oya* (Sango's wife), *Erinle* (the great hunter) and *Orisa Oko* (also a hunter of Irawo native).<sup>744</sup> Johnson explained that in every king's

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<sup>739</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>740</sup>This research is concern with the connections of the Yoruba culture with those of the ancient Egyptians.

<sup>741</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 26.

<sup>742</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 26.

<sup>743</sup>The word *Egungun* literally means "bone," or "skeleton." The association between *Egungun* to the rising of the dead affords some reasoning behind the practice of involving skeletons in *Egungun* ritual. *Egungun* also refers to an individual who is supposed to be a man in the spirit world, but who has arisen from the dead to walk among the living (A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa, their religion, manners, customs, laws, language, etc.*, (Oosterhout: Anthropological, 1966), 107). When an elderly Yoruba man dies, his spirit joins the ancestors to become an *Egungun*. An *Egungun* is regarded as a citizen of Heaven who returned from the spirit-world to check on the welfare of the living.<sup>743</sup> During the *Egungun* festival, the living act on behalf of certain ancestors, or spirits of the dead, and are referred to as *Egungun*. Moreover, the members of communities that practice *Egungun* rituals and festivals, are not only regarded as the representatives of *Egungun* on earth, but are also referred to as *Egungun* themselves. During these festivals, the *Egungun* are dressed from head to toe in colourful garments. Every part of the body must be covered, leaving only narrow slits for eyes, so that the *Egungun* are seen as spiritual beings and not as humans (J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 133). *Egungun* masks are passed down within the community and are only worn by men who have gone through the rituals of initiation. Women are not allowed to know the identity of the wearers of *Egungun* masks, except for an official woman, known as the *Iya Agan*, who helps the the men to dress (J.S. Eades, *The Yoruba today*, 123).

<sup>744</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 26-39.

palace there were different types of workers, including the title officers (responsible for administration), the Eunuchs (superior staffers) and the *Ilaris* (preservers of the king's life). Some of the palace workers resided at the king's palace but others did not.<sup>745</sup>

The fifth chapter, "Yoruba Names"<sup>746</sup> Discuss traditional Yoruba practices of name-giving. He said that the Yoruba normally had traditional names in Yoruba language, although each name does have a significance or meaning. Some of the traditionally known Yoruba names he mentioned are *Taiwo* or *Ebo* (first-borns who are twins), *Kahinde* (the second born), *Idowu* (the child born after twins), *Abiodun* (born at the New Year or during any Yoruba festival), *Yetunde* (mother comes again). Names like *Yetunte* and *Babatunde* (Father come again) are associated with reincarnation in Yoruba culture.<sup>747</sup>

Other rituals discussed by Johnson include the coronation of kingship, the public appearance of a king and the rituals involved in the burial of a king.<sup>748</sup> Johnson said that kings were normally buried at night, with the sounds of ivory trumpets and Kosa drums. The deceased king was normally covered in black and white dress and with a crown on his head. Some Yoruba committed suicide in order to show their respect for the deceased king and in order to be buried alongside the king (which was seen as a great honour). Those who committed suicide did so because they thought they would rule with the deceased king in the

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<sup>745</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 57-78.

<sup>746</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 79.

<sup>747</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 79-89. The Yorubas consider the concept of reincarnation with great reverence. This is the reason why the following prayer is said at the funeral of someone who had lived a fulfilled life: *Mama se pe ki o way alodo wa* ("Do not delay in being reincarnated in our home or family") (J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 254). When a child is born, the Yorubas normally consult an oracle to determine which of their ancestors has been reincarnated in that child. It is believed that, if a child is born on or near an ancestor's date of death, that child is the reincarnation of the family member in question. For example, the name *Babatunde* (father has returned) or *Iyabo/ Mamatunde/ Yetunde* (mother has returned) is often given to such a child. Sometimes, ancestors are reincarnated through their grandchildren, especially in cases of multiple birth (twins or more) within the immediate family that lost a loved one. The Yoruba also believe that the soul of the deceased may be reborn or transmuted into an animal, like a lion or leopard. They also believe that the soul could be transformed into plants, but this is a rare occurrence. In other words, they believe in the transmigration of the soul, which means that the deceased can transform into a stone, a tree or another object or animal. However, they believe that transmigration is limited to wicked souls (O.F. Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*, 59-60; J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 254; K. Adamolekun, *Death Studies*, 610; J.A. Adedeji, *Traditional religion in West Africa*, 118). Another Yoruba tradition references reincarnated humans, who are referred to as *Ogbanjes*; humans who are actually spirits. The Yoruba believe that *Ogbanje* are humans who died and were denied access into Heaven, as they were lazy during their lifetimes (A.E. Asakitikpi, 'Born to die: The Ogbanje phenomenon and its implication on childhood mortality in southern Nigeria,' *Anthropologist* 10 (1), [2008], 59-610).

<sup>748</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 41-54.

afterlife.<sup>749</sup> Johnson encouraged the Yoruba to use Yoruba names, but he noted that it was not obligatory for any woman to use her husband's name as traditionally known: "[n]either Christianity or civilisation requires a man's name to be given to his wife or children...."<sup>750</sup> In chapter eight, Johnson discussed that the Yoruba had much respect for their manners and customs. Most importantly, he mentioned that respect for elderly people was a great pride in Yorubaland.<sup>751</sup> Other Yoruba customs discussed by Johnson are dressing, marriage, widowhood, trade, use of wealth, management of debt, behaviors during wars, funerals and tribal marks. Johnson said that tribal marks differ from one Yoruba region to the next.<sup>752</sup>

The entire first part of Johnson's book, which has, seven chapters is strictly dedicated to explaining the rituals involved in Yoruba culture. There are two major or specific statements which Johnson made on the connection of the Yoruba culture and those of the Egyptians in *The History of the Yorubas*. While describing the Yoruba as a people who originated from the "East" or "Egypt,"<sup>753</sup> Johnson noted that certain cultural compositions or attributes of the Yoruba connected them with the Coptic Christians or the Nubians:

That the Yorubas came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove. With them the East is Mecca and Mecca

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<sup>749</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 54-55. The Egyptians also believed that their pharaohs could help them in the afterlife. For example, in the Old Kingdom, pharaohs were regarded as representatives of the gods on Earth. They also believed that the pharaohs were given the responsibility of implementing the will of the gods of earth, a belief which prompted many Egyptians to serve their kings to the point of death. As it was widely believed that the pharaohs could influence the resurrection of all those who served the throne during their life-time, subordinates were eager to participate in the construction of pyramids and tombs, in preparation for the pharaoh's death. As a reward, the pharaoh would then bestow his subjects and servants with the title of *rech-nesw* meaning "acquaintance of the king".<sup>749</sup> The Egyptians were willing to die and be entombed alongside their pharaohs in appreciation, with the belief that they would enjoy eternal life alongside their ruler. However, at a later stage, the act of human sacrifice was replaced by the practice of *ushabti* burials. *Ushabti* are figurines or statuettes meant to symbolically replace real sacrificial victims. The *ushabti* took many forms, such as farmers, bakers, hand maidens, soldiers, etc, and were thought to perform their represented duties in the afterlife. The larger the contingent *ushabti* within real life; the larger the contingent of servants within the afterlife. For example, Turner states that King Tutankhamen was buried alongside 414 *shabtis*.<sup>749</sup> Egyptians of a lower standing within society were often buried with just one of two *shabtis*<sup>749</sup> (K.A. Turner, *The history of hell*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 15).

<sup>750</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 89.

<sup>751</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.98-103. Lucas said that Yoruba social engagements, like respect for elders and salutation, are similar to those of the Egyptians (J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, 413-416).

<sup>752</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 104 – 140.

<sup>753</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

is the East. Having strong affinities with the East, and Mecca in the East looming so largely in their imagination, everything that comes from the East, with them comes from Mecca, and hence it is natural to represent themselves as having hailed originally from that city.<sup>754</sup>

Johnson did not explain or indicate any of the specific habits, manners or custom that connected the Yoruba with the Egyptians. The second pronouncement made by Johnson on the connection of the Yoruba culture or crafts to those of the Egyptians, involved the arts of sculpture.<sup>755</sup> While describing the Yoruba ancestors as people who originated from Upper Egypt, Johnson reiterated that the Yoruba sculptures are similar to those of the Egyptians. Johnson called the Yoruba sculptures “Ife Marbles” and he cited *Opa Oranyan*<sup>756</sup> as a typical example of what he meant by the terms Ife Marbles:

Again, that they emigrated from Upper Egypt to Ile Ife may also be proved by those sculptures commonly known as the “Ife Marbles,” several of which may be seen at Ile Ife to this day, said to be the handiwork of the early ancestors of the race. They are all together Egyptian in form. The most notable of them is what is known as the “Opa Oranya,” (Oranyan’s staff) an obelisk standing on the site of the Oranyan’s supposed grave, having characters cut in it which suggest a Phoenician origin. Three or four of these sculptures may now be seen in the Egyptian Court of the British Museum, showing at a glance that they are among kindred works of art.<sup>757</sup>

It is likely that Johnson’s main concern was to link the Yoruba origin with the Copts and the Nubians. Johnson’s comparison of the Yoruba obelisk and sculptures with that of the Egyptians, suggests that he might have had some knowledge of Egyptian archaeological discoveries. This knowledge may have

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<sup>754</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5. With reference to the East as Mecca, Johnson believed that the Yorubas did not originate from the East, but rather from Upper Egypt or Nubia (Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6). See 4.7 for more information.

<sup>755</sup>Shawn Stevens sided with Johnson by saying that Yoruba sculptures are similar to those of the Egyptians: “some early Yoruban sculptures resemble Egyptian sculpture,” (S. Stevens, “The Yorubas and early missionary work among them,” <http://www.zionchristianministry.com/international/africa/the-yorubas-and-early-missionary-work-amongthem/>, 1.

<sup>756</sup>Oranya was a Yoruba king from the Kingdom of Ile Ife and the Yorubas believe him to be the heir to Oduduwa. It is no certainty over the period that Oranya ruled Ile Ife, as there is no certainty on the year Oduduwa ruled Ile Ife.

<sup>757</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.



stemmed from his teachers and probably from other European missionaries whom he had contact with. He also discussed family lineages of the Yoruba kings, which have no direct connection with Egypt, except in mentioning Oduduwa as the Yoruba ancestor. This family lineage is said to have started from Oduduwa.

## 4.6 The Oduduwa myth and what it says about Johnson's worldview

Before he explained his views that the Yoruba ancestors were likely from Nubia, or that they were Coptic Christians, Johnson explained what he understood by Oduduwa. He said that Oduduwa is the original ancestor of the Yoruba who migrated from Mecca to Ile Ife.<sup>758</sup> Johnson deemphasised the Meccan origin of Oduduwa and emphasised the Egyptian origin of Oduduwa. It becomes pertinent to inquire about the general meaning of Oduduwa and how Johnson perceived Oduduwa in relation to the Yoruba origin. This subchapter explains the meaning of Oduduwa from Johnson's time and after the time of Johnson. The main purpose of the definition, especially after Johnson, is to evaluate the Oduduwa myth and what it says on Johnson's worldview of the Yoruba origin.

The word, *Oduduwa*, *Odudua* or *dua* refer to one person according to Yoruba beliefs.<sup>759</sup> Johnson said that the term *Oduduwa* originated from *Odu (ti o da iwa)*, which literally means anything that is large and mostly importantly, such as a container that is large in size.<sup>760</sup> In other words, the term *Odu* implies the greatness of *Oduduwa* as the author of existence.<sup>761</sup> Olumide Lucas,<sup>762</sup> an author whose views will be discussed more at length in the next chapter, said that the word *Oduduwa* generally means the Black One.<sup>763</sup> Lucas said that the derivation of the name *dudu* means Black and that *Iwa* means existence, hence the contraction of *Odu ti o da wa*, translates into "self-existent personage."<sup>764</sup> A further enunciation of

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<sup>758</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>759</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas: Being an account of the religious beliefs and practice of the Yoruba peoples of southern Nigeria, especially in relation to the religion of ancient Egypt*, (Lagos: C.M.S. Bookshop, 1948), 95.

<sup>760</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>761</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>762</sup> J.K. Olupona, 'The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective,' *NUMEN*, 3(40), [1993], 243.

<sup>763</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 95.

<sup>764</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 95.

these derivations by Lucas indicates that *Odu and dua* also means “a chief” or “an exalted personage.”<sup>765</sup> Lucas believed that the word *dua* comes from the ancient Egyptian word *dua-t*, which means “the other world.” Lucas thought that *Odu-dua* means “Lord of the Other World” or “Mistress of the Other World.”<sup>766</sup> In order to highlight his understanding of connecting the Yoruba with the Egyptians, Lucas adds that another name for Oduduwa is *Ye-mu-u* or *Ye-muhu*, which literally means “the Living Mut” or “Mother Mut.”<sup>767</sup> Lucas said that the Yoruba and many other tribes in West Africa regard the word *Ye* to mean the living one. *Mut* is an Egyptian goddess, thus, while the Yoruba regard *Oduduwa* or *Ye-mu-u* as *Mother Mut*, the Egyptians regarded *Mut* as Mother.<sup>768</sup>

Furthermore, Alfred Burdon Ellis, a renowned writer on West African history like Lucas, proposed that the word *du* or *dudu* generally means “black”, and that the association of Oduduwa with the colour black could be due to an ideology that African people appreciate black skin as a sign of great beauty.<sup>769</sup> Unto the Yoruba in particular, black skin is a great beauty and they are proud to associate their goddess Oduduwa, the wife of the anthropomorphic sky-god *Obatala*, with the color black.<sup>770</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> century writers of Yoruba history, like Afolayan, have continued to associate the word Oduduwa with the creator of existence. Afolayan, like Johnson and Lucas for example, said that the name *Oduduwa* is indeed a resonance which comes from the contraction of the name *Odu ti o da iwa*, which means that it was *Odu* (deity or mystery) who created (*da*) *iwa* (existence, life, and character).<sup>771</sup>

Johnson is known by the Yoruba as one of the first writers to document the Oduduwa myth during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Oduduwa myth was used by the Yoruba to explain their origins and the knowledge of the myth was passed by word of mouth from one generation to the next. Up to this day, the Oduduwa myth is included in the curriculum of the subjects of “history” and “government” in Nigerian high schools.

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<sup>765</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 95.

<sup>766</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 95.

<sup>767</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 97

<sup>768</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 97.

<sup>769</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa, their religion, manners, customs, laws, language, etc.*, (Oosterhout: Anthropological, 1966), 41.

<sup>770</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 41-42.

<sup>771</sup> F. Afolayan, “The Early Yoruba Kingdoms,” in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.), *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 32.

In Nigerian high schools, the Oduduwa myth is taught as an available and reliable source of information that explains the Yoruba origin. Many writers of Yoruba history from the 1950s onward consider Oduduwa myth as a reliable source of information. From the 1950s onward, many writers of Yoruba history, like Lucas and Ojo,<sup>772</sup> have relied on Johnson's explanation of the Oduduwa myth to teach others about the origin of the Yoruba. For example, Olumide Lucas' association of the Yoruba origin with Egypt might have been influenced by Johnson's view that the Yoruba were the descendants of the Copts, or a people who practiced another form of Christianity that differed from the mainstream one.<sup>773</sup> Frobenius, an author whose views will also be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, believed that while many Yoruba believe in the Oduduwa myth, some attach greater value to the myth than others.<sup>774</sup> Frobenius also believed that the respect shown to Oduduwa by Ibadan Yoruba differs from that of the people of Ile Ife. This is due to the fact that Oduduwa's origin is associated with Ile Ife and not any other part of the Yorubaland.<sup>775</sup>

On some occasions, Oduduwa is regarded as a male god, a warrior, a creator, a migrant legend, a wise king, a mythical figure, but on others as a female goddess. Whenever Oduduwa is portrayed as a female entity, evil or immorality is often associated with her personality. Researchers rely on two hypotheses to discuss the Yoruba origin. The first is the Oduduwa creation myth, and secondly, the Oduduwa legend of migration.<sup>776</sup> Every Yoruba tradition concerning Yoruba origins regarded Oduduwa as the progenitor of the Yoruba people.<sup>777</sup> The role of Oduduwa as a deity or legend is never compromised among the Yoruba. Oduduwa is described as an all-powerful conqueror and is today the most celebrated deity or legend

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<sup>772</sup> A. Ojo, 'Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture.'

<sup>773</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

<sup>774</sup> B.B. Godesberg, *Leo Frobenius: An anthology*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1973), 160.

<sup>775</sup> B.B. Godesberg, *Leo Frobenius: An anthology*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1973), 160. Other writers, like Ojo, Oyebade, Akinyele, Ayandele and many more, also mentioned the Oduduwa myth while discussing Yoruba origin. It is important to note that the Oduduwa myth was an oral tradition that is now documented by various authors. Among today's historians, the Oduduwa myth is so important that even the Benin people (South-South Nigeria) and a section of the Ibos (South-East Nigeria) are all claiming their ancestry to Oduduwa. Each group has defined the myth to suit their respective beliefs regarding their origins.

<sup>776</sup> A. Oyebade, "Reconstructing the past through oral tradition," in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.), *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 53-54.

<sup>777</sup> J.K. Olupona, *City of 201 gods: Ile Ife in time, space, and the imagination*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 224.

among other Yoruba deities or legends.<sup>778</sup> The extensive (and expensive) annual Oduduwa festival, celebrated in Ile Ife, which often attracts many Yoruba and tourists from all over the world, is the most popular among all of Yoruba festivals. One of the aims of the festival is to show the strength and the superiority of Oduduwa over all humans and other deities or legends.<sup>779</sup> The fact that the Yoruba regard themselves as the children of Oduduwa, whom they describe as a hero, a warrior, the creator, and a king, raises questions on the imageries of Oduduwa as a singular person from whom the Yoruba originated. What did the Oduduwa myth say concerning Johnson's worldview on the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba?

Different views concerning the Yoruba creation myth exist.<sup>780</sup> Yoruba myths regarding the creation of the world and the creation of everything that exist, all point to Oduduwa as the most important figure in the creation acts.<sup>781</sup> The Yoruba creation myth is that God (Olorun) laid down a chain from Heaven to Ile Ife, from which Oduduwa then descended down to Earth.<sup>782</sup> Oduduwa came down from Heaven to an Earth that contained nothing but water. With him he brought a cockerel, some earth or soil, and a palm kernel. Oduduwa then poured out the soil into the waters that filled the earth, where after the cockerel scratched the soil on the waters until the earth produced a land mass. Oduduwa then planted the palm kernel on the newly created earth, which grew and developed 16 branches. These branches represented the 16 traditional kingdoms of the Yoruba.<sup>783</sup>

Another tradition regarding the Yoruba creation myth is that the whole earth was covered with water and that God sent messengers to the earth to create farmlands. The gods who were sent to create the farmlands included Obatala (Orisa Nla, or Orisa Alase) the leader of them all, and 16 other immortal beings (Oye) that were each given five pieces of iron, a white piece of cloth (which contained a lump of earth) and a cockerel.<sup>784</sup> On their way to this world, Obatala got drunk on palm wine, so Oduduwa took the

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<sup>778</sup> J.K. Olupona, *City of 201 gods*, 224.

<sup>779</sup> J.K. Olupona, *City of 201 gods*, 224.

<sup>780</sup> Samuel Johnson did not discuss the Oduduwa creation myth, but focused on discussing it as a migrant legend (S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 3-14).

<sup>781</sup> A. Oyebade, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 53.

<sup>782</sup> A. Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture," 5.

<sup>783</sup> A. Ojo, "Yoruba Omo Oduduwa: Papers on Yoruba people, language, and culture," 5.

<sup>784</sup> Other Yoruba Oye are Opele, Ifa, Ogun, Shango, and many more (S.S Farrow, *Faith, fancies and fetich or Yoruba paganism: Being some account of the religious beliefs of the West African Negroes, particularly of the Yoruba tribes of southern Nigeria*, (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 35-50.

opportunity and led the delegation of the Oyes to this world.<sup>785</sup> All the messengers landed in Oke Oramfe at Ile Ife, where they laid down the five pieces of iron and placed lumps of earth on each one. The cockerel spread the soil with its toes until so many parts of the world were covered with soil.<sup>786</sup> Omolewa and Ellis stipulate that there were instances where Oduduwa and Obatala were regarded as the servants of Olorun,<sup>787</sup> and others where Oduduwa was seen as coeval to Olorun and not as a creation of Olorun.<sup>788</sup>

According to a popular Yoruba oral tradition, and when it comes to the subject of creation, Oduduwa is generally regarded as the wife of Obatala.<sup>789</sup> Oduduwa represents the earth that is married to the sky-god Obatala, and the two are regarded as inseparable entities.<sup>790</sup> The Yoruba myth emphasised that in the beginning, Oduduwa was blind. Oduduwa and Obatala were locked-up in darkness; enclosed within a calabash, where Obatala was in the upper part and Oduduwa in the lower part. It is not known how the two came to be together, but the Yoruba oral tradition, according to Ellis, emphasised that Oduduwa and Obatala remained in this position for days until they became hungry and tired.<sup>791</sup> Oduduwa blamed Obatala for their predicaments. This angered Obatala and he tore out Oduduwa's eyes because she could not control her tongue. As a result, Oduduwa cursed Obatala "[n]aught shalt thou eat but snails," and this marks the main reason why snails are offered to Obatala as sacrifice by the Yoruba.<sup>792</sup>

Oduduwa's temple is located in Ado (which means a lewd person of either sex), about fifteen miles to the north of Badagry.<sup>793</sup> Ellis noted that according to a Yoruba oral tradition, Oduduwa, the patroness of love,

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<sup>785</sup> E.A. Ayandele, "Yorubaland up to 1800," in I. Obaro (ed.). *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, (Jos: Heinemann Educational Books, 2004), 122;

<sup>786</sup> E.A. Ayandele, *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, 122; S.A. Akintoye, "From early times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century," in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>787</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, (Ikeja: Longman, 2008), 58.

<sup>788</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa, their religion, manners, customs, laws, language, etc.*, (Oosterhout: Anthropological, 1966), 41-42.

<sup>789</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 41

<sup>790</sup> Within this thesis, the discussion surrounding the manifestation of Oduduwa as a female is centred on the views of Ellis. Ellis depended on the transcription of oral interviews he conducted among some Yorubas. Other authors, among them Frobenius and Ayandele, did not discuss the idea of Oduduwa as a female goddess at length.

<sup>791</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 41-42.

<sup>792</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 41-42.

<sup>793</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 41-42.

was walking along a forest one day when she met a handsome hunter. She was attracted to the hunter and made advances on him until they had sex.<sup>794</sup> The sexual gratification of her passion for the hunter continued for some weeks in a hut made of branches, built at the foot of silk-cotton tree. She promised to protect the hunter at all times and to protect those who pass via the route; and the location of their sexual union. She later became tired of the hunter and left him, but the promise she made to him regarding his protection encouraged many people to reside in Ado at the location believed to be Oduduwa's place of pleasure. A temple was also built for the goddess, and during her feast days, sacrifices of cattle and sheep are made, while women display their nudity indiscriminately among men, all in honour of Oduduwa as a female goddess.<sup>795</sup> The association of Oduduwa with an immoral female individual or goddess is never discussed by Johnson. Perhaps Johnson did not want to give a bad image to Oduduwa as an acclaimed male hero.

The Oduduwa myth, as presented by Johnson, generally indicates that it might have been influenced or originated by the Arabs, who were also traders in West Africa,<sup>796</sup> or by the Yoruba themselves. Since the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Arabs associated the origins of the West African peoples with the Ancient Near East. Mohammed Belo had contact with the Arab traders, most of whom were Muslims. It is likely that Belo's association of the Yoruba origin with the East or Arabia was influenced by Arab traders. It became popular among the Yoruba through oral traditions to say that their ancestors originated from the "East." The tradition, according to which the Yoruba originated from the East, might have existed long before Belo. This is likely, as Johnson interviewed Yoruba elders, including the bards, who told him that the Yoruba originated from the East. The tradition was handed down from generation to generation, possibly before Belo was born. Johnson recognised that the Yoruba ancestors lived in Mecca or Arabia but were chased from Arabia due to religious reasons.

As mentioned before, the Oduduwa myth emphasised that Oduduwa was expelled from the East because he practiced idolatry. However, Johnson proposed that Oduduwa might have been a Coptic Christian, or someone who practiced a different form of Christianity, and as a result, he was chased out of the East.

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<sup>794</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 43.

<sup>795</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 43.

<sup>796</sup> Lange said that the Arabs in the 9<sup>th</sup> century associated the origin of the West African people with the Ancient Near East (D. Lange, "Origin of the Yoruba and 'The Lost Tribes of Israel,'" *Anthropos*, 106 [2011], 580).

Johnson proposed that the “East” meant Egypt. There seems to be an attempt by Johnson to dissociate Yoruba origin from Mecca or Arabia simply because of Mecca’s and Arabia’s association with Islam. It is also likely that there might have been a possible migration of the Egyptian Christians to other parts of Africa including West Africa since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when Muslims took over control of Egypt. Though it cannot be proven that the Egyptian Christians (Coptic or Nubians) influenced Yorubaland, the trade routes used by Phoenician or Egyptian traders between the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, might have been used by the Egyptian Christians, Byzantine Christians or traders to penetrate the Sudan and move into the Lake Chad region (including some parts of Hausaland). The interactions between the Wangarawa traders from Mali and the Hausas, together with the interactions between the Hausas and the Yoruba since the 11<sup>th</sup> century, might have contributed to the spread of the tradition that the West African peoples, including the Yoruba, originated from the East.<sup>797</sup> Johnson, who was a Christian missionary and believed in the biblical account of creation, refused to accept Oduduwa as a creator god.<sup>798</sup> This might also be why he also refused to consider Oduduwa as a female goddess or as a female who committed immorality with an unknown man.<sup>799</sup>

#### 4.7 Samuel Johnson’s theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba: Myth or reality?

Samuel Johnson contributed to the development of the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba, as he believed that the Yoruba originated from Egypt. However, in my view, he seemed uncertain of this theory when he himself used the word “mythologic” in his explanation of Yoruba origins. After explaining his views of the Oduduwa myth and the connection of the Yoruba sculptures with that of the Egyptians, he used the words “authentic” or “mythologic” to make his conclusion regarding the Yoruba origin. He said that the traditions regarding the Yoruba origin might be authentic or mythologic: “from these statements and traditions, whether authentic or mythologic....”<sup>800</sup> While it is not clear what he meant by mythologic,

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<sup>797</sup> Johnson stated that some tribes in West Africa, including the Gas of Ghana, and the Popos and Dahomians of Benin, also have a tradition according to which their ancestors emanated from Ile Ife in Yorubaland (S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 15).

<sup>798</sup> Cf. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 148.

<sup>799</sup> See 5.4 for more information.

<sup>800</sup> S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 6.

it is pertinent to inquire whether his motive was linked to the concept of myths. What is myth? Is Johnson's theory of the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba a myth or reality?

Both the story of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba and the Oduduwa myth, were basically oral traditions which were passed-on by way of mouth from one generation to the next. The traditions could be read as myth for the following reasons: a myth is one of the mediums, through which oral traditions are expressed.<sup>801</sup> A renowned Yoruba writer, Oyebade, said that oral tradition could appear in the form of both legend and myth.<sup>802</sup> Myths could be preserved, both orally and in written forms, unlike oral tradition which was fundamentally preserved by word of mouth. The non-availability of evidence concerning Egyptian migrations to Yorubaland during the Predynastic and Dynastic periods<sup>803</sup> or around the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, when the Coptic Church was founded in Egypt,<sup>804</sup> makes it possible to study whether the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba, is a myth or a reality.<sup>805</sup> It thus becomes pertinent to understand the meaning of myth.

A myth can be regarded as a narrative which originated during the primeval or non-historical period, or the period when history was not documented.<sup>806</sup> The Oduduwa myth, or the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba, might not have been written at length in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it is today.<sup>807</sup> This makes it possible to suggest that the tradition is based on a myth because it was initiated or mainly used during

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<sup>801</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, 'The Value of Oral Tradition to a Researcher of African Historiography', *Historical Research Letter*, 17, [2015], 57.

<sup>802</sup> A. Oyebade, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 52.

<sup>803</sup> Agai, J.M., 2013a, 'An investigation into the ancient Egyptian cultural influences on the Yorubas of Nigeria', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1919>, 69, [2013a], 10.

<sup>804</sup> L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The religious impact* (London: Hurst & Company, 1983), 4.

<sup>805</sup> Spence pointed that myth used to be regarded a narration that cannot be scientifically proven (L. Spence, *The outlines of mythology*, (London: Watts & Co., 1976), 1 cf. A. Dundes (ed), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 1).

<sup>806</sup> Dyk van, P., "Mythical linkage and mythical frameworks" *Old Testament Essays*, 867.

<sup>807</sup> Umoh suggested that the Yoruba people began to settle in Yorubaland around 1700 CE, and that this might have been the period during which the Yorubas began to formulate their histories, either by written or by oral tradition (S.M. Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior," PhD Dissertation, Dept. of Communications, United State International University, [1971], 117). Umoh did provide evidence regarding his suggestion.



the non-historical period (when little was written on the Yoruba origins) of the Yorubaland.<sup>808</sup> The word myth has various definitions the concept of myth as a field of study has been formalised in the sense that it is now defined by individuals according to their areas of academic speciality or their professional backgrounds.<sup>809</sup> For example, scholars in biblical studies are of the search for myths as they appear in the Old Testament, while Classicists investigate the relevance of myths in the Greek, Roman and Middle Eastern worlds. On one hand, psychologist seeks to explain myth as a fantastic impulse generated by human psychological dilemmas,<sup>810</sup> while anthropologists are concerned over the role myth plays within those cultural patterns that influence the daily organisational structures of human society.<sup>811</sup> Folklorists concentrate on the use of myths among various ethnic groups, while experts on the history of religion explore the function of myths in religious rituals and religious systems in general.<sup>812</sup> Jaan Puhvel, argued that no single definition of myth is universally acceptable.<sup>813</sup> In this thesis, myths are defined as stories or narratives used to explain natural phenomenon or events that happened before the advent of writing, or before the introduction of scientific methods of inquiry. In other words, within the context of this thesis, myth means that which cannot be scientifically proven at present, even if it is true. The direct association between gods and myths makes it possible for myth to be regarded as truth; as human faith, through systems of religious belief, affords these gods (and their associated myths) with an air of reality and truth. In simpler terms; since myths belong to the gods, and as gods are seen as true (through human faith), myths can also be seen as true, due to their direct association with the gods. This definition concurred with Dyk's definition of myth as narratives of the primeval or non-historical periods.<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>808</sup> K.O. Olabimtan, "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, [2009], 24, 91); cf. T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 44.

<sup>809</sup> A. Dundes (ed), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, (London: University of California Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>810</sup> M. Scarborough, *Myth and modernity: Postcritical reflections*, (New York: New York State University Press, 1994), 24.

<sup>811</sup> To anthropologists, myths are sacred cultural foundations expressed in human rituals (Kritzinger, B., "An Exploration of Myth in the Adaptation Processes of Zimbabwean Migrants Residing in Port Elizabeth," Dissertation of the degree of Magister Artium in the Faculty of Arts at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, [2011], 17).

<sup>812</sup> A. Dundes (ed), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 3.

<sup>813</sup> J. Puhvel, *Comparative mythology*, (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1.

<sup>814</sup> Dyk van, P., "Mythical linkage and mythical frameworks," *Old Testament Essays*, 867. A professor of Old Testament studies, Peet van Dyk, who is also a senior lecturer in the department of Biblical and Ancient Studies at the University of South Africa, gave a working definition of myth to include true events, true narratives and actual activities ordained by the gods and narrated by a priest or an interpreter (Dyk van, P., "Mythical linkage and mythical frameworks," *Old Testament Essays*, 867).

Johnson explained that the origin of Oduduwa, who is the ancestor of the Yoruba, can be read in two ways. He stated that all the information he presented regarding Oduduwa was in accordance with Ife mythology according to which Oduduwa was the son of Olodumare (the Almighty).<sup>815</sup>

ODUDUWA the reputed founder and ancestor of the race is really a mythical personage. The Etymology of the term is from Odu (ti o) da Iwa. Whatever is usually large as a large pot or container is termed Odu: the term then implies, the great container the author of existence. According to Ife mythology Oduduwa was the son of Olodumare, i.e. the father or Lord of Odu; ma re implies cannot go beyond i.e. the Almighty. Oduduwa was sent by Olodumare from Heaven to create the earth. Olokun i.e. the goddess of the ocean was the wife of Oduduwa, Oranmiyan and Isedale their children, and Ogun a grand-child.<sup>816</sup>

The Ife mythology states<sup>817</sup> that Oduduwa was sent from Heaven by Olodumare to create the world. In his acts of creating the world, Oduduwa was assisted by his accomplices Olokun (the wife of Oduduwa who was also the goddess of the ocean), Oranmiyan and Isedale (the two children of Oduduwa), and Ogun (the grand-child of Oduduwa).<sup>818</sup> Johnson mentioned this myth, but not once did he dispute its validity or state that it was untrue. The fact that he mentioned this Oduduwa myth suggests he might have believed in stories propagated by Yoruba elders, even when the stories could be proven scientifically (through archaeological evidence or historical records).<sup>819</sup> In addition, Johnson believed that there is another version of the Yoruba myth according to which Oduduwa originated from the "East."<sup>820</sup> Oduduwa was an individual who emigrated from the "East" to Ile Ife, where his descendants continued to rule all of Yorubaland:

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<sup>815</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>816</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>817</sup> The Oduduwa myth, which follows Ife mythology, has been accepted by the Yorubas as a genuine or real explanation for Yoruba origins.

<sup>818</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>819</sup> Individual figures in myths were often associated with sacredness (A. Dundes (ed), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 1), a factor which may have contributed to Johnson's belief in, or acceptance of, Oduduwa as a historical figure.

<sup>820</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

All that was known of him has been told in Part I of this history, which gives an account of the emigration of the ancestors of the Yorubas from the east to Ile Ife where Oduduwa died in peace and was deified, being worshipped to this day by the Ifes, and up to the time of the British Protectorate, human sacrifices were offered to him at regular intervals. The soil of Ile Ife is said to be sacred to him. He was the grandfather and the great-grandfather of renowned Kings and Princes who ruled and made history in the Yoruba country.<sup>821</sup>

The account above regarding Oduduwa indicates that Johnson was ambiguous in his view regarding the Yoruba origins. On the one hand, he believed peoples' stories regarding Oduduwa and other hand; he defended the story in which Oduduwa migrated from the East, the latter which, to him, meant Egypt to Ile Ife.<sup>822</sup> Unto Johnson, a myth meant that which may be true, yet cannot be proven. This is so because Johnson believed what he heard regarding the Yoruba origin. He added his own view by introducing the theory of Christian origins for the Yoruba.

The consideration of Oduduwa as a divine being, created by Olodumare according to Ife mythology, indicates that Oduduwa had no connection with Egypt but with Ile Ife. Johnson contributed to this discussion by explaining that the term "East", according to Yoruba understanding, actually meant Egypt.<sup>823</sup> He firstly stated the Yoruba view, according to which the East meant Mecca, could be attributed in origin to the teachings of Mohammed Belo:

That the Yorubas came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove. With them the East is Mecca and Mecca is the East. Having strong affinities with the East, and Mecca in the East looming so largely in their imagination, everything that comes from the East, with them, comes from Mecca, and hence it is natural to represent themselves as having hailed originally from that city. The only written record we have on this subject is that of Sultan Belo of Sokoto, the founder of that

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<sup>821</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>822</sup> Cf. S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

<sup>823</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

city, the most learned if not the most powerful of the Fulani sovereigns that ever bore rule in the Soudan.<sup>824</sup>

Johnson contested the Meccan theory of the Yoruba origin. He claimed that the East where the Yoruba originated from actually meant Egypt, thus he associated the Yoruba origin with the Coptic Christians.<sup>825</sup> He did not insist that the Oduduwa myth can be scientifically proven. In fact, his attitudes towards Oduduwa indicate that he had no evidence that Oduduwa ever existed, or that Oduduwa was a real person.<sup>826</sup> He introduced the idea that the oral tradition regarding the origin of Oduduwa from Mecca may be authentic or mythologic. He suggested that Oduduwa originated from Upper Egypt or Nubia and added that the ancestors of the Yoruba, who came from Egypt, were subjects of Nimrod who conquered Egypt.<sup>827</sup>

Johnson also said that Oduduwa as a person was actually a myth: "Oduduwa the reputed founder and ancestor of the race is a mythical personage."<sup>828</sup> He noted that the development of the Oduduwa myth was relevant in his time, since other nations were also developing stories or myths that related to their origins: "[s]uch is the desire of most nations to find a mythical origin for themselves through their kings and ancestors."<sup>829</sup> The fact that Johnson took it upon himself to write about the Yoruba origin using oral tradition, was no surprise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is because there was an increased interest in the study of myth during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with origin narratives representing the primary focal point of mythic science.<sup>830</sup> This tradition could be regarded as a myth because it involved the collection and combination

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<sup>824</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>825</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>826</sup> According to the Yorubas, a god-king (or a powerful mortal king) by the name Oduduwa, literally lived in and ruled Ile Ife as the first Yoruba king (J.K. Olupona, *City of 201 gods: Ile Ife in time, space, and the imagination*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 224). The Yorubas pride themselves in Oduduwa, and even today, Yoruba genius or achievers will often present themselves as *Omo Oduduwa* ("Descendants of Oduduwa") (J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 93).

<sup>827</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6. See 4.4 for information regarding Nimrod.

<sup>828</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>829</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>830</sup> A. Dundes (ed), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 3. Lauri Honko concurred with this assertion and added that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mythology was primarily regarded as the study of the interpretation of pre-scientific theories. In other words, myths were regarded as pre-scientific theories which explained natural phenomenon or origins (L. Honko, 'The problem of defining myth' in A. Dundes (ed.), *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, (University of California Press. Los Angeles, 1984), 41).

of oral traditions, together with some written sources like those of Belo. In addition, Johnson relied on myths disseminated in the form of oral traditions as told by Yoruba elders.<sup>831</sup> For example, Johnson had listened and recorded information regarding the Yoruba origin from prominent Yoruba like venerable Lagunju the Timi of Ede, David Kukomi and many more.<sup>832</sup>

Furthermore, the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba could also be read from a Euhemeral perspective. The word Euhemeral is obtained from a man named Euhemerus of Messene. Euhemerus (circa 330-260 BCE) of Messene or Sicily was a friend of the king of Cassander (301-297 BCE), the first ruler of Macedonia after the death Alexander the Great.<sup>833</sup> Euhemerus was one of the greatest writers in the Hellenistic period.<sup>834</sup> Euhemerus, after his tour to multiple ancient cities including Panara and Heira, noticed how various gods, who were initially humans, were being worshipped. He came to believe that the gods were actually humans defied by men. He believed that the god Zeus and his kin were people who belonged to royal families and were worshipped after they died.<sup>835</sup> Most of Euhemerus thoughts regarding the gods are presented in Diodorus of Sicily's book *The Library of History*.<sup>836</sup> Diodorus of Sicily wrote that Euhemrus proposed that the gods were actually humans who were deified as gods because they were kind to mankind:

Certain of the gods, they say, are eternal and imperishable, such as the sun and the moon and the other stars of the heavens, and the winds as well and whatever else possesses a nature similar to theirs; for of each of these the genesis and duration are from everlasting to everlasting. But the other gods we are told were terrestrial beings who attained to immortal honor and fame because of their benefactions to mankind, such as Heracles, Dionysus, Aristaeus, and the others who were like them. Regarding theses terrestrial gods many and

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<sup>831</sup> K.O. Olabimtan [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land," 69.

<sup>832</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>833</sup> Penny, M. C., et al (eds.), *The Zondervan pictorial encyclopedia of the Bible*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1975), 334.

<sup>834</sup> T.S. Brown, "Euhemerus and the historians," in *Harvard Theological Review*, 39 (4), [1946], 259.

<sup>835</sup> Penny, M. C., et al (eds.), *The Zondervan pictorial encyclopedia of the Bible*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1975), 334.

<sup>836</sup> Stenudd, S, "The Greek Philosophers on Myth and Cosmology: Euhemerus," 2. Originally from Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History, book VI*, translated by C. H. Oldfather, volume 3, Cambridge 1970.

varying account have been handed down by the writers of history and of mythology; of the historians, Euhemerus, who composed the Sacred History, has written a special treatise about them, while, of the writers of myths, Homer and Hesiod and Orpheus and the others of their kind have invented rather monstrous stories about the gods.<sup>837</sup>

More so, Euhemerus regarded myth as a history in disguise.<sup>838</sup> The interpretation of myth, according to Euhemerus, is that myths are actually historical events whereby the biographies of human being were modified or amplified to be biographies of the gods.<sup>839</sup> In other words, Euhemerus regarded myth as history in disguise, whereby men who exhibit special and unique virtues were glorified during life and deified after death.<sup>840</sup> The Euhemerist theory proposes that the gods of myths were actually real human leaders who were virtuous during their lifetimes, but that the reporters, writers, and heritage custodians responsible for transferring historical knowledge, tarnished their images, abilities and natures to such an extent that readers began to regard these accounts as mythical rather than factual.<sup>841</sup>

The Euhemerist theory on myths could be applied in the study of the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba.<sup>842</sup> Oduduwa is generally regarded by the Yoruba as their original ancestor.<sup>843</sup> The Yoruba myth is that Oduduwa was created in Heaven and sent into Ile Ife by Olodumare<sup>844</sup> and the myth also emphasises that Oduduwa emigrated from the East or Arabia or Egypt to Ile Ife.<sup>845</sup>

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<sup>837</sup> Stenudd, S, "The Greek Philosophers on Myth and Cosmology: Euhemerus," 2. Originally from Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History, book VI*, translated by C. H. Oldfather, volume 3, Cambridge 1970.

<sup>838</sup> T.S. Brown, "Euhemerus and the historians," in *Harvard Theological Review*, 39 (4), [1946], 256-274.

<sup>839</sup> L. Honko, *Sacred narrative: Reading in the theory of myth*, 42.

<sup>840</sup> Stenudd, S, 2014, "The Greek Philosophers on Myth and Cosmology: Euhemerus," from <http://www.stenudd.com/greekphilosophers/euhemerus.htm>, 1.

<sup>841</sup> M. Scarborough, *Myth and modernity*, 5.

<sup>842</sup> K.O. Olabimtan, "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, [2009], 25; T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 44, 91.

<sup>843</sup> Oduduwa is the most celebrated deity among other Yoruba deities. This can be deduced from the fact that festivals dedicated to Oduduwa are the most celebrated (and often the most extravagant) among other Yoruba festivities, (J.K. Olupona, 2011, *City of 201 gods: Ile Ife in time, space, and the imagination*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 1-17, 21-50).

<sup>844</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>845</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

The Princes who became Kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa went westward and Oduduwa eastwards. The latter travelled 90 days from Mecca, and after wandering about finally settled down at Ile Ife where he met with Agboniregun (or Setilu) the founder of the Ifa worship.<sup>846</sup>

A Euhemeristic reading of Oduduwa as a migrant legend would suggest that he/she was a historical person who actually ruled Yorubaland and was later deified. More so, a Euhemeristic reading of Oduduwa as a migrant legend also implies that the creation myth, which gave reference to Oduduwa as a diving being, is not literally true. Instead, Oduduwa was a person deified due to his or her heroic attributes. This could be the main reason why Johnson pointed out that during Oduduwa's reign, Yorubaland prospered.<sup>847</sup>

He was the grandfather and great-grandfather of renowned Kings and Princes who ruled and made history in the Yoruba country. The number of years embraced by this period is unknown, but it includes the time during which the Yoruba kingdom was in prosperity, and the Kings despotic.<sup>848</sup>

The main weakness of a theory in which Oduduwa was a real-life migrant, is that his/her existence, as a historical figure (who possessed all the qualities of a deity, ruler, migrant from the East, creator, and warrior) and ruler of Yorubaland and its people, cannot be confirmed.<sup>849</sup> It is no surprise that Johnson himself therefore described Oduduwa as a "mythical personage."<sup>850</sup> However, he said the description of Oduduwa as a migrant legend could be mythological or authentic, yet he had a responsibility to make his deduction regarding the Oduduwa legend: "[f]rom these statements and traditions, whether authentic or mythologic, the only safe deduction we can make as the most probable origin of the Yorubas are...."<sup>851</sup>

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<sup>846</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

<sup>847</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>848</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>849</sup>It is no surprise that Ayandele suggested that the main aim of the Oduduwa migration myth is to show that Yorubaland once prospered under the leadership of an unknown king called Oduduwa. He reiterated that the Oduduwa myth is not about Yoruba origin (E.A. Ayandele, "Yorubaland up to 1800", in I. Obaro (ed.). *Groundwork of Nigeria history*, (Jos: Heinemann Educational Books, 2004), 123).

<sup>850</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

<sup>851</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6.

The strength of reading the Oduduwa myth from a Euhemeristic point of view is that it encourages lovers of Yoruba history to continue their belief in Oduduwa, not as a god or goddess, but rather as a specific literal king/queen through whom the Yoruba originated. This view supports the Yoruba mythology that Oduduwa lived as a specific person. A continued reading of Oduduwa as a migrant legend from a Euhemeristic point of view can encourage further research on the search for Oduduwa as a historical person who lived in Yorubaland.

The absence of evidence, which could prove that a specific man or woman by the name Oduduwa lived, made it possible to make this suggestion. The suggestion is that the name Oduduwa should not only be regarded as a title that has no gender-specific or individual-specific connotation, but also as a title which was bestowed upon various known and unknown heroic Yoruba individuals. There might have been a hero or a heroine, who prospered in Yorubaland, but whose name was not known; so Yoruba oral historians decided to call the person *Oduduwa*, which was a title reserved for a Yoruba individuals of exceptional achievement. However, this assertion cannot be proven without further research into traditional Yoruba practices of assigning titles to individuals. Despite the many unanswered questions about the person of Oduduwa, the Yoruba still regard the myth as the best tradition in explaining Yoruba origin.<sup>852</sup>

In conclusion, it is important to note that the debate surrounding the origins of the Yoruba ancestors or Oduduwa from Arabia or Egypt, have contributed immensely to the development of the tradition according which the Yoruba originated from Egypt. Johnson, who contributed to developing a tradition of dissociating the Yoruba origin from Mecca or Arabia, and rather associating it the “East” or Coptic Egypt, deserves to be recognised. Johnson’s writings and his interpretation of the Oduduwa myth as an Ife mythology played a great role in the development of this tradition according to which the Yoruba originally ancestors came from Egypt. According to Johnson, the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba was a myth. A myth because he seemed to believe in the stories he heard regarding the migration of Oduduwa from the East to Yorubaland, even though the myth cannot be proven. Johnson might have regarded myth

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<sup>852</sup> Fani-Kayode still proposes that the Yorubas actually originated from Egypt (Fani-Kayode, F., 2013a, “Who are the Yoruba people? (Part One),” *Vanguard*. May 6, From <http://premiumtimesng.com/opinion/132867-who-are-the-yoruba-people-part-1-by-fem...> ; Fani-Kayode, F., 2013b, “Who are the Yoruba people ? (Part Two),” *Vanguard*. May 25, From <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/old-yoruba-kingdom-who-are-the-yoruba-people...> ;Fani-Kayode, F., 2013c, “Who are the Yoruba people ? (Part Three),” *Vanguard*. June 3, From <http://premiumtimesng.com/opinion/137358-who-are-the-yoruba-people-part-3-by-fem...>



as that which is true, yet cannot be proven, as well as that which was not documented before his time. By documenting the Yoruba history, Johnson created a background for Yoruba myth to be regarded as reality.

## 4.8 Samuel Johnson's use of oral tradition

Johnson's book, *The History of the Yorubas*, is one of the lengthiest and best documented of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries regarding the Yoruba origins. The general history of the Yoruba had not been written in depth before Johnson's time<sup>853</sup> and as a result, he had to rely on oral traditions in the compilation of his book. But what is oral tradition and how was oral tradition perceived by 19<sup>th</sup> century writers of African history, including Johnson? Generally, the words "oral tradition" means narratives which are unwritten and transmitted by word of mouth from one person to another, and from one generation to the next. The narrator may be a direct eyewitness or one who was told about a narrative.<sup>854</sup> Oral traditions fundamentally rely on oral sources, and these, according to Ugwukah,<sup>855</sup> may be divided into two types: eyewitness accounts and narrative accounts (referring to a narrative from someone who received the account).<sup>856</sup> A popular definition of oral tradition is given by Mizinga of the Livingstone Museum of Zambia.<sup>857</sup> Mizinga explained that oral tradition meant an entire cultural heritage; an education of philosophical and artistic knowledge of the past about humans, which are modified or improved by successive generations and transmitted by word of mouth.<sup>858</sup>

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<sup>853</sup>Cf. S.M. Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior," PhD Dissertation, Dept. of Communications, United State International University, [1971], 117.

<sup>854</sup>A.C. Ugwukah, "The Value of Oral Tradition to a Researcher of African Historiography," *Historical Research Letter*, 17, [2015], 53, 57.

<sup>855</sup>Alexander C. Ugwukah is a lecturer in the department of history and international studies, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria.

<sup>856</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 53, 57.

<sup>857</sup> Flexon Mizinga was the keeper of history and the Head of Department, Humanities and Social Sciences, Livingstone Museum, Zambia (F. Mizinga, "Learn from the dying generation: A critical analysis of oral tradition in history reconstruction," National Museum of Zambia, [1992], 1).

<sup>858</sup>F. Mizinga, "Learn from the dying generation: A critical analysis of oral tradition in history reconstruction," 1.

Christopher J. Lee said that oral tradition could be created from material sources, interviews and cultural practices.<sup>859</sup> Oral traditions may appear in various forms to include myths, legends, songs, poetry, formulae, tales, list and commentaries.<sup>860</sup> These means of knowledge transfer were powerful and practical for the Africans of the pre-colonial, colonial and early post-colonial periods.<sup>861</sup> Mizinga said that after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 in Sierra Leone,<sup>862</sup> James Africanus (from Sierra Leone, 1835-1883) and Sarabah (from Ghana) fought for the political, economic and the social independence of Africa. He noted that both Africanus Sarabah disregarded the belief that oral tradition was an un-formidable and unreliable means of knowledge preservation and transfer.<sup>863</sup> Mizinga said that a Eurocentric view regarding the writing of history in Africa, with postulates that history only began in Africa at the emergence of colonialism and writing, completely disregarded the relevance of oral tradition as a means of preserving knowledge.<sup>864</sup> Adeoti concurred with Mizinga's view and surmised:<sup>865</sup>

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<sup>859</sup> C. J. Lee, "How to do things with words: African oral history and its textual incarnations," University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill., 3. Christopher J. Lee was a former lecturer at the following Universities: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Stanford University, Harvard and Dalhousie Universities. He holds a PhD in African history, which he obtained from Stanford University. He completed extensive research on African oral histories, mostly those originating from southern Africa. He conducted field researches in Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and also lived in Mozambique and Botswana. Dr. Lee is now a lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.

<sup>860</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 57.

<sup>861</sup> For example, during the early 1960s, many educated Africans were tasked with the responsibility of collecting and preserving their past. The aim was mainly to search for an identity of the African ethnic groups which gives an impression of separation or subordination from colonial control (C. J. Lee, 'How to do things with words: African oral history and its textual incarnation,' 1). Africans who lived during pre-colonial periods possessed less, or no, written records of their history, as recorded by fellow Africans (cf. M. Delafosse, M., 1931, *The Negroes of Africa: History and culture*, (New York: Kennikat Press, 1931), xxv-2). Because of this, they relied on other forms of knowledge-dissemination such as oral tradition, poetry, songs, poems, legends, proverbs, myths, folk tales, crafts, rituals and ceremonies, folk songs and many more (A. Oyebade, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 52).

<sup>862</sup> C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 34.

<sup>863</sup> (F. Mizinga, National Museum of Zambia, 1). After the abolition of the slave trade, some Africans began to take leadership over their territories. For example, William Pappa Pepple was a receptive slave, but after the abolition of slave trade, he was restored (by the British government) as a ruler of Bonny in Nigeria between 1852 and 1861. King Jaja of Opobo, also a recaptive, slave was restored as a chief in the Niger Delta by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, (Longman: Ikeja, 2008), 107.

<sup>864</sup> F. Mizinga, National Museum of Zambia, 3.

<sup>865</sup> Ezekiel Oladele Adeoti is a lecturer of history and international relations in the Department of History and International Studies, Lagos State University, Nigeria.

One major objection of European historian of African history is the universal lack of written records in most African societies before European intervention. Since these Europeans are accustomed to think that 'history only begins when men take writing', the largely unwritten African past was regarded as the concern of the archaeologists and anthropologists and not that of the historian.<sup>866</sup>

Adeoti listed Hegel as an example of a Eurocentric European, whose views had influenced other Europeans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>867</sup> Adeoti said G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) used to regard Africans as a non-historical people who have little or nothing to contribute to human history.<sup>868</sup> Masuzawa also wrote on the Eurocentric views, which classified the religions of the people of the world into those of the East and the West. She said that Africa, which was regarded as a preliterate society by Eurocentric scholars, also had African religions classified as "Eastern religions" that held no historical relevance, as Eurocentric Europeans thought that "the East preserves history, the West creates history."<sup>869</sup> Ugwukah made mention of people like Lord Raglan, who argued that historical construction cannot be realised without literacy. Ugwukah said that Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish born British anthropologist, asserted that oral traditions are fabricated constructions meant to please a group's interests.<sup>870</sup> Was oral tradition not a reliable means of knowledge preservation or transfer in Africa before the Europeans came? More so, should oral tradition be valued as a means of preserving history?<sup>871</sup> How and why did Johnson use Yoruba oral tradition to

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<sup>866</sup>E.O. Adeoti, "African History and the Tradition of Historical Writing," *Journal of Social Science (COES & J-JSS)* 3(2), [2014], 319.

<sup>867</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 318.

<sup>868</sup>Adeoti noted that the German philosopher, G.W.F Hegel, when developing his philosophy of history in a series of lectures in 1830 through 1831, divided the people of the world in two: historical people who had contributed to the development of humanity and non-historical people who added nothing good to the growth of mankind. Africans were classified as one of the non-historical peoples. For Hegel, history started and ended in Europe, while Asia was just beginning. He regarded Africa as a region that had neither movement nor development; thus a non-relevant part of the world (E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 318).

<sup>869</sup>T. Masuzawa, *The invention of world religions or how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>870</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 52. Notwithstanding, Malinowski regarded myth, which is an aspect of oral tradition, as that which has integrated itself within the daily lives of all people and not just Africans alone. He believed that myths were viewed as things that truly happened during the primeval times, and that such knowledge has continued to affect the conceptions of modern people on the subject. He argues myths were actually verbal knowledge reflected in rituals, likewise oral traditions (L. Spence, *The outlines of mythology*, (London, Watts & Co., 1976), 4.

<sup>871</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 57.

develop his theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba? Ugwukah emphasised that oral traditions contributed to the unity of African peoples. He noted that 19<sup>th</sup> century writers of African history like Samuel Johnson, James Africanus and others who used oral tradition to write African history, were mainly concerned about encouraging national unity among their people, a factor which motivated them to write their histories:

The concept of nation-building became crucial in the independence era as each country attempted to find common identity so that it could serve as a unifying factor among different ethnic groups. The role of the nationalist historians in this epoch was to find common identity in ethnic histories. This gave rise to the ideology of African socialism which idealised and glorified the African past.<sup>872</sup>

For Samuel Johnson, who was a repatriate from Sierra Leone, one of the events which led to the independence of the African people, was the abolition of slave trade. Johnson might have also suggested that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, different ethnic groups or nations were concerned in developing the histories of their peoples using oral traditions. Johnson suggested that the desire for unity among the African people through oral traditions became so powerful that many Africans were willing to associate their origins to mythic imageries:

Oduduwa was sent by Olodumare from Heaven to create the Earth. Olokun i.e. the goddess of the ocean was the wife of Oduduwa, Oranmiyan and Isedale their children, and Ogun a grand-child. Such is the desire of most nations to find a mythical origin for themselves through their kings and ancestors.<sup>873</sup>

From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of educated Africans began to emphasise the need to use indigenous and traditional sources of information as crucial tools in the reconstruction of the African past. Ugwukah listed some of those Africans, including James Africanus Beale Horton (1835-1883) of Sierra Leone, who became a prominent nationalist and writer in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Horton was a surgeon, a scientist and a soldier who served under the British army from Freetown in Sierra Leone. His father was

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<sup>872</sup> F. Mizinga, National Museum of Zambia, 3.

<sup>873</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143.

an Igbo recaptive slave.<sup>874</sup> Other Africans who encouraged the writing of African history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are Carl Christian Reindorf (31 May 1834 – 1 July 1917), a Ghanaian historian and pastor, Samuel Johnson of Nigeria, and many more.<sup>875</sup> Johnson passionately believed that it was his responsibility to document the history of the Yoruba of Nigeria. His motive for writing Yoruba history was purely patriotic “... but a purely patriotic motive, that the history of our fatherland might not be lost in oblivion...”<sup>876</sup>

While it is relevant to applaud those Africans who initiated the transcription of African oral traditions into written history, it is also important to note that oral tradition itself is not a perfect means of preserving knowledge. Ugwukah listed the limitations of oral traditions to include: deliberate changes from initial testimonies, the power of the memory to preserve, omit, distort or add to a tradition. He also added that the political and ideological interest of the preserver, likewise the listener, may be paramount in spreading an oral tradition; that there may be no precise date or that chronology may be influenced by the preserver of an oral tradition.<sup>877</sup> These and some other reasons might have influenced a number of Europeans (like Hegel) to not appreciate oral traditions in the same way Africans like Samuel Johnson did.<sup>878</sup>

It is no surprise that, in recent times, even European historians are accepting oral tradition as a formal historical tools or sources. Adeoti said: “[i]n recent times, the use of oral tradition in particular has been embraced by European researchers on Africa history, thus confirming the claim that Africa had a rich pool

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<sup>874</sup> Cf. A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 52.

<sup>875</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 52.

<sup>876</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the beginning of the British protectorate*, O. Johnson (ed.), (CSS: Abuja, 1921), viii.

<sup>877</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 52.

<sup>878</sup> A.C. Ugwukah, *Historical Research Letter*, 52 cf. F. Mizinga, National Museum of Zambia, 5. One important thing to note here is that, while critics of oral traditions believe that the methods of preserving and spreading oral traditions are unscientific and unreliable, hence imperfect, Mizinga stated that there are imperfections in formal historical methods as well. He mentioned that in the writing of formal history: the historical epoch in which the writer lives, the political ‘climate’ which may influence the decision of the writer, the nationality or regional, ethnic or religious interest of the writer, as well as the ideological inclinations of the writer, can all play a role in reporting a formal history through writing. This suggests that both oral tradition and modern historiography have their strengths and weaknesses. It is clear that both oral tradition and formal historical methods have their limitations in the writing of history. Therefore, a need exists apply or combine both oral tradition and modern historical methods in reporting or documenting African history. Since oral tradition were the best means of preserving African history before the emergence of formal writing, historians can learn a lot from the use of oral traditions through appropriate evaluation with contemporary historical methods.

of valid historical sources(s) even before ‘men take to writing.’”<sup>879</sup> Mizinga called on African historians not to reject elderly people as sources of oral tradition. This call made by Mizinga for African historians to seek the repositories of African knowledge, could be likened to what Johnson did. Johnson was concerned that the elderly were dying without anyone documenting their knowledge. As noted before, Johnson took up this responsibility and began interviewing Yoruba elders. Johnson’s interviews of Yoruba elders contributed in the publication of his book *The History of Yorubas*.<sup>880</sup>

Johnson interviewed the bards, Yoruba elders and palace workers.<sup>881</sup> This means that he relied on oral traditions to write the Yoruba history. Johnson claimed that it was through oral tradition he discovered that the Yoruba originated from the East. He stated that the “East”, according to 19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba understanding, meant Arabia or Mecca.<sup>882</sup> The fact that Johnson wrote about Oduduwa as someone who originated from Mecca suggests that the Yoruba oral tradition he observed associated the origin of the Yoruba with Mecca.<sup>883</sup> Johnson disputed the tradition which proposed that the Yoruba originated from Mecca. He associated the Yoruba origin with the Nubians and with the Coptic Christians who lived in Egypt, postulating that they might have migrated to Yorubaland. He quoted Mohammed Belo as one of those who contributed to the development of the tradition of Arab origins of the Yoruba.<sup>884</sup> The fact that Johnson described Belo as one of those who influenced the tradition of Yoruba history, suggests that Johnson did not only rely on oral traditions alone to develop his theory of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba; he also read the accounts of other Africa writers and scholars.

Johnson read many books while he was at school<sup>885</sup> and his interest in history and religion might have made him to read about Belo. Captain Clapperton described Belo as a sultan who had much knowledge

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<sup>879</sup> E.O. Adeoti, *Journal of Social Science*, 321. Mizinga, of the Livingstone Museum in Zambia, also emphasised that no history is final; thereby fostering the need to continue with the interpretation and reinterpretation of historical sources while taking oral traditions into account. He called on historians, and especially African historians, to consult the repositories of African history, most of whom are elders who live in the rural African societies, before death can take them, and their knowledge, away (F. Mizinga, National Museum of Zambia, 8-9).

<sup>880</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>881</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, viii.

<sup>882</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>883</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 3-4.

<sup>884</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.

<sup>885</sup> Johnson studied at the Abeokuta Training Institution and he might have read many books as a result.

on the subject of religion.<sup>886</sup> The growing strength of Islam in Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, initiated by the Sokoto Caliphate which used to be ruled by Belo, might have prompted Johnson to dissociate the Yoruba origin from Islam or from Arabia. One cannot be certain whether some of the people Johnson interviewed told him that the Yoruba ancestors were initially Christians from Egypt. What is clear is that Johnson contributed to the development of the tradition of Christian origins of the Yoruba. This means that he has contributed to a reconstruction of the Yoruba oral tradition, which was influenced by the socio-religious and the political context of the Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On this subject, Falola reiterated that Johnson's personal interest and context might have influenced his views of the Yoruba origins:

It is not always clear whether the traditions collected by Johnson were those in line with his motives or those already doctored by his informants or those already affected by the contacts with external influences like Islam and Christianity. Since he also interpreted a number of traditions, he imposed his own perspectives. He admitted to editing many of the traditions, at least in order not to cause divisions in society.<sup>887</sup>

Johnson might have preferred to associate the Yoruba origin with Egypt because of the Coptic Christians or the Nubians in Egypt, and also because of the beliefs that the Egyptians were civilised in the ancient times. The ideas regarding Egyptian civilisation were popular during the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the many archaeological discoveries in Egyptians tombs and temples. Although evidence is sparse, coastal trade routes managed by the Phoenicians during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, , may have facilitated communication or the transfer of ideas between Sudan to West Africa, and more specifically, between the Egyptians and the Hausas or the Yoruba.<sup>888</sup> This view has a chronological impasse and may be disputed. For Johnson, there could be truth or reality in oral tradition. This could be why he relied on the stories he heard regarding the Yoruba origin. Johnson may be applauded for his effort in carefully converting what he mainly heard as oral traditions into documents presented in *The History of the Yorubas*.

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<sup>886</sup>Denham, D., Clapperton, H., Oudney, W., & Salamé, A.V., 1828, 1826, *Narrative of travels and discoveries in Northern Nigeria and central Africa in the years 1822-1823, and 1824*, John Murray: London, 331-332.

<sup>887</sup>T. Falola, *Yoruba gurus*, 45.

<sup>888</sup> Lange said that Egypt relied on Dafur in the Western Sudan and in West Africa to obtain black slaves (D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 279).

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE DEBATE ON THE EGYPTIAN ORIGINS OF THE YORUBA AND THEIR CULTURE BEFORE AND AFTER JOHNSON

### 5.1 Introduction

Mohammed Belo in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century associated the Yoruba origin with Arabia<sup>889</sup> and Oyeade said that Crowther linked the Yoruba origin with Israel.<sup>890</sup> After Johnson, Leo Frobenius, Olumide Lucas and Geoffrey Parrinder continued to debate the origin of the Yoruba. Frobenius thought that the Yoruba culture originated from Etruria<sup>891</sup> while Parrinder linked the origin of the Yoruba culture to Arabia.<sup>892</sup> The debate regarding the origin of the Yoruba before and after Johnson clearly suggests that the discussion on the origin of the Yoruba culture is an important academic discourse. Samuel Johnson wrote that there are similarities between the Egyptian culture and the culture of the Yoruba.<sup>893</sup>

In this research, culture is understood as traditional practices or norms which include beliefs, crafts, customs, oral traditions, and languages that are cherished and carefully handed-down from generation to generation by specific group of people living in a defined geographical location within a demarcated period of time. In other words, culture is liable to change within a period of time as determined by a group's cognitive abilities, location and the appreciation or application of a particular practice from a local or universal point of view. This definition of culture is supported by Professor Muhib Opeloye. He regarded

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<sup>889</sup> D. Lange, "Origin of the Yoruba and "The Lost Tribes of Israel,"" *Anthropos*, 106 [2011], 583; Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 62.

<sup>890</sup> A. Oyeade, "Reconstructing the past through oral tradition," 51.

<sup>891</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa: Being an account of the travels of the German inner African expedition in the years 1910-1912*, vol 1, (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1913), 345.

<sup>892</sup>G. Parrinder, *West African religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples*, (Epworth: London, 1942), 137-149.

<sup>893</sup>S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 5.



culture as knowledge, beliefs, customs and behaviour passed from one generation unto the next.<sup>894</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to put Johnson's theory in context. The chapter describes the debate regarding the origins of the Yoruba and their culture before and after Johnson.

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<sup>894</sup>M.O. Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2:1, [2011], 3. Today culture is understood as a norm propagated by a particular group of society at a specific period of time (M. Hopkins, lectures on "Historical Evangelicalism," The Theological College of Northern Nigeria Bukuru: 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2002). Botz-Bornstein, while differentiating the words culture from civilisation, narrowed the meaning of culture as social practices which are basically intellectual, spiritual and artistic in nature. Botz-Bornstein believes that civilisation, unlike culture, is materially, economically, technically and socially engaging. In other words, Botz-Bornstein thinks that civilisation is factual while culture is abstract (T. Botz-Bornstein, "What is the difference between culture and civilization?" 10-11).

## 5.2 The theory of the Arab origins of the Yoruba and their culture

The debate concerning the origin of the Yoruba and their culture started before Samuel Johnson. There is a tradition according to which the Yoruba and their culture originated from Arabia.<sup>895</sup> Mohamed Belo in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century proposed that the Yoruba originated from Arabia. In *Infaqul-Maysur*, a work written by him in 1812,<sup>896</sup> Belo regarded the Yoruba ancestors as migrants who left Iraq for Yorubaland:

The Yoruba were remnants of the Canaanites of the tribe of Nimūd who were expelled from Iraq by Yaʿub b. Qahtān and who fled to the west before they proceeded via Egypt and Ethiopia until they came to Yoruba.<sup>897</sup>

Parrinder and Opeloye also defended the theory of an Arab origin of the Yoruba. Geoffrey Parrinder, a Methodist minister and a scholar of comparative religion in 1951, supported the view according to which the Yoruba culture originated from Arabia.<sup>898</sup> Islam is generally associated with Arabia and this might have been one of the reasons that caused Opeloye to argue that the Muslim tradition, especially with regard to marriage, did not contradict the Yoruba culture.<sup>899</sup> Muhib O. Opeloye believed that the Yoruba culture and Islamic culture have so many similarities.<sup>900</sup>

Long before Parrinder and Opeloye, Johnson contested this tradition by stating that there is no Arab record which supports the theory that Arabians started the Yoruba culture by settling in Yorubaland: “[t]he Yorubas are certainly not of the Arabian family, and could not have come from Mecca...”<sup>901</sup> It is

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<sup>895</sup> F. Olojede, “The Exodus and identity formation in view of the Yoruba origin and migration narratives,” *Scriptura*, 108, [2011], 343-344.

<sup>896</sup> D. Lange, “Origin of the Yoruba and ‘The Lost Tribes of Israel,’” *Anthropos*, 106 [2011], 583; Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 62.

<sup>897</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583, originally from Gummi Abu Bakr (ed.), *Infāaq-maysūr*, Cairo: Darwa-matabi al-shab, [WR 1812], P. 48.

<sup>898</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology: A comparative study of psychological and religious thought*, (Lutterworth: London, 1951), 205-209.

<sup>899</sup> M.O. Opeloye, “The Yoruba Muslims’ Cultural Identity Question,” *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2:1, [2011], 4-8.

<sup>900</sup> M.O. Opeloye, *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2:1, [2011], 4-8.

<sup>901</sup> S. Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 5.

likely that the Arabians had written documents before writing emerged in West Africa.<sup>902</sup> Arab geographers, like the Iraqi born al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Qutayba, who wrote in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, together with the 10<sup>th</sup> century al-Masʿūdī, have associated the history of the origins of the West African people with Arabia and with the Ancient Near East.<sup>903</sup> Sultan Mohammed Belo linked the origin of the Yoruba in particular with Iraq and with Mecca, all of which are Arabian territories.<sup>904</sup>

From the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, many parts of Arabia including Iraq, Afghanistan and parts of North Africa were penetrated by Islam.<sup>905</sup> Islam started in Nigeria and in Kanem-Borno in particular in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>906</sup> The penetration of Islam into Kanem-Borno was made possible firstly, when King Humai of Kanem became a Muslim sometime between 1085 and 1097.<sup>907</sup> Traders from Mali who were also Muslims preached in Borno in the 1080s and contributed to the spread of Islam in Nigeria.<sup>908</sup> It is not known precisely when Islam was established in Yorubaland.<sup>909</sup> What is clearly known is that Islam reigned in Yorubaland before the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>910</sup> More so, Islam started in Yorubaland long before the 1840s and by 1840, many parts of Yorubaland including Arda, Badagry, Ikoyi, Ketu and others were penetrated by Islam.<sup>911</sup> Opeloye noted that many Arabs who were Muslims visited Yorubaland since the 15<sup>th</sup> century and that the Arabs have preached Islam to the Yoruba people during their visits.<sup>912</sup>

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<sup>902</sup>E.O. Adeoti, 'African History and the Tradition of Historical Writing', *Journal of Social Science (COES & J-JSS)* 3:2, [2014], 320.

<sup>903</sup>D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 583,

<sup>904</sup>O.B. Adeyemi, "Dress and identity in Yorubaland, 1880-1980," MA Thesis, Department of History, Universiteit Leiden, [2012], 47.

<sup>905</sup> T. Adamu, lectures on "Christianity and Islam from 622-1453," Bukuru, The Theological College of Northern Nigeria, 10<sup>TH</sup>-19<sup>TH</sup> March 2002.

<sup>906</sup> T. Falola & M.M. Heaton, *A history of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29.

<sup>907</sup> T. Falola & M.M Heaton, *A history of Nigeria*, 29.

<sup>908</sup> M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 90.

<sup>909</sup> M.O. Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2 (1), [2011], 2.

<sup>910</sup> Y. Sadiq, 'The practice of Islam,' in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.). *Understanding Yoruba life and culture* (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 137.

<sup>911</sup>T.G.O. Gbadamosi, *The growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841-1908*, (Longman Group Limited: London, 1978), 5.

<sup>912</sup> M.O. Opeloye, "The Yoruba Muslims' Cultural Identity Question," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 2:1, [2011], 2.

Mohammed Belo, who was a prominent political and religious leader in Northern Nigeria, had contact with various people that visited Northern Nigeria including the Arabs. He might have learnt about the Arabian origins of the West African peoples (and probably the Yoruba) from Arab traders and Islamic preachers, who were associated with the Arabs by virtue of trade, education, adventures and religion. Belo might also have learnt about the tradition of Yoruba origins from the Yoruba people. However, this speculation cannot be proven. It is likely that these traditions, focusing on the origins of some West African ethnic groups from the Ancient Near East, existed before the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>913</sup> Dierk Lange said that al-Ya'qūbī, the Iraqi-born geographer, who also wrote about the migration of the Semitic peoples to West Africa, learnt the tradition from West Africans themselves:

As for al-Ya'qūbī, his brief account of the great migration of West African people started from Babylon relies probably on West African oral traditions reported by Arab traders, which in his time might have been more detailed than now.<sup>914</sup>

In other words, it cannot be established with certainty at the moment, when and where the tradition of Arab origins of the Yoruba started. It might have started in West Africa or in Arabia by unknown persons. What is clear is that Belo has contributed to documenting Yoruba history and in associating the Yoruba in particular with Arabia, and Johnson discussed the topic extensively. Johnson clearly stated that he also learnt about the tradition that proposed Mecca as a place of origin for the Yoruba:

The Yorubas are said to have sprung from Lamurudu one of the Kings of Mecca whose offspring were:-Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorubas, the Kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa, two tribes in Hausa country.<sup>915</sup>

The possibility exists that the tradition of Arab or Muslim origins of the Yoruba was popular among the Yoruba before the time of Johnson. Johnson basically interviewed the Yoruba in order to listen to the tradition of their origins. The fact that Johnson discussed this subject of associating the Yoruba with Arabia or with Islam, suggests that there were many Yoruba who believed in the tradition. Johnson taught that

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<sup>913</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 580,

<sup>914</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 584.

<sup>915</sup> S. Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 3.

the Yoruba had a tradition which linked their origins to the “East” which to him did not mean Mecca or Arabia or a Muslim country but Egypt.<sup>916</sup> After Johnson, the popularity of the theory of the Arabic origin of the Yoruba was limited.

Dr Funlola Olojede said that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Muslim origins of the Yoruba is not appealing to the Yoruba and other scholars: “[o]verall, the theory that the Yoruba must have migrated from Mecca to Ile Ife has met with disapproval among scholars.”<sup>917</sup> Dr Olojede quoted Beier Law, who believed that the theory of an Arab origin of the Yoruba and their culture was not original, but a borrowed idea which caused the Yoruba to associate their origins with the ideology of the early civilisation started from the East: “the claim to origin from Mecca is not an original element of the tradition, but a later elaboration, intended to link the Yoruba to the prestigious civilisations of the east.”<sup>918</sup> Prominent writers like Lucas Olumide, Leo Frobenius, Folorunso and others did not favour the theory of a Muslim origin of the Yoruba.

### 5.3 The theory of the Jewish origin of the Yoruba and their culture

The theory of the Hebraic or Jewish origin of the Yoruba culture is that the Yoruba culture originated from Jewish sources or that the Yoruba culture is influenced by the Jews.<sup>919</sup> Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1807-1891), who was a Yoruba man, was one of the earliest proponents of the theory of the Jewish origin of the Yoruba people and their culture. Mr Lichtblau and Professor Magdel Le Roux are contemporary proponents of the theory, according to which some African ethnic groups originated from Israel. Professor Adebayo Oyebadde mentioned that Crowther of the Church Missionary Society was the first African and Yoruba man to become an Anglican bishop. He said that Crowther is one of the Yoruba that proposed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the similarities between the Yoruba and the Israelite cultures meant that the

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<sup>916</sup> S. Johnson, *the history of the Yorubas*, 5-6.

<sup>917</sup>F. Olojede, ‘The Exodus and identity formation in view of the Yoruba origin and migration narratives,’ *Scriptura*, 108, [2011], 344.

<sup>918</sup> F. Olojede, *Scriptura*, 344 originally from Law RC, 1977, *The Oyo Empire* (c.1600-1836). Oxford: Clarendon.

<sup>919</sup>J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 379.

Yoruba originated from Israel, or that the Yoruba culture was influenced by the Israelites.<sup>920</sup> Crowther contributed immensely to the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>921</sup> The claim made by Crowther that the Yoruba might have originated from Israel has not been captivating for many Yoruba. Dierk Lange said that “the Yoruba never claimed an Israelite identity.”<sup>922</sup> Lange noted that a number of authors recognised that there are cultural practices or customs that connect the Yoruba with the Israelites, but that the connections are not as a result of a direct migration between the northern kingdom of Israel and Yorubaland.<sup>923</sup> For example, Lucas mentions that there are certain cultures that are practiced among the Yoruba and the Israelites. He listed some of the cultures to include:<sup>924</sup>

circumcision, the division of tribes into separate families, and very frequently into the number twelve; the rigid interdiction of marriage between families too nearly related; bloody sacrifices, with the sprinkling of blood upon the altars and door-posts; a specified time for mourning for the dead, during which they shave their heads, and wear soiled or tattered clothes; demoniacal possessions, purifications and other usages probably of a Jewish origin.<sup>925</sup>

Lucas explained that there are a number of “leading features”<sup>926</sup> (cultural elements that stand out) that lend probability to theories which connect Yoruba culture to that of the ancient Israelites. He said that with regard to the offering of animal sacrifice, the Yoruba and the Israelites practiced the rituals in similar

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<sup>920</sup>The view regarding the Israelite origin of the Yorubas by Crowther was originally cited in S. Biobaku, “The Origin of the Yoruba,” *Humanities Monograph Series*, (Lagos: University of Lagos, 1971), no. 1, p.8 (A. Oyeade, “Reconstructing the past through oral tradition,” 51).

<sup>921</sup>C. Fyfe, *A short history of Sierra Leone*, 52.

<sup>922</sup>D. Lange, “Origin of the Yoruba and ‘The Lost Tribes of Israel,’” *Anthropos*, 106 [2011], 583; Y.A. Quadri, *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 591.

<sup>923</sup>D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 591-592.

<sup>924</sup>Lucas suggests that both the Yorubas and the Guineans of West Africa practice similar cultures as the Jews.

<sup>925</sup>J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 379. Davies notes that the Israelites also mourned for a specified period of time. Some mourning practices in ancient Israel included walking bare foot, not taking a bath, not having sex, turning chairs upside down, not working, etc. (J.D. Davies, *Death, ritual and belief: The rhetoric of funerary rites*, Cassell, London, 1997), 120). The Yorubas also shaved their hair as the Israelites did. They also do not work or have sex during mourning, similar to the Israelites. Women in particular dedicated a longer period of time to mourn the death of their husbands, and so too so the Israelites.

<sup>926</sup>Cultures that involved the use of blood for rituals.

ways.<sup>927</sup> Lucas cited Father J. J. Williams<sup>928</sup> as another proponent of an Israelite origin of the Yoruba culture in the 1930s.<sup>929</sup> After comparing the Yoruba language with the linguistic phraseologies of the ancient Israelites, Parrinder commented in 1951 that there are little or no linguistic similarities between Yoruba and Semitic language structures.<sup>930</sup> Lucas stated that although a few cultural practices, like animal sacrifice and mourning, are shared between the Yoruba and the Israelites, this does not automatically mean that the Yoruba culture originated from Israel. Lucas reiterated that Yoruba culture exhibited closer connection to ancient Egyptians culture than that of the Israelites.<sup>931</sup>

Professor Magdel Le Roux did extensive research on the influences of the Israelites and their culture on Africans in Africa. Le Roux argued that there are remnants of the Israelites still living in Africa. She said that the administrative management of Jerusalem in the 70s CE contributed to forcing many Jews to migrate and reside in both southern and western parts of Africa.<sup>932</sup> Le Roux cited an example of the Lemba clan, who are living in Southern Africa as the remnants of an ancient Israelites clan in Africa. She noted that numerous Yemenite folklores mentioned that the ancestors of Lemba clan originated from Israel 42 years before the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. She further reiterated that the ancestors of the Lemba clan first migrated to Palestine, and from Palestine to Yemen, before they finally came to settle in some parts of Southern Africa.<sup>933</sup>

The Lemba people, most of whom are dark-skinned Africans, also believe that their ancestors were the Israelites who once lived in Yemen, but left Yemen when Islam became the dominant religion.<sup>934</sup> Le Roux pointed out that there are many other remnants of the ancient Israelites who are living in Africa. Some of these remnants include the Falashas of Ethiopia, the Beni Israel, who are made up of the Wolof and the

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<sup>927</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 381-382.

<sup>928</sup> Father Joseph J. Williams supported the idea that the Yoruba culture originated from ancient Israel (cf. Williams, J. J. *Hebrewisms of West Africa*, (The Vail-Ballou Papers: New York, 1930) (J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 382).

<sup>929</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 382.

<sup>930</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 199.

<sup>931</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 382-388; G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 199.

<sup>932</sup> M. Le Roux, "Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 90 (19), [2008], 3.

<sup>933</sup> M. Le Roux, "Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 3, 5.

<sup>934</sup> M. Le Roux, "Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 3, 5. Skolfield said that Islam became the dominant religion in Yemen in 632 AD (E.H. Skolfield, *The false prophet: Who is behind Middle East terrorism?* (Florida: Fish House Publishing, 2001), 142-143).

Mandige communities in Senegal. Le Roux indicates that ancestors of the Beni Israel in Senegal might have been forced to convert to Islam in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>935</sup> Lange also argued that recent re-examination of the Oyo-Yoruba tradition, according to which the Oyo-Yoruba were originally Israelites, who were exiled from Israel during the first Assyrian intervention in 841 BCE and during the Assyrian conquest of Samaria in 722 BCE, is logical.<sup>936</sup>

From a comparative analysis of Oyo dynastic tradition and ancient Near Eastern history, it appears that Israelites migrated to West Africa subsequently to the fall of the Assyrian Empire, and that their descendants survive as the core people of the present-day Oyo-Yoruba. Indeed, Oyo tradition reveals that the ancestral Yoruba were mainly composed of Israelites, who, in the course of their history, became influenced by the Assyrian views of past events.<sup>937</sup>

To further support the arguments on the Israelite origin of the Yoruba culture, Mr. George Lichtblau, an attaché and political officer at the American Embassy in Tel Aviv, believes that there many remnants of the Jews in West Africa.<sup>938</sup> Lichtblau worked as a service officer for the U.S. Department of State in a number of francophone West African countries.<sup>939</sup> He interviewed many West Africans he met. He also read the folklores and listened to the oral traditions of many Africans who claimed that their ancestors originally came from Israel. Lichtblau observed the behaviour of the Africans he interviewed and he concluded that there are cultural connections between those Africans he observed and the Israelites.<sup>940</sup>

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<sup>935</sup>M. Le Roux, "Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 3, 5. Jide Uwechia also agreed that remnants of the Jewish people can be found in southern and western Africa. The Igbos of Nigeria also attribute their ancestry to the tribes of Dan and Benjamin of ancient Israel (cf. J. Uwechia, "The Black Jews of Africa," from <http://www.originaldissent.com/forums/showthread.php?7176-The-Black-Jews-Of-Af...> [2008], 1-9.

<sup>936</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 592.

<sup>937</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 592.

<sup>938</sup> Further information about Lichtblau interviews can be obtained from those conducted between James F. Shea and Mr. George E. Lichtblau on 17 December 1991. "The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Labour Series," Interview, December 17, 1991, pp. 1-18.

<sup>939</sup>"The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Labour Series," Interview, December 17, 1991, pp. 1-18.

<sup>940</sup> J. Uwechia, 'The Black Jews of Africa,' [2008], 1-9.



Lichtblau proposed that during the various Jewish Diasporas,<sup>941</sup> Jewish communities were formed in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Western Sudan, Senegal, Mauritania and some parts of southern Africa.<sup>942</sup> Other parts of West Africa where the Jewish communities might have lived included Gao, Timbuktu, Ghana, Bamako, Agades and Ibadan.<sup>943</sup> Lichtblau pointed out that the “glassmakers” in Niger claimed their ancestry to Israel and specially Hebron, and that there are similarities with regard the structure of craftsmanship between the glassmakers in Niger and the glassmakers in Bida.<sup>944</sup>

Oyebade, like Lucas and Parrinder, also believed that the Yoruba oral history and the Yoruba oral tradition did not mention any kind of connection between the Israelites and the Yoruba. Oyebade suggested that the Yoruba culture did not originate from Israel.<sup>945</sup> Lange compared the Oyo oral traditions pertaining to heroes, with certain Near Eastern kings. He believed that Sargon and the Yoruba Ofiran; Assurbanipal and the Yoruba *Oderawu* and *Ojige*; and Nabopolassar and the Yoruba *Gbonka*, have similar features.<sup>946</sup> Many Yoruba like Lucas and Oyebade did not seem impressed by Lange’s comparison.

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<sup>941</sup> The Jewish Diasporas have occurred at different times throughout history. These mostly occurred as a result of wars, which forced Jews to migrate or relocate to other parts of the world. For example, in 598 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and assassinated the Judean leader, Johoiakim (H. Jagersma, H., 1978, *A history of Israel in the Old Testament period*, (SCM, London, 1978). In 589 BCE, Nebuzaradan also invaded Judah, destroying the Temple and killing many Israelite priests (D.F., Hindson, *Old Testament introduction 1: History of Israel*, (SPCK, London, 1990), 138. These and many other types of invasions by foreigners forced the Israelites to migrate countries or regions.

<sup>942</sup> M. Le Roux, ‘Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa’ *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 16.

<sup>943</sup> Ibadan is one of the renowned states located in Yorubaland (cf. M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 55).

<sup>944</sup> S. Kurinsky, “Jews in Africa Part II: Ancient Black African Relations Fact Paper,” from

<http://conversations.blackvoices.com/faith-andreligion/001b4d43752e4d1ca06c8c63c> [2010]. Bida is located in Northern Nigeria where Hausa is spoken as the lingua franca.

<sup>945</sup> A. Oyebade, “Reconstructing the past through oral tradition,” 51.

<sup>946</sup> D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 588.

## 5.4 The theory of Etruscan origins of the Yoruba and their culture

Another theory of the Yoruba origin, which became popular after Johnson, is the Etruscan theory mainly propagated by Leo Frobenius. The theory seemed to imply an esoteric expansion of the Etruscan culture. The Yoruba culture and civilisation, which is sometimes demonstrated in their arts, crafts, sculptures, monuments, inscriptions, festivals, ceremonies and in the practice of some of their cultures, is very popular.<sup>947</sup> The result of this popularity of Yoruba culture resulted in many archaeological excavations being launched in Ile Ife. Leo Frobenius, a German professor of anthropology,<sup>948</sup> excavated the northern site of Ile Ife in 1910. He found bronze, many broken artefacts and terracotta heads. Frobenius's finds added to the popularity of the Yoruba people.<sup>949</sup>

Frobenius compared Yoruba bronze arts and architectural works to those of the Etruscans.<sup>950</sup> He identified Etruria with the mythical Atlantis.<sup>951</sup> Xavier Seguin, a writer in Paris, highlighted that Frobenius believed that Etruria and Yorubaland were two regions influenced by the ancient "Atlantic civilisation."<sup>952</sup> It is appropriate to note here that the Etruscans inhabited northern Italy before the emergence of Roman civilisation.<sup>953</sup> The theory of the Etruscan origin of the Yoruba culture proposed by Frobenius is that

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<sup>947</sup> More Yoruba festivals are celebrated in Ile Ife than any other Yoruba town. The Oduduwa festival, for example, attracts guests and tourists from outside of Nigeria, and more so from Nigeria itself. These festivals have all contributed to the popularity of the Yoruba people (J.K. Olupona, 2011, *City of 201 gods: Ile Ife in time, space, and the imagination*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 1-17, 21-50).

<sup>948</sup> F. Olojede, "The Exodus and identity formation in view of the Yoruba origin and migration narratives," *Scriptura*, 108, [2011], 345.

<sup>949</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa: Being an account of the travels of the German inner African expedition in the years 1910-1912*, vol 1, (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1913), 345.

<sup>950</sup> F. Olojede, *Scriptura*, 345.

<sup>951</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 321.

<sup>952</sup> X. Seguin, "The Yoruba and the Etruscans," <http://eden-saga.com/en/survivors-from-atlantis-frobenius-sixteen-gods-oracle-of-fa.html> [2010], 3.

<sup>953</sup> X. Seguin. "The Yoruba and the Etruscans," 1.

originally, the Yoruba culture emanated from Etruscan sources.<sup>954</sup> The theory further states that the Etruscan culture spread from Etruria, through the Atlantic Ocean, to the regions or nations located beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Frobenius noted that: “this train of thought leads me to suppose that this ancient Western culture must of necessity have travelled with the “nations who dwell beyond the Pillars of Hercules.””<sup>955</sup> He believed that it was from the “nations who dwell beyond the Pillars of Hercules” that the Etruscan culture found its way into North Africa to Yorubaland.<sup>956</sup> He said: “[th]ere is no actual difficulty in proving the existence of relations between the sphere of Atlantic culture and the growth of the civilisation proper to Inner and Northern Africa.”<sup>957</sup>

Frobenius argued that it was from North Africa and specifically Morocco, which the Etruscan culture travelled eastward along the coast of West Africa in the southerly direction, finally entering Yorubaland.<sup>958</sup> Frobenius believed that the carriers of the Etruscan culture had to pass through the Atlantic Ocean before they arrived at North Africa and as result; he termed the theory of the transfer of culture from the Etruscans to the Yoruba as the “Atlantic.”<sup>959</sup> His main reason for the use of the term Atlantic could be associated with the transfer of culture via the Atlantic Ocean. He said: [n]ow, since this civilisation has its home on the Atlantic Ocean’s shores, I shall begin by calling it “Atlantic.”<sup>960</sup> He referred to the transfer of Etruscan culture through the Atlantic Ocean to Yorubaland as “Atlantic African culture.”<sup>961</sup>

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<sup>954</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345. Guiseppi noted that the Etruscans were seafaring peoples, who originated from Asia Minor and resided in Italy since 1000 BCE (R.A. Guiseppi, (ed.), “The spread of civilization in Africa, in *International World History Project*,” from <http://history-world.org/africa1.htm>., [(2001), 1).

<sup>955</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 344.

<sup>956</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345.

<sup>957</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 326. The Pillars of Hercules are located on the mountain-side of the Strait of Gibraltar (a narrow opening that connects Africa and Europe). Geographical areas associated with the Pillars of Hercules are Jebel Moussa and Mount Hacho in Morocco (located in the Spanish city of Ceuta) (cf. X. Seguin, “The Yoruba and the Etruscans,” 1-4).

<sup>958</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345.

<sup>959</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 319-321.

<sup>960</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 321.

<sup>961</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 348.

Frobenius mentioned Plato's Atlantis.<sup>962</sup> He said: "Yoruba, whose peculiarities are not inadequately depicted in the Platonic account - this Yoruba, I assert, is Atlantis..."<sup>963</sup> Frobenius seemed ambiguous in his view of Plato's Atlantis. On the one hand, his comparison of Etruscan elements with that of the Yoruba or North Africans, suggests that he might not have regarded "Atlantis" as a mythical geographical region.<sup>964</sup> He said: "[a]fter much conflict of opinion, science has agreed to regard the Etruscans as identical with the Tyrrhenians or Thyrsenes of the Hellenes, and the Turs or Tursh or Turishas of the ancient Egyptian inscriptions."<sup>965</sup> On the other hand, he regarded Plato's Atlantis as a fable. He said: "...the idea of the Templum is actually contained in one sentence of Plato's fable of Atlantis."<sup>966</sup>

Frobenius basically used cultural similarities between the peoples of North Africa and the Yoruba to suggest that the Yoruba culture was influenced or that it originated from Etruscan sources. Frobenius said that the Yoruba and the Etruscans have cultural similarities:<sup>967</sup>

The type and colour of bows and arrows used in Yorubaland are the same as those used in Morocco, one of the North African regions which Frobenius believed was influenced by the Etruscan culture.<sup>968</sup>

The type of drum-design found in North Africa are not found in the Sudan but in Yorubaland, which suggests that there was some form of contact between North Africa and the Yorubaland;<sup>969</sup>

With regard to the water storage systems, Frobenius believed that the design of houses, as carried out by the Yoruba, was the same as those built and used by the Etruscans, Moroccans and Algerians. These North Africans and Etruscans, together with the Yoruba, normally built *impluvia* (a sunken part of the atrium of a house, designed to carry rainwater) in the centre of their houses and they made sure that their

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<sup>962</sup> X. Seguin, "The Yoruba and the Etruscans," 3.

<sup>963</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345.

<sup>964</sup> X. Seguin, "The Yoruba and the Etruscans," 3.

<sup>965</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 342

<sup>966</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 346.

<sup>967</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345.

<sup>968</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 329-331.

<sup>969</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 322-236, 345.

apartments were built with verandas in rectangular form.<sup>970</sup> He said that the building of *Impluvia* originated from the Etruscans: “[t]he Etruscans were the first to introduce the *Impluvium* as a classic feature in the world’s architectural history.”<sup>971</sup>

The type of hand loom used in North Africa was also found in Yorubaland and was used by the Yoruba women;<sup>972</sup>

The Yoruba constructed their houses with ridge roofs in the same way as the ones constructed in North Africa;<sup>973</sup>

The Yoruba and the North Africans together with the Etruscans normally built their houses strictly with the existence of *Templum*. This means that houses were built alongside temples or sacred places of worship. Both the Yoruba and the North African houses were normally built round the temple(s). Frobenius believed that the religions of Ile Ife, and the construction of the places of worship in the city, are in accordance with the Etruscan *Templum* design;<sup>974</sup>

Frobenius associated Olokun (a Yoruba deity) as a similar deity to the Poseidon, the sea-god or ram-headed god (an Etruscan deity). Frobenius compared Olokun and Poseidon because both deities were associated with the Sea in both cultures.<sup>975</sup>

And this is the method by which I maintain I have re-discovered Atlantis, the Emporium of the culture of the West on the further side of the Straits of Gibraltar, that Atlantis, whose walls, as Solon informs us, held within them Poseidon’s castle, where there was a wealth of luxuriant vegetation; where tree-like plants grew which gave forth food and drink and unguents (the oil-palm); that a fruit tree, with quickly decaying fruit (the banana), and

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<sup>970</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 332-333.

<sup>971</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 341.26-329.

<sup>972</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 332-333

<sup>973</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 333-334.

<sup>974</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 333-334 cf. J.M. Agai, [2013a], *HTS Teologiese Studies*, 2.

<sup>975</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 305-314.

desirable condiment (pepper) there flourished abundantly; that elephants lived there; that bronze, or brass, was won there (as till recently was so, behind the Yoruban mountain range); that the natives wore dark blue(?tree indigo) garments, and that they had a somewhat foreign style of architecture (ridge roofs of palm leaf). Therefore I lay claim to Yoruba, so tropically lush and rank in its vegetation; Yoruba, with its channelled network of lakes on the coast and the reaches of the Niger; Yoruba, whose peculiarities are not inadequately depicted in the Platonic account-this Yoruba, I assert, is Atlantis, the home of Poseidon's posterity, the Sea God by them name Olokun; the land of people of whom Solon declared: "They have even extended their lordship over Egypt and Tyrrhene!"<sup>976</sup>

Frobenius pointed out that the Ifa cult, which is practiced in Yorubaland, originated in North Africa.<sup>977</sup> Ifa is one of the Yoruba gods or *Orishas*. Ifa is the most consulted deity among the Yoruba and was approached when a successful traditional festival was desired.<sup>978</sup> The Yoruba mostly associated Ifa with creation and believed that Ifa was the offspring of Oduduwa and Obatala.<sup>979</sup>

Frobenius noted that the Yoruba believe that it was god who created Ifa and initiated Ifa worship. The Yoruba recognise the role of Ifa by making sacrifices to Ifa through the Yoruba priests (*babalawos*).<sup>980</sup> Frobenius associated the Ifa cult with North African and not Egypt. He excavated a site in Ile Ife in 1910 and found a number of items including bronze, terracotta heads and many broken artefacts.<sup>981</sup> He further evaluated other elements of Yoruba material culture, including house-form and compared what he found in Yorubaland with similar archaeological features discovered in North Africa. Frobenius had earlier on refuted the theory according to which Etruscan culture travelled via the Interior into Yorubaland, simply

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<sup>976</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345.

<sup>977</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 212-219.

<sup>978</sup> S.S. Farrow, *Faith, fancies, and fetich*, 35-37.

<sup>979</sup> S.S. Farrow, *Faith, fancies, and fetich*, 35-37.

<sup>979</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 351.

<sup>980</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 212-219.

<sup>981</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 345.

because Etruscan elements have not been found in the Sudan. Frobenius suggested that it was from the Atlas Mountains that Etruscan culture came to the Yorubaland.<sup>982</sup>

However, the Phoenicians together with the Greeks migrated to Egypt to trade for gold, which was regarded as a sacred metal since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>983</sup> Other commodities, which were traded between the Egyptians, the Phoenicians and West Africans, included metals, weapons, ivory, and textiles.<sup>984</sup> The search for black slaves by the Phoenicians extended their travels to Central Sudan.<sup>985</sup> Parrinder said that before the advent of Christianity, there was migration from Egypt's Upper Nile region to Sudan, and from Sudan, to the then western Sudanese kingdoms comprising of Gao, Ghana, Mali, Guinea and the Bight of Benin.<sup>986</sup> The Bight of Benin, in the direction of south-west Nigeria (and now located in Benin Republic), use to be one of the colonies of the Old Oyo Empire administered by the Yoruba.<sup>987</sup> Fitzgerald, a professor of Latin language and literature, mentioned that the Phoenicians and Egyptian travelled to West Africa for trade as early as 550 BCE.<sup>988</sup> Fitzgerald cited Herodotus who noted that by 600 BCE, some Phoenicians had circumnavigated West Africa including Gambia, Senegal and Sierra Leone:

Herodotus recorded that about the year 600 BCE, 'certain Phoenician adventurers completed the circumnavigation of Africa, starting from the red sea and two years later passing the Pillars of Hercules on their way to the Levant, but the extend of Phoenician exploration does not depend solely on this doubtful record. They passed beyond the Mediterranean they established trade depots on the coast of Rio de Oro (c. 500 BC) and from there some of them

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<sup>982</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 336-337.

<sup>983</sup>M. Le Roux, 'Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa' *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 90 (19), [2008], 7. Lange pointed out that the Phoenicians and Egyptians traded in gold with West African kingdoms (D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, J.H. Roll: Dettelbach, [2004], 279).

<sup>984</sup>W. Boshoff, & E. Scheffler, 2000, 'The world of the ancient near east.' *Ancient Israelites literature in context*, (Protea Book House: Pretoria, 2000), 38; J.D. Clark, *The prehistory of Africa: Ancient peoples and places*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1970), 15.

<sup>985</sup>D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, 277, 279.

<sup>986</sup>G. Parrinder, *West African psychology: A comparative study of psychological and religious thought*, 198.

<sup>987</sup>M. Omolewa, *Certificate history of Nigeria*, 127.

<sup>988</sup>W. Fitzgerald, *Africa: A social, economic and political geography of its major regions*, (Methuen & Co. Limited: London, 1968), 75-76.

took southward beyond the desert to the neighborhood of Senegal and Gambia rivers.’ It is even probable that they visited the Sierra Leone coast. Through the mediums of such West African enterprises, and by virtue their ability to tap the trans-Saharan caravan trade, the Carthaginians were able to offer in Mediterranean port-markets tropical products similar to those – namely, ivory, gold, and Negro slaves – which were sought two thousand years by European adventurers on the West African coast.<sup>989</sup>

Considering the statement made by Herodotus, it is important to note that the purpose of the discourse on trade between West Africa, Sudan and Egypt is to establish the possibility that there might have been trade routes which connected the Phoenicians or the Egyptians with Northern Nigeria since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The trade routes might have served as a link for the Egyptian Christians or the Arab-Muslim traders, who might have exchange ideas with West Africans in general and with the Yoruba and Hausa ancestors in particular. Belo’s association of the Yoruba origin with the Phoenicians or the Arabians, and Johnson’s association of the Yoruba origins with the Egyptian Christians might have been influenced by this background, but this is mere speculation.<sup>990</sup>

More so, Lucas also contested Frobenius argument that all of Yoruba ancient monuments including the Etruscan elements were mostly located on the coast.<sup>991</sup> He believed in the existence of Etruscan elements in Yorubaland as discussed by Frobenius. However, he argued against Frobenius’ view that the Yoruba should not be associated with the Egyptians but the Etruscans. Lucas said that renowned Yoruba locations like Ile Ife and Offa, where most of the Etruscan elements are found, are located far away from the coast

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<sup>989</sup>W. Fitzgerald, *Africa: A social, economic and political geography of its major regions*, 75-76.

<sup>990</sup> As early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Arab traders (who were mostly Muslims) associated the origins of many tribes in West African with the Ancient Near East. In a similar fashion, Belo specifically associated the Yoruba origin with the Ancient Near East and noted that the ancestors of the Yoruba were initially Phoenicians who migrated to Arabia, Egypt and Ethiopia, until they arrived in Yorubaland (D. Lange, *Anthropos*, 580, 583). It is likely that the Yoruba oral tradition, which associated Yoruba origins with the “East”, emerged as a result of Arab traders and Belo’s historical discourse, according to which the West African tribes emanated from the Near East. As a Muslim, Belo could’ve been influence by his belief to propose an association between Yoruba origins and Islam, seeing as Canaan or Babylon (part of modern-day Iraq) is dominated by Muslims and Arab traders. As many felt that the influence of Islam in Yorubaland during the 19<sup>th</sup> had to be limited, Johnson believed that this could be achieved by disassociating the Yoruba origins from Islam and associating it with Egypt instead.

<sup>991</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 336.



(about 200 miles).<sup>992</sup> In this research, the Egyptians are regarded as Africans.<sup>993</sup> The connection between the Egyptian and Yoruban cultures, especially in terms of their belief in the afterlife, outweighs the connection between the Etruscan culture and that of the Yoruba, as both the Egyptians and the Yoruba were and are Africans.<sup>994</sup>

## 5.5 The theory of the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba and their culture

There is another theory according to which the Yoruba originated from Egypt.<sup>995</sup> We have seen in the earlier chapters that, in Johnson's view, the ancestors of the Yoruba were either Nubians or Coptic Christians from Egypt.<sup>996</sup> This section is about authors who spoke of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba after Johnson. Authors like Lucas and Parrinder also supported the view that the Yoruba originated from Egypt. While they may not have quoted or give credence to Johnson as the initiator of the theory, their support for his view makes it possible for them to be classified as proponents of this theory. However, they differed slightly from Johnson's view of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Lucas<sup>997</sup> and Parrinder believed that the ancestors of the Yoruba were Predynastic and Dynastic Egyptians<sup>998</sup> while Johnson emphasised that they were Nubians or Coptic Christians. On this subject, Parrinder wrote in 1951 while Lucas wrote in 1970. It is not known if they knew each other, but their theories on the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba are similar.

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<sup>992</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 349.

<sup>993</sup> O'Connor and Reid stated that Egypt was described by some writers as a non-African territory and that Egyptian artefacts were interpreted as foreign to Africa (D. O'Connor & A. Reid, "Locating ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern theories, past realities," in D. O'Connor & Reid (eds.), *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (London: UCL, 2003), 1-5). Adamo mentions that the ancient Egyptians were dark-skinned people and that they were Africans (T.D. Adamo, "Teaching the history of ancient Israel from an African perspective: The invasion of Sennacherib of 701 B.C.E. as an example," *Old Testament Essays*, 23(3), [2010], 475). Agai argued that the geographical, economic and emigrational connectedness of Africans explains why different groups share many similar cultural elements. He cited the similarity of burial cultures among most Africans as an example (J. Agai, "Reading the near-death experience from an African perspective," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71(1), [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i1.2898](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i1.2898), [2015], 3-5; cf. J.M. Agai, "An archaeological investigation into the origins of the afterlife beliefs in ancient Egypt," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 95 (24), [2013B], 46-60.

<sup>994</sup> Further studies concerning the Etruscan views of the afterlife is required.

<sup>995</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 391.

<sup>996</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

<sup>997</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, 413-416.

<sup>998</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 200, 202-203.

Leo Frobenius, the German explorer and ethnologist who introduced the Etruscan theory of the origin of the Yoruba, emphasised that the Yoruba culture originated from Etruscan sources.<sup>999</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, born in New Barnet, London on 10 April 1910, worked as a missionary in Benin and in Cote d'Ivoire in 1933. He admitted that there were rather little influences from the ancient Egyptian culture on the Yoruba. He emphasised that both Islam and the Arab world had influenced the Yoruba culture more than the ancient Egyptians did.<sup>1000</sup> He believed however, that the Egyptian Predynastic and Dynastic culture was similar to the Yoruba culture.<sup>1001</sup> According to Parrinder, the Yoruba cultural elements that were associated with the Egyptian culture were the Predynastic and Dynastic cultural elements: burial rituals, rituals regarding the coronation of kings, informal mummification, the non-use of clothes except by the Egyptian leaders who used animal skin for clothing, the tattooing of human skin designed with animal images and lines, and the belief in totems (associating spiritual meaning to objects or emblems).<sup>1002</sup>

Furthermore, Olumide Lucas, a Yoruba pastor, who compared the Yoruba religion with that of the ancient Egyptians, argued that there are many language structures that connect the Yoruba with the ancient Egyptians. He said that with regard to the meaning and the pronunciation of certain words, the ancient Egyptians and the Yoruba shared the meaning and pronunciation of many words.<sup>1003</sup> Theophile Obenga, a Congolese philosopher, linguist, historian and Egyptologist, who was involved in archaeological excavations in Egypt in 2010, and who also was the chief editor of the journal *ANKH*, agreed with Lucas on the similarities of the Yoruba culture with that of the ancient Egyptians. Obenga said that the Egyptian pharaonic language structures are similar in many ways to those of modern Yoruba.<sup>1004</sup> Lucas said that the Egyptians pronounced the word *irit* and that it meant hippopotamus. He said that the Yoruba word *riri* is derived from the Egyptian word *irit* which means *dirty*. He pointed out that the Yoruba associate the word *irit* with *riri* ("dirty") due to hippopotamus's love for waddling in dirty waters.<sup>1005</sup> Lucas went further to argue that the Yoruba word *oni* ("crocodile"), which is used as a title for the Yoruba leader the Oni of

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<sup>999</sup> L. Frobenius, *The voice of Africa*, 336.

<sup>1000</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 205-209.

<sup>1001</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 200, 202-203.

<sup>1002</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 200, 202-203.

<sup>1003</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 21-28.

<sup>1004</sup> T. Obenga, "Ancient Egyptian and modern Yoruba: Phonetic regularity," *ANKH*, 99-108, from <http://www.ankhonline.com>, [2007], 99-106.

<sup>1005</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 21-28.

ife, was derived from an unknown sacred animal of the Egyptian city known as *on (aunu)*.<sup>1006</sup> Also, the Yoruba word *orisa* or *orisha* (used to describe Yoruba deities or spirits or objects of worship), according to Lucas, might have been derived from the Egyptian word *horu-sa-ast* or *horu-se-ast* (one of the Egyptian gods).<sup>1007</sup> The Yoruba regard their god *Olorun* as an omniscient, omnipotent and an omnipresent god. Lucas said that the Yoruba word *orun* specifically means “sky” and the word *ol* indicates lordship or ownership. In other words, the Yoruba word *Olorun* can be translated as “Lord of the sky or of the heavens.”<sup>1008</sup>

More so, the Yoruba and the Egyptians practiced polygamy. They regarded the first wife as the second in command after the husband in a family. The Yoruba referred to the first wife as *Iyale* (“the woman leader of the family”) while the Egyptians called the first wife *nabit piru* (“the mistress crowned”).<sup>1009</sup> Both the Yoruba and the Egyptians practiced body mutilation. Body alteration, such as shaving, the piercing of ears and noses, excision, tattooing, and circumcision, were practiced by both cultures.<sup>1010</sup> The Yoruba and the Egyptians worshipped their local deities or town deities despite the fact that they all recognised the supremacy of a particular Supreme Deity. Both cultures had sacred animals, they practiced magic, and used charms, and during their festivities, certain rituals, singing, recitations and dancing were carried out.<sup>1011</sup> Lucas said that the Yoruba and the Egyptians shared the following social responsibilities: respect for elderly people, they valued oaths, and that they were modest in their behaviour and dress.<sup>1012</sup> The Yoruba and the Egyptians shared similitudes in certain names as well. Lucas cited an example of the Egyptian word *danga* which meant dwarf; the Yoruba normally say *lo bi danga* meaning *go as fast as a danga dwarf*.<sup>1013</sup>

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<sup>1006</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 21-28.

<sup>1007</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, (Lagos: n.p., 1970), 411-412.

<sup>1008</sup> J. O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 35.

<sup>1009</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 28-30.

<sup>1010</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 412-413.

<sup>1011</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, 414-413.

<sup>1012</sup> Lucas said that the Yoruba practice of clothing themselves in leopard skins was an Egyptian Predynastic and Dynastic tradition (J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, 413-416).

<sup>1013</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, 413-416.

In addition, Lucas pointed out that in terms of the styles used in manufacturing, and for the design of metal and glass works, the Yoruba and the Dynastic Egyptians shared similar practices.<sup>1014</sup> Johnson mentioned that the Ife Marbles and their Egyptian counterparts are similar.”<sup>1015</sup> Lucas is a major protagonist of the theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba culture. In his view, the similarities of the Yoruba culture with those of the Egyptians suggest that the Yoruba culture originated from Egypt. In one of his writings, Lucas appreciated all the non-Yoruba people for taking the time to research and document Yoruba history. He noted, however, that non-Yoruba natives who documented Yoruba history would not be able to give an accurate account of the Yoruba history, mainly because of their limited knowledge of Yoruba language. Lucas believed that his writings, which were aimed at comparing the Yoruba culture, especially in terms of language, with those of the Egyptians, were accurate “[s]uffice it here to tender an apology, once for all, for these criticisms which are necessitated by a desire to give an accurate account of the subject.”<sup>1016</sup>

However, not all authors agreed with Lucas and Parrinder’s view on the ancient Egyptian origin of the Yoruba culture. Lange did not believe that Lucas’s linguistic comparison with that of the ancient Egyptians was accurate, as he thought the comparison lacked scholastic scrutiny.<sup>1017</sup> Lange thought that:

[Lucas] His proposed etymologies are however very vague and since neither the assumed phonetic and semantic similarities are convincing, they cannot be accepted as evidence for historical reconstruction.<sup>1018</sup>

Lucas did not concentrate on explaining the differences in cultural practices between the Egyptians and the Yoruba. He also neglected to discuss in detail that the Egyptian culture also shared similarities with a

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<sup>1014</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, 414-416.

<sup>1015</sup>S. Johnson, the *history of the Yorubas*, 6-7. The origins of specialised bronze and brass casting methods in Nigeria is not known. The exact reasons why the Nok terracottas (500BCE-200 CE, central Nigeria), the art from Igbo-Ukwu (near Enugu, south-east Nigeria)(M. Shinnie, *Ancient African kingdoms*, 80-81) and the Yoruba Ife bronze heads (South-West Nigeria) resemble examples from Egypt, are not known (J.D. Clark, *The prehistory of Africa: Ancient peoples and places*, 214-216). In light of these similarities, it has been suggested that a close relationship existed between the Egyptians and the West Africans.

<sup>1016</sup>J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 5-6.

<sup>1017</sup> D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 311.

<sup>1018</sup> D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 311.

number of other African cultures. Dr. Kwasi Opoku, a Ghanaian scholar on African traditional religion, said that Africans generally believe in life after death despite the slight differences in their burial rituals. He believes that the motives behind burials are the same in all African cultures.<sup>1019</sup> Opoku cited the examples of the Abaluyia tribe of Kenya, who buried their dead naked so that the deceased would be reborn in the world of the dead. The symbolism of such nakedness is reminiscent of the birth into this life. The Zulus of South Africa bury their dead in a squatting position, which to them symbolises the position of the embryo, which is meant to give rise to another life.<sup>1020</sup> The motivation behind burial methods among both Abaluyia and the Zulus are for the dead to continue be reincarnated and to continue life after death. The Yoruba also believe in the reincarnation of the dead. The Berom ethnic group in North-Central Nigeria also uses the word *Ku* or *Khu* for death, similar to the Egyptians and the Yoruba. The proposal that the Yoruba culture originated from ancient Egypt, simply because certain Egyptian culture are similar to Yoruba culture, raises serious question on the origin of other African cultures that are similar to the Egyptian culture as well. The implications of this proposed theory is that other African groups, whose culture are similar to that of the Egyptians, could also believe that their culture originates from Egypt. Another implication arises from the differences that exist between the Egyptian culture and the Yoruba culture. The theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba culture also fails to address the existence of similarities between the Yoruba culture and that of the Etruscans, Israelites, Arabs, and other West African ethnic groups.

Contrary to Frobenius, Lucas emphasised that the Etruscans did not regard the sea-god Poseidon is the same light as the Yoruba do. He said that the Yoruba regard *Olokun* as one of their deities and that the *Olokun* exist only because of his relationship with other Yoruba deities. In other words, *Olokun* would not be able to exist on its own.<sup>1021</sup> He noted that the Etruscans regarded Poseidon as their only god, or as their major deity, unlike the Yoruba.<sup>1022</sup> Lucas argued that *Olokun* means the *owner of the sea* and he associated

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<sup>1019</sup> A.K. Opoku, "African perspectives on death and dying," in A. Berger & P. Badham (eds.) *Perspectives on death and dying: Cross-cultural and multidisciplinary views*, (Charles: Philadelphia, 1989), 17, 21.

<sup>1020</sup> A.K. Opoku, *Perspectives on death and dying: Cross-cultural and multidisciplinary views*, 17, 21.

<sup>1021</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 350-352.

<sup>1022</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 350-352. The Yorubas worship varieties of deities or *Orishas*, some which are Ifa, Obatala, Oduduwa and many more (S.S Farrow, S.S., *Faith, fancies and fetich or Yoruba paganism: Being some account of the religious beliefs of the West African Negroes, particularly of the Yoruba tribes of southern Nigeria*, (Negro University Press: New York, 1969), 35-46).

*Olokun* with an Egyptian deity, *Adimu* or *Adumu*, which means *Lord of the primordial abyss*.<sup>1023</sup> Lucas concluded that the cult of the ram-headed deity practiced in both North African and in Yorubaland might have originated from Egypt, simply because ram-headed deities were worshipped in Egypt as well.<sup>1024</sup> Lucas further indicated that the Etruscan culture in North Africa indeed recognised the existence of the sea-god, but that the Yoruba recognition of *Olokun* as a sea-god could be associated with the Egyptian sea-god on more definite terms than its Etruscan counterpart.<sup>1025</sup>

Furthermore, Lucas proposed that the Yoruba Ifa cult might have originated from Egypt, or that the cult is inclined to Egyptian culture more than any other culture from the region of North Africa.<sup>1026</sup> Lucas said that the ram-headed cult in Egypt and the Ifa cult in Yorubaland are similar. He indicated that the Ifa cult was highly recognised and practiced by the Yoruba before the emergence of Islam in Yorubaland, but that Islam in turn influenced the practice of the Ifa cult among the Yoruba.<sup>1027</sup> Parrinder suggested that the Ifa cult itself might have originated from Arabia and Egypt or from the North East.<sup>1028</sup> Lucas said that both the Igbos and the Ekoi of West Africa also practice the Ifa cult.<sup>1029</sup>

In addition to these, Lucas admitted that Frobenius undertook archaeological research in Yorubaland, and that his comparison of Yoruba articles and material culture to that of the Etruscans was logical.<sup>1030</sup> However, Lucas argued that these Etruscan elements made little or no serious impact on Yorubaland.<sup>1031</sup> He further argued that the same Etruscan elements of material culture (*impluvium*, *templum*, hood loom, the arrow, etc), which Frobenius said are found in Yorubaland, are also found in Egypt. Lucas questioned Frobenius's motives for not detailing that Etruscan elements are also found in Egypt.<sup>1032</sup> Lucas also pointed

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<sup>1023</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 351.

<sup>1024</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 354, 393.

<sup>1025</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 354, 393.

<sup>1026</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 352, 393.

<sup>1027</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 352.

<sup>1028</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples*, (London: Epworth, 1942), 137-149.

<sup>1029</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 352.

<sup>1030</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 348.

<sup>1031</sup> J. O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 350.

<sup>1032</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 351.

out that the Etruscan elements found in Egypt are not of Egyptian origin. He said that the Etruscan elements in Yorubaland originated from Egypt.<sup>1033</sup> Lucas reiterated that there were Etruscan people who settled in Egypt, and from Egypt their culture travelled by way of the interior (through the Sudan) into Yorubaland.<sup>1034</sup>

More so, the Yoruba varied from the Egyptian on numerous levels with regard to; their practice of mummification, beliefs in transmigration and reincarnation, construction of pyramids, veneration of ancestors, and the extent of their respect for the dead, or fear of the spirits of the dead.<sup>1035</sup> Despite the questions that remain unanswered, (particularly in terms of providing reasons for the similarities and differences between the culture of the Yoruba and that of the Etruscans, Israelites, Arabians, and other West Africans), the subject is still important for historical debates. As more research is conducted on the subject of cultural comparisons, observations on the occurrence of cultures through time and place (space), and the shared similarities or differences among these cultures, can provide the historian with the relevant knowledge.

Although an exact chronology of the origins of a particular culture cannot be determined through a simple comparison of cultural elements alone, a contextual study, which includes the careful examination of material culture in combination with oral and written sources, could provide useful information to historians on specific cultural groups. When it comes to research into the origins of a particular culture, the historian needs to draw from archaeological and anthropological knowledge in order to formulate more comprehensive conclusions.

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<sup>1033</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 351.

<sup>1034</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 351.

<sup>1035</sup> J.M. Agai, [2013a], *HTS Teologiese Studies*, 8-9.

## 5.6 The theory of the local origins of the Yoruba and their culture

Another view that may contribute to the debate regarding the origin of the Yoruba is the view that the Yoruba originated locally. The theory was mentioned by Lucas, but he did not agree with it, nor did he mention any specific author(s) who supported this theory. The theory of a local origin of Yoruba culture postulates that the Yoruba culture originated locally within Nigeria.<sup>1036</sup> Lucas maintained that this theory placed emphasis on the idea that the Yoruba were the first people to occupy Yorubaland and that all cultural developments took place internally over time. He did not make mention of the origin of the first people who occupied the Yorubaland.<sup>1037</sup> In opposition to the theory of local origins, Lucas stated that it made little or no sense to speculate that the Yoruba culture could originate locally. In other words, he believed that every culture had some foreign origins or influences. He reiterated that even the Yoruba themselves are aware that their culture did not originate locally, but from foreign sources.<sup>1038</sup> Dr. Saburi Oladeni Biobaku supported the view; namely that the Yoruba and their culture did not originate locally but from the Ancient Near East, the Middle East or Egypt:

...they [Yorubas] were immigrants from a region where they came under the influences of ancient Egyptians, Etruscan and Jews. Their original home must have been the Near East, and it is probable that the all-Black Kingdom of Meroe in the Sudan played an important part in transmitting Egyptian influences to them. Whether it was in Upper Egypt or the Yemen, the Yoruba came under Arab influences in their old homes, and their subsequent migration was connected with Arab movements.<sup>1039</sup>

The theory of a local origin of the Yoruba culture requires extensive inquiry into the settlement of early humans that lived in West Africa, as along with their ways of life.<sup>1040</sup> The fossils of early humans who

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<sup>1036</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, (Lagos: n.p., 1970), 373.

<sup>1037</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa & ancient Egypt*, (Lagos: n.p., 1970), 373.

<sup>1038</sup> J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, 373.

<sup>1039</sup> S. Biobaku, S., n.d., 'The pattern of Yoruba history', from [www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/de/asjans58.14.pdf](http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/de/asjans58.14.pdf), [n.d.], 63-64.

<sup>1040</sup> Archaeological research into the remains of early humans, who lived in West Africa, can contribute to the development of a theory which postulates local origins of the Yoruba people. A study of this nature will aid researchers in their quest to determine who were the first inhabitants to; a) practice certain traditions and b) exhibit particular aspects of culture. For example: the technologies involved in crafting the Nok terracottas and the Ife



occupied West Africa is debated, as specific fossils of early humans in West Africa have not been found.<sup>1041</sup> Archaeologists rely on ancient materials made from shell, stone, bone, and some cleavers (stone tools) found in Nigeria, to speculate that early humans such as Homo erectus, Homo Neanderthals and early Homo sapiens lived in Nigeria.<sup>1042</sup> The Neanderthals are allegedly the originators of human culture. Scholars such as Clark, Constable, Leakey, MacGregor, Hultkrantz, Caldwell and Gyles, all argued that burial cultures, or beliefs in life after death, were firstly initiated by the Neanderthals before the practices spread to modern humans.<sup>1043</sup> However, Neanderthal and early human fossils are yet to be found in Nigeria and in Yorubaland in particular.<sup>1044</sup>

The non-availability of an early human fossil record in Yorubaland suggests that modern humans were responsible initiating the very origins of Yoruba culture. The question of who these modern humans were, and where they came from, remains unknown.<sup>1045</sup> The theory of an independent origin of the Yoruba culture suggests that those modern humans developed their culture locally without any foreign influences. The implications of this theory are that:

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Bronzes have prompted archaeologists (like Atwood) to suggest that West Africans were responsible for initiating iron smelting technology (Atwood, 2013, *The Digging Stick*, 13-14). This type of perception can contribute to the study of the local origin of the Yoruba.

<sup>1041</sup>T. Shaw, 'Prehistory' in O. Ikime (ed.). *Groundwork of Nigerian history*, (Heinemann Educational Books; Jos, 2004), 25.

<sup>1042</sup>J.M. Agai, "An archaeological search for the emergence of early humans in West Africa," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(3), [http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2033](http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2033), [2014], 4-5.

<sup>1043</sup>J.D. Clark, *The prehistory of Africa: Ancient peoples and places*. (Thames and Hudson: London, 1970), 120; G. Constable, *The Neanderthals: The emergence of man*, (Time Life: New York, 1973), 97-101; R.E. Leakey, *Human origins*, (Hamish Hamilton: London, 1982), 52-53; G. MacGregor, *Images of afterlife*, (New York: Paragon, 1992), 55-56; A. Hultkrantz, A., 1982, "Religion before history," in R. Beaver (ed.). *Eeerdman's handbook to the world's religions*, (Lion: England, 1982), 24; E. Caldwell, & W. Gyles, *The ancient world*, (Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc: New York, 1966), 9.

<sup>1044</sup>P. Jordan, *Egypt the black land*, 28; J.M. Agai, [2013a], *HTS Teologiese Studies*, 9-10.

<sup>1045</sup> The Oduduwa myth mentions that Oduduwa encountered people in Yorubaland when he first came to West Africa. The identity of these people are unknown, but some speculate that it could have been the Igbos, who were at war with Ife people (F. Olojede, *Scriptura*, 346).

Since human cultures were assumed to develop locally, a theory which postulates a local origin of Yoruba culture, disregard the phenomenon of migration as a fundamental aspect of the daily lives of both early and modern humans.<sup>1046</sup>

The theory is not supported by evidence of how the Yoruba, or other peoples that firstly occupied the Yorubaland, developed their culture independently. Lucas did not mention specific writers that supported the theory of the local origin of the Yoruba and their culture. According to the research presented in this thesis, scholars who support this theory are view and far between. The theory is largely regarded as a subject for debate and it open to further discussion. The German Professor of African history, Dierk Lange, who also specialises on the history of the Yoruba people, believed that 21st century West African historiographers are opening their minds to the idea that Yoruba culture might have originated from within West Africa itself, and not from the Semitic world, the Egyptians or from Etruscan sources.<sup>1047</sup> However, Lange did not mention specific scholars who shared this view. This might implied that the local origin theory is too weak for people like Lucas and Frobenius, who both traced the origin of the Yoruba culture to foreign locations. It is not known whether Johnson knew of the local origin theory, but his own theory on Egyptian origins of the Yoruba culture suggests that he disregarded it, or possibly never even considered it. In light of what has been said, the local origins theory is still important, as it raises many deeper seated questions on the exact originators of human culture. It also raises questions on the similarities, the differences and the universality of certain human cultures. These questions are relevant for both historical and anthropological discourse.

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<sup>1046</sup> Migration have always been a major aspect of human culture. See R.E. Leakey, *Human origins*, 20-23; D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa*, 319; M. Le Roux, M., "Ancient near eastern influence in sub-Saharan Africa," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 90 (19), [2008], 3.

<sup>1047</sup> Lange did not specify the twenty-first century historiographers (D. Lange, "Ife and the Origin of the Yoruba," 48).

## 5.7 Conclusion

The origin of Oduduwa is still under debate. The association the origin of Oduduwa with Islam suggests that the legend might have migrated to Yorubaland after 622 CE; the date of the Hijrah (the period of Mohammed's departure from Mecca to Medina).<sup>1048</sup> It is relevant at this point to note that both Lucas and Parrinder argued that the cultural similarities between the Yoruba and the Egyptians are based upon Predynastic and Dynastic Egyptians cultures. Both authors believed in ancient migration between Egypt and the Yorubaland during Predynastic and Dynastic periods.<sup>1049</sup> While this suggestion is under debate, it redirects the minds of researchers and historians to question whether the migration of the Egyptians to the Yorubaland took place during these Egyptians periods. The Yoruba, including Johnson, believed that Oduduwa is their original ancestor who migrated from Arabia or Egypt to Yorubaland. The Yoruba have different views regarding the sexuality of Oduduwa as a male or female deity or legend.<sup>1050</sup>

According to Godesberg, Frobenius assumed that the identification of Oduduwa as a male legend or deity was strictly overemphasised by the people of Ile Ife; otherwise, Oduduwa was mostly known as a female goddess, especially in Ibadan.<sup>1051</sup> When Oduduwa as portrayed as a male deity, he often portrays heroic character and admirable virtues, but as a female deity, she is regarded as an immoral or a weak being. The reason for portrayal of Oduduwa as an evil goddess who became the progenitor of the Yoruba race is not known. However, Lucas argued that the myth depicting Oduduwa as a female deity is rather more original in character. His transliteration of the origins of the word "Oduduwa" shows that Oduduwa is originally a female entity, yet it remains a mystery why the Yoruba are objecting to the idea that Oduduwa was a female legend or goddess.<sup>1052</sup>

Lucas said that Oduduwa actually possessed many fine attributes akin to her husband Obatala, until her worship degenerated. Her worship as a goddess diminished because her followers considering her

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<sup>1048</sup>F. Afolayan, "The Early Yoruba Kingdoms," in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.) *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 33.

<sup>1049</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African psychology*, 200, 202-203; J.O. Lucas, *Religions in West Africa*, iii.

<sup>1050</sup> A.B. Ellis, *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of the slave coast of West Africa*, 41-42.

<sup>1051</sup> B.B. Godesberg, *Leo Frobenius: An anthology*, 160-161.

<sup>1052</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 93-95.

strength to have played an important role in Yoruba history, yet they refused to regard her as a female entity. As a result, oral traditions which portray her as evil were then invented so that a female Oduduwa might not be regarded as the creator of the Yoruba race. In other words, if Oduduwa was truly evil or immoral, the Yoruba would not have regarded her as their progenitor in the first place, thus indicating that the evil aspects of Oduduwa were mere inventions that were not true.<sup>1053</sup>

The connotation of men with strength and perfection could be another reason why the Yoruba prefer to regard Oduduwa as a male and not a female entity: “[w]ith her adoption as the progenitor of the Yoruba race, there seems to have arisen a tendency to regard her as a leader and a ‘hero’, in consequence of which late stories transforming her to a male deity were invented.”<sup>1054</sup> Moreover, the migration theory of Oduduwa has no mention of Oduduwa as a female but strictly as a male warrior, founder, king, and a legend. The association of Oduduwa as a female entity is mostly relevant in the Yoruba creation myth. Johnson basically discussed Oduduwa as a male and not a female. He might have been aware of the myth which regarded Oduduwa as a female, but refused to discuss it.

Oyebade and Afolayan, both of whom are renowned Yoruba writers, date the migration of Oduduwa to Yorubaland to either 1100 CE or the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1055</sup> Associating Oduduwa with the Coptic Church also indicates that Oduduwa might have left the East or Egypt in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. These speculated chronologies enhanced the debate surrounding the origins of the Yoruba people and their culture. Johnson has contributed to initiating the debate on the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba people and their culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lucas’ argument in comparing and tracing the origins of the Yoruba culture to ancient Egypt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Frobenius’s arguments against the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, have all contributed to enhancing further debate on Johnson’s theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba.

It is appropriate to once more note that while there are similarities between the Egyptian cultures and the Yoruba cultures, there are also differences between them. Yoruba writers like Johnson, Lucas,

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<sup>1053</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 93-95.

<sup>1054</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 93-95.

<sup>1055</sup> A. Oyebade, “Reconstructing the past through oral tradition,” in N. S. Lawal, M. N. O. Sadiku & A. Dopamu (eds.) *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, (Trenton: African World Press, 2004), 53.

Folorunso and others who argued that the Yoruba cultures could have originated in Egypt due to their similarities, did not address the issue of multiple differences that existed between the two cultures. The similarities between the Egyptian culture and other cultures in Africa have also been ignored by these Yoruba writers. This is why further research is needed, especially with regard to elucidating the origin of African cultures and why certain differences exist between them.

In conclusion, the association of the origins of the Yoruba people and their culture with Arabia, Etruria, Egypt or Israel, are likely in connection with the cultural or technological civilisations of these regions in ancient times. For example, Johnson was attracted to the Nubians or the Coptic Christians<sup>1056</sup> and the Egyptian civilisation, while Frobenius was attracted to the civilisation of the Etruscans. This made Frobenius to associate the origin of the Yoruba culture to the Etruscans.

Lucas associated the Yoruba culture with the ancient Egyptians while Parrinder believed in the Arabic and ancient Egyptian influences on the Yoruba. Johnson's theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba and their culture might have been influenced by the ideology that West Africa did have its own civilisation, thus the need to associate themselves with foreign civilisations existed.<sup>1057</sup> The similarities of the Yoruba culture, including their arts and religions, with that of other West African cultures, and the geographical distribution of the Yoruba across West Africa, calls for greater research into West Africa as a possible option in the search for the origin of the Yoruba and their culture.

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<sup>1056</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 7.

<sup>1057</sup> S.M. Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior," PhD Dissertation, Dept. of Communications, United State International University, [1971], 163-164; D. Lange, *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French*, 215-216; R.A. Guisepe, (ed.), "The spread of civilization in Africa, in *International World History Project*," from <http://history-world.org/africa1.htm>. [(2001), 1).

# CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSION

Factors like the emergence of the Coptic and Nubian Christians, together with the Phoenician trades in the Sudanic regions of West Africa such as Chad, Niger and Mali, made it possible to speculate that the Egyptians might have influenced certain African cultures including those of the Yoruba. Yet, the non-availability of evidence for this assertion made it possible to suggest that the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba is a myth. A myth in this sense means a possible reality that cannot be proven or disproven. A Euhemeristic reading of the Oduduwa myth suggests that a prominent individual, whose personality cannot be traced, ruled Yorubaland and made Yorubaland prosper. He or she is deified by the Yoruba due to his or her heroic achievements.

Regarding Oduduwa as an individual who actually lived, died and later became deified, is a probability, but one which cannot be proven. Associating Oduduwa as a god or goddess brings out the mythical or the fictitious aspects of the tradition of Yoruba origins. Therefore, the regard for Oduduwa as a divine being is a myth aimed at giving the Yoruba some connection with a supernatural image.<sup>1058</sup> I am not dismissing the possibility that there might have been an Egyptian influence on the Yoruba. However, I believe that the Yoruba did not originate from Egypt because people whose identity is yet unknown, have lived in Nigeria and in Yorubaland for much longer than anticipated, or long before the arrival of Oduduwa to Yorubaland.<sup>1059</sup> The unknown people that lived in Yorubaland before Oduduwa may or may not be connected to the Yoruba. No Egyptian records have yet been found which could indicate that their people migrated to Yorubaland. There is also no clear archaeological or ethnographic evidence which shows that the Yoruba are remnants of the descendants of the Egyptians. However, the study of the myths regarding

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<sup>1058</sup>Johnson said that during his time, many tribal groups or nations created myths that explained their origins (Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 143).

<sup>1059</sup>Radiocarbon dates from archaeological finds in Ile Ife reveal that the area was occupied as early as 500 CE, long before the suggested migration of the Phoenicians or Egyptians (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries), or Oduduwa (10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> centuries) to the Yorubaland (F. Olojede, "The Exodus and identity formation in view of the Yoruba origin and migration narratives," *Scriptura*, 108, [2011], 347). The Nok people lived in Northern Nigeria since 500 BCE (Atwood, R., 2013, "The Nok of Nigeria: West Africa's earliest-known civilization," *The Digging Stick*, 30(1), originally from Roger Atwood, *Archaeology* 64(4), July/August 2011, 13-14). It therefore makes sense to propose that interactions took place, before and after Oduduwa's time, between the people who lived in Yorubaland.

the Yoruba origin from Egypt is relevant in the twenty-first century because some Yoruba people still believe that their ancestors originated from Egypt. More so, at the moment, the Yoruba people do not have any other explanation regarding their origin except those based on the Egyptian, Jewish, Arab and possibly Etruscan theories.

There are indeed similarities between the Egyptian and the Yoruba culture. With regard to burials, Lucas said that the Egyptians had the same beliefs as the Yoruba. He added that beneficial burial rites for the deceased, in both the Yoruba and the Egyptian cultures, affected the relationship between the living and the dead. Lucas pointed out that the Yoruba and the Egyptians believed that good burial practices attracted success in the daily activities of the bereaved together with the deceased. He said that bad burial practices attracted accidents and disasters for the bereaved together with the deceased.<sup>1060</sup>

The arguments presented by Lucas on the similarities of the Egyptian and the Yoruba culture can be contested. The argument is that other Africans, together with the Yoruba, also practice similar cultures as the Egyptians. For example, the dead are buried carefully, and deceased leaders and wealthy people are extravagantly buried. First sons are given special place in succession, including inheritance. With regard to the beliefs and practices in reincarnation, transmigration, mummification and the building of pyramids, the Egyptians differed from the Yoruba. It is important to note that other ethnic groups in Africa also display similar cultural elements with the Egyptians. The Beroms for example bury their dead with extensive rituals like the Egyptians did. This is one of the reasons why Johnson's theory of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba can be seen as a myth.

This research focused on the development of the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba, with a special focus to the period 1846 to 1901. The results confirm that Samuel Johnson played a significant role in the development of the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba. Johnson's parents were trained as missionaries and with the support provided by Mr. and Mrs. Hinderer, Mr. Daniel Olubi and Mr. Bühler,

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<sup>1060</sup>J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 253. (Cf. K. Adamolekun, *Death Studies*, 610; A. El-Shahawy, *The funerary art of ancient Egypt*, 78; O.F. Awolalu, *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*, 56-57; T.G.H. James, *An introduction to ancient Egypt*, 158-159.) Because the Egyptians believed in resurrection, they preserved the bodies of loved ones. As the embalming process was quite lengthy, it afforded bereaved loved ones with enough time to prepare for a proper burial. It also gave the bereaved a sense of comfort, as they believed the dead would live again and be reunited with their loved ones. The Egyptians also believed that by performing certain rituals, the dead would be assured a successful passage through the afterlife and eventual resurrection. These beliefs and practices are shared by many Yoruba, even in modern times, and accounts for the practice of preservation in modern mortuaries.

Johnson himself became a missionary. The Hinderers encouraged and supported Johnson to be enrolled as a student of the Abeokuta Training Institution. Bühler taught Johnson at the Abeokuta Training Institution and Olubi helped in training Johnson to become a pastor. Johnson prioritised the preaching of his Christian faith to the Yoruba people. This background had influenced his views of the Yoruba origin to the point that he associated the Yoruba origins with the Coptic Christians.

Johnson, in his role as a Christian missionary, preached far and wide and converted Muslims and pagans to Christianity. This was necessary because during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims preached in many parts of Yorubaland and converted many Yoruba to Islam. It should be pointed out that Johnson was not an enemy of Muslims and pagans, rather he saw Christianity as the most appropriate faith and as a channel for spreading western civilisation in Yorubaland. It is no surprise that he did all he could to ensure that foreign Christian missionaries had a peaceful and most rewarding stay in Yorubaland. He saw missionaries as agents of peace and development among the Yoruba people. This is why, despite the fact that Johnson loved Yoruba culture and the Yoruba people; he had no conflicts of interest with western missionaries, including the British colonial government that ruled Nigeria.

It is likely that Johnson's background and interest in Christianity had influenced his views on the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. For example, the Yoruba Oduduwa myth contends that Yoruba ancestors originally came from the East or Arabia. Belo had contributed in the documentation of the tradition of Arabian or Muslim origins of the Yoruba. The Arabs were among the first to document that the West African people owed their origins to the Middle East or the Ancient Near East, and Belo was the first in Nigeria to document that the Yoruba in particular had origins in Arabia. It is not known precisely by who, where and when the tradition of Yoruba origins from the East or Arabia emerged. The Yoruba themselves might have originated this tradition and transmitted it orally, yet this cannot be proven. What is very clear is that the tradition of Yoruba origins from the East was popular among the Yoruba as an oral tradition before, during and after Johnson's time. The Yoruba thought that the East meant Arabia, Mecca or the Middle East. Johnson also interviewed many Yoruba elders, who told him that the Yoruba originated from the East. The fact that Johnson described Belo as a lay historian suggests that Johnson himself had also read extensively to inquire about the origin of the Yoruba.



Johnson emphasised that the “East,” according to Yoruba understanding, did not mean the cities in Arabia such as Mecca, Yemen or Meroe. Instead, Johnson believed that the “East” actually meant Egypt.<sup>1061</sup> More so, the East might have been read as a metaphor for the location where the sun rises. West African people like the Yoruba who associate their origin with the East might have been influenced by an oral tradition according to which humans originated from the East, where the sun rises. More so, trans-Saharan trade routes and the existence of empires like the Timbuktu in Mali use to be regarded in antiquity as a region of north-east Africa. Also, travel from north-east Africa to West Africa was possible. The Yoruba Muslims were and are still called *Imale* (meaning the people who practice a religion from Mali).<sup>1062</sup> Johnson might not have been pleased with the idea of associating the East with Islam. This could have been one of the reasons why the geographical location of the East was contested by Johnson. However, his decision to associate the East with Egypt might have been logical also because Egypt is geographically located in north-east Africa.<sup>1063</sup>

Johnson regarded Mohamad Belo as a proponent of the theory of Yoruba origins from Arabia or Mecca. Muslims dominated Arabia before and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Johnson might have thought that Belo’s association of the Yoruba origin with Arabia was solely to promote the growth of Islam in Yorubaland. This speculation can be backed by Johnson’s argument of the Egyptian origin of the Yoruba. Johnson said that the Egyptians, who were the original ancestors of the Yoruba people, came from Nubia or that they were Coptic Christians or Christians from Egypt who held a somewhat distorted belief in Christianity. Johnson also contested that the notion that Oduduwa and his sons, Kukawa and Gogobiri, arrived Yorubaland with an *Idi* (interpreted to be Quran), stating that it was fallacy. He argued that the *Idi* was actually a copy of the (Bible) Scriptures and not the Quran, as was stipulated by the Yoruba oral tradition according to which the Yoruba originated from Mecca. With this background, it can be said that both Christianity and Islam influenced Johnson’s views on the origins of the Yoruba.

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<sup>1061</sup> More so, the “East” could have been understood as metaphorical (referring to location of the rising sun) rather than literal (referring to physical direction or geographical location). West African people, like the Yoruba who associate their origins with the East, might have been influenced by oral traditions according to which humans originated from the place where the sun rises. This could have been one of the reasons why Johnson contested the theory that the “East” referred to a geographical location.

<sup>1062</sup>Y. Sadiq, *Understanding Yoruba life and culture*, 137-138.

<sup>1063</sup> O’Connor, D. & Reid A., “Locating ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern theories, past realities,” in D. O’Connor & Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (UCL: London, 2003), 11.

The Yorubaland had suffered various internal wars and was attacked by Dahomey as well. A great proportion of Johnson's book, *The History of the Yorubas*, records the Yoruba Wars. Johnson was involved in negotiating for peace among various warring Yoruba groups. Johnson also mediated for peace during the Yoruba Wars. He mediated between the Yoruba leaders and the British authorities who ruled Nigeria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Johnson's peace negotiation had contributed immensely in ending the Yoruba Wars in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from negotiations, one of the ways Johnson chose to end the Yoruba Wars was to preach to the Yoruba that they all originated from one source; Oduduwa, and from one region; Egypt. It can therefore be suggested that one of Johnson's motivations behind writing *The History of the Yorubas*, was to unite the Yoruba so they no longer fought against each other.

The archaeological discoveries in Egypt during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have contributed to the popularity of Egypt, especially in Europe. The role Napoleon played in his search for Egyptians artefacts cannot be under-estimated as a major contributor to the popularity of Egypt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bühler and Mr. Hinderer, both of whom were Europeans, might have been influenced by the study of Egyptian knowledge during this time. Bühler taught Johnson about ancient history, including the histories of Greece, Rome and Egypt. Johnson, like others, might have been fascinated by the ideology of Egyptian civilisation. Adamo said that Bluemenbach's classification of the Egyptian civilisation as a non-African civilisation around 1810 was a deliberate attempt to dissociate and alienate the Egyptians from the rest of Africa.<sup>1064</sup>

Folorunso stated that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, African-American missionaries who came to preach in West Africa, and disputed Bluemenbach's dissociation of Egypt as an African territory.<sup>1065</sup> Johnson's association of the Yoruba origin with Egypt suggests that he preferred to associate the Yoruba with other Africans, with special reference to the Egyptians. The debate on whether Egypt was an African country or not, was popular during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Johnson might have been aware of it, yet this cannot be proven. Another reason for Johnson's association of the Yoruba origin with Egypt could be the prevailing popularity of the Egyptian civilisation, which was most eminent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1064</sup> Information about Bluemenbach was originally obtained from Bluemenbach, F., 1865. "Anthropological Treatise," translated by T. Bendyche, London; Anthropological Society (D.T. Adamo, "The African wife of Jeroboam (ano): An African reading of 1 King 14:1-18," *Theologia Viatorum*, 37(2), [2013], 73, 85).

<sup>1065</sup> C.A. Folorunso, "Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective," in D. O'Connor & A. Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (UCL: London, 2003), 84.

Johnson thought that the similarities between the Yoruba culture with that of the Egyptians, supported his argument for the Egyptian origins of the Yoruba. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Leo Frobenius argued that the Yoruba culture, including their civilisation, might have originated from Etruscan sources and not Egypt. Frobenius implied that the Yoruba did not originate from Egypt. Lucas commended Johnson for his published book<sup>1066</sup> and he also argued that the Egyptians might have migrated to Yorubaland during the Predynastic and Dynastic periods. This argument was necessitated because Lucas believed that the Yoruba cultures that are similar to the Egyptians cultures are of Predynastic and Dynastic Egyptian in origin. Parrinder also sided with Lucas when he noted that the Egyptian Predynastic and Dynastic cultures are similar to those of the Yoruba. In other words, both Lucas and Parrinder believed that there was migration between Egypt and Yorubaland during the Egyptian Predynastic and Dynastic periods. Jacob U. Egharevba on the other hand dated the migration of Oduduwa to Yorubaland from about the twelfth century.<sup>1067</sup> While Johnson argued for the Coptic or the Nubian origins of the Yoruba, Lucas and Parrinder, who wrote after Johnson, argued for Egyptian origins of the Yoruba. A deliberate attempt to associate the Yoruba with Christianity might have been the main motive behind Johnson's theory of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba.

Both Lucas and Parrinder did not give any archaeological evidence for their arguments. Parrinder also suggested that the Arabs and Islam might have made greater impacts on the cultures of the Yoruba than Egypt did. Also, the similarities of the Egyptian cultures and other African cultures made it possible to ask whether all Africans originated from Egypt. Lucas might have gone extreme when he said that other cultures in West Africa emanated from Egypt. Lucas said that the Ewe (Ghana and Togo), the Ga (Ghana), the Ibos (Nigeria) and many other West African ethnic groups were influenced by the Egyptians.<sup>1068</sup> The similarities of other African cultures to those of the Egyptians together with the differences that existed between the Egyptian culture and the Yoruba culture, made it possible to regard the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba as a myth.

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<sup>1066</sup> J.O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas*, 6-7.

<sup>1067</sup> J.U. Eggarevba, *A short history of Benin* (Ibadan University Press, 1953), 1.

<sup>1068</sup> J. O. Lucas, *The religion of the Yorubas: Being an account of the religious beliefs and practice of the Yoruba peoples of southern Nigeria, especially in relation to the religion of ancient Egypt*, (C.M.S. Bookshop: Lagos, 1948), 263-264, 388-406.

In conclusion, Johnson might have associated the Yoruba origin with Egypt because of his Christian background, which required that he propagate his Christian faith. It can be insinuated that Johnson also supported the biblical or the Israelite origin of the Yoruba, as he associated the Yoruba culture with certain Old Testament cultures. His emphasis on the connection of the Yoruba origin with Christianity is an indication of his regard for both the Old and New Testament as non-contradictory. The discourse on the background of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria and in Sierra Leone, before and during the time of Johnson, indicates that Johnson prioritise his Christian faith in his documentation of the Yoruba origin. More so, the ideology of the civilisation of the Egyptians, which was popular, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had influenced his views of the Yoruba origins.

I pointed that Napoleon's exploration of Egyptian landmarks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the development of the ideology of the Egyptian civilisation. Other reasons for Johnson's association of the Yoruba origins with Egypt are: his intention to unite the Yoruba during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yoruba Wars so they could live in peace, his intention to dissociate the Yoruba from Islam in favour of Christianity and his intention to associate the Yoruba with westernisation and with Christianity, which expressed his appreciation of the Christian missionaries. Due to the fact that trade routes and evidence for contact between the Phoenicians, who traded with West Africa in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, are yet to be established, the tradition of Egyptian origins of the Yoruba is rendered a myth.

It is a myth for two major reasons. Firstly, the tradition could be read as a myth not because the Semitic Peoples or the Egyptians might not have influenced the Yoruba, but because there is no evidence for the channels through which they influenced the Yoruba. Secondly, Johnson was ambiguous regarding his view of the Yoruba origins. He believed in his Egyptian theory of the Yoruba origins, but also in the oral tradition he heard regarding Oduduwa. On the other hand, he doubted the existence of Oduduwa as an individual person and regarded him or her as a mythical personage.<sup>1069</sup>

At this point, the question as to why West African people associate their origins with the Hamitic theory is vital.<sup>1070</sup> For example, the Hausas think that they originated from Iraq while the Igbos claim that their

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<sup>1069</sup>See S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 6, 143.

<sup>1070</sup> The Hamitic theory is a concept pertaining to civilization according to which all of the achievements, technologies and innovations in Africa came from the Hamittes, a people basically associated with the Europeans and other races that are not from Africa. Sanders said that the theory "states that everything of value ever found in Africa was

ancestors originated from Israel.<sup>1071</sup> The Hamitic hypothesis posits that the races or the progenies of the races from the Ancient Near East are superior or slightly advanced than the Africans or the black race. In addition, the view that civilization, Christianity and Islam did not originate in West Africa have contributed to the development of the tradition according to which West African people originated from foreign regions. The Hamitic theory produces two effects among the people who subscribe to it. Firstly, it has a racist undertone which encourages the superiority of one ethnic group in Africa over the other. Secondly, the theory has contributed to make some Africans not to accept and believe that they and their ancestors were independently responsible for initiating their civilization which is comparable to the Greeks and the Romans.

The views of Samuel Johnson regarding the Yoruba origin indicate that political circumstances and exigencies have the potential to influence mythological constructs. Samuel Johnson might have been influenced by a nineteenth century perception that the Egyptians were a more superior race. For example, Adamo, O'Connor and Reid said that many studies written in the nineteenth century described the Egyptians as the descendants of the Semitic Peoples.<sup>1072</sup> More so, Wayne & Simonis said that the Egyptians who were descended from the Hamito-Semitic race are the "real Egyptians."<sup>1073</sup> Why can't West Africans and the Yoruba in particular say that they originated from Africa or from Nigeria itself? The theory of the local origin of the Yoruba and their culture is a tradition according to which the Yoruba might have originated from within West Africa or specifically from Nigeria. It would be appropriate for researchers to begin to direct their interest on a possible origin of the Yoruba from within West Africa or specifically from

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brought there by the Hammites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian race" (Sanders, E.R., "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *The Journal of African History*, 4, 1969, 521.

<sup>1071</sup> Umoh, S. M., Umoh, "Nigeria's multi-ethno-cultural communications system and its influence upon social and business behavior," (PhD Dissertation, Dept. of Communications, United State International University, 1971), 163-164; Lange, D., *Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives, a collection of published and unpublished studies in English and French* (J.H.Roll. Dettelbach, 2004), 215-216.

<sup>1072</sup>D. O'Connor & A. Reid, "Locating ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern theories, past realities," in D. O'Connor & Reid (eds.). *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (London: UCL, 2003), 1-5; T.D. Adamo, "Teaching the history of ancient Israel from an African perspective: The invasion of Sennacherib of 701 B.C.E. as an example," *Old Testament Essays*, 23(3), (2010), 475.

<sup>1073</sup> S. Wayne & D. Simonis, *Egypt and the Sudan*, 17.

Nigeria itself.<sup>1074</sup> While the origin of the Yoruba is still contested or not known, some may suggest that modern DNA testing could potentially help to determine whether the Yoruba people originated from West Africa or from Egypt or from Arabia or from Etruria or from Israel or from another geographical region not mentioned.

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<sup>1074</sup> The technologies involved in crafting the Nok terracotta and the Ife Bronze have resulted in archaeologists like Atwood to suggest that West Africans were responsible for initiating iron smelting technology (Atwood, 2013, *The Digging Stick*, 13-14). This type of perception can contribute to the study of the local origin of the Yoruba.

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# APPENDIX A

**Table 1:** Structure of the Nigerian States

	State	Capital	Number of Local Government	Geographical Zone
1	Abia	Umahia	17	South- East
2	Adamawa	Yola	20	North –East
3	Akwa-Ibom	Uyo	31	South- South
4	Anambra	Awka	21	South- East
5	Bauchi	Bauchi	20	North- East
6	Bayelsa	Yenagoa	9	South- South
7	Benue	Makurdi	22	North- Central
8	Borno	Maiduguri	27	North – East
9	Cross River	Calabar	18	South – South
10	Delta	Asaba	25	South – South
11	Ebonyi	Abakaliki	12	South – East
12	Edo	Benin City	18	South – South
13	*Ekiti	Ado-Ekiti	16	South- West
14	Enugu	Enugu	17	South – East
15	Gombe	Gombe	11	North- East
16	Imo	Oweri	27	South – East
17	Jigawa	Dutse	27	North – West
18	Kaduna	Kaduna	23	North-West
19	Kano	Kano	44	North-West
20	Katsina	Katsina	34	North- West
21	Kebbi	Birnin Kebbi	22	North- West
22	Kogi	Lokoja	20	North-Central
23	Kwara	Ilorin	16	North- Central

24	Lagos	Ikeja	20	South- West
25	Nassarawa	Lafia	13	North-Central
26	Niger	Minna	25	North- Central
27	Ogun	Abeokuta	20	South- West
28	Ondo	Akure	18	South –West
29	Osun	Osogbo	30	South- West
30	Oyo	Ibadan	32	South - West
31	Plateau	Jos	17	North- Central
32	Rivers	Port-Harcourt	22	South- South
33	Sokoto	Sokoto	22	North-West
34	Taraba	Jalingo	15	North- East
35	Yobe	Damaturu	17	North- East
36	Zamfara	Gusau	14	North- West

**Abuja is the Capital City of Nigeria**

**Table 2: States and Local Governments Areas Dominated by the Yoruba<sup>1075</sup>**

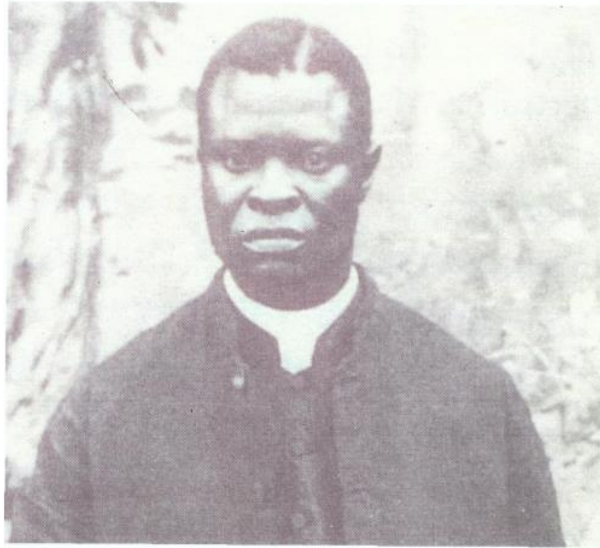
Ekiti	Ado-Ekiti, Aiyekire, Effon, Ekiti South-West, Ekiti West, Emure, Idosi-Osi, Ikero, Ikere, Ikole, Ilemeji, Irepodum/Ifelodun, Ise/Orun, Moba, Oye.
Kogi	Adavi, Ajeokuta, Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Iggalela-Odolu, Ijumu, Kabba/Bunu, Kogi, Lokoja, Mopa-Muro, Ofu, Ogori/Mangongo, Okehi, Okene, Olamabolo, Omala, Yagba East, Yagba West
Kwara	Asa, Baruten, Edu, Ekiti, Ifelodun, Illorin-East, Illorin-South, Illorin-West, Irepodun, Isin, Kaiama, Moro, Offa, Oke-Ero, Oyun, Patigi
Lagos	Agege, Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Alimosho, Amuwo-Odofin, Apapa, Badagry, Epe, Eti-Osa, Ibeju/Lekki, Ifako-Ijaye, Ikeja, Ikorodu, Kosofe, Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Mushin, Ojo, Oshodi-Isolo, Shomolu, Surelere
Ogun	Abeokuta North, Abeokuta South, Ado-Odo/Ota, Egbada South, Egbada North, Ewekoro, Ifo, Ijabu East, Ijabu North, Ijabu North-East, Ijabu Ode, Ikenne, Ikeko-Afon, Ipokia, Obafemi-Owode, Ogun Waterside, Odeda, Odogbolu, Remo North, Shagamu.
Ondo	Akoko North-East, Akoko North-West, Akoko South-East, Akoko South-West, Akure North, Akure South, Ese-Odo, Idanre, Ifedore, Ilaje, Ile-Oluji-Okeigbo, Irele, Odigbo, Okitipupa, Ondo-East, Ondo West, Ose, Owo.
Osun	Aiyedade, Aiyedire, Atakumosa East, Atakumosa West, Bolowaduro, Boripe, Ede North, Ede South, Egbedore, Ejigbo, Ife Central, Ife East, Ife North, Ife South, Ifedayo, Ifelodun, Ila, Ilesha West, Ilesha West, Irepodun, Irewole, Isokan, Iwo, Obokun, Odo-Otin, Ola Oluwa, Olorunda, Oriade, Orolu, Osogbo
Oyo	Afijiro, Akinyele, Atiba, Atigbo, Egbeda, Ibadan Central, Ibadan North, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South-East, Ibadan South-West, Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East, Ibarapa North, Odo, Orepo, Iseyin, Itesiwaju, Iwajowa, Kajora, Lagelu, Ogbomosho North, Ogbomosho South, Ogo Oluwa, Olorunsogo, Oluyole, Ona-Ara, Orelupe, Ori Ile, Oyo East, Oyo West, Saki East, Saki West, Surulere.

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<sup>1075</sup> Obtained from Aliogo, J.E., *Up to date current affairs*, 28.



## APPENDIX B



**Figure 1:** Photograph of Reverend Samuel Johnson<sup>1076</sup>



**Figure 2.** Photograph of Dr. Obadiah Johnson<sup>1077</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> Obtained from K.O, Olabimtan, [2009], "Samuel Johnson of Yoruba Land, 1846-1901: Religio-cultural identity in a changing environment and the making of a mission agent," PhD Dissertation, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, xv.

<sup>1077</sup> Obtained from Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, ii.



**Figure 3.** Ife Brass Sculpture from the British Museum<sup>1078</sup>

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<sup>1078</sup> Obtained from Ferguson, J., *The Yorubas of Nigeria*, (The Open University Press: London, 1970), 52.



**Figure 4:** Principal Archaeological Sites in Egypt<sup>1079</sup>

<sup>1079</sup> Grajetzki, W., *Burial customs in ancient Egypt: Life in death for the rich & poor*, (Biddles Ltd: Norfolk, 2003), vi.



**Figure 5.** Mummy of Ramesses II<sup>1080</sup>

The mummy of Ramesses II was discovered by Gaston Maspero on 5 July 1881.<sup>1081</sup> The findings have contributed to the development of the construct according to which the Egyptians were civilized.



**Figure 6:** Photograph of Leo Frobenius, taken around 1930<sup>1082</sup>

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<sup>1080</sup> Obtained from Partridge, R. B., *Faces of Pharaohs: Royal mummies & coffins from ancient Thebes*, (The Rubison: London, 1994), 155.

<sup>1081</sup> E. Scheffler, *Fascinating discoveries from the biblical world*, 121.

<sup>1082</sup> Godesberg, B.B., 1973, *Leo Frobenius: An anthology*, (Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH: Wiesbaden, 1973),



**Figure 7:** Terracotta Heads excavated by Frobenius in Ile Ife<sup>1083</sup>

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<sup>1083</sup> Godesberg, B.B., 1973, *Leo Frobenius: An anthology*, (Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH: Wiesbaden, 1973), 196-197.

# APPENDIX C

## EXTRACT OF SAMUEL JOHNSON'S *HISTORY OF THE YORUBAS* ON THE EGYPTIAN ORIGIN OF THE YORUBA

### Introduction

This subsection is a verbatim transcription of a section of Johnson's *History of the Yorubas* in which he discusses the origins of the Yoruba. The section presents Johnson's view regarding the Oduduwa myth and the descendants of Oduduwa who ruled the various Yoruba provinces. This is important because the readers of this thesis would have direct access to Johnson's proposal regarding the Coptic Egyptian and the Yoruba connection. Johnson's view of an Egyptian origin of the Yoruba is presented in chapter 1 of *The History of the Yorubas* and this section is the chapter 1 of Johnson book. It is only in this chapter that Johnson discussed the Coptic and the Nubian connection with the Yoruba. The specific book used for this research is the one first published in 1921 by the Church and School Suppliers (CSS) limited in Lagos, Nigeria. It was reprinted in 1937, 1956, 1957, 1960, 1969, 1997 and 2001. The edition used for this research is the one reprinted in 2001. The book does not have a bibliographical section or a list of reference books at the end except some few quotations with references in the footnote. One of the quotations made is from Captain Clapperton in *Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, 1822-1824*. Johnson quoted Clapperton who wrote about Belo.<sup>1084</sup> Below is a verbatim transcription of a section of *The History of the Yorubas*. In this section, Johnson discusses the origin of the Yoruba and the early formation of the various Yoruba kingdoms. The section goes from page 3 to page 14.

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<sup>1084</sup> S. Johnson, *The history of the Yorubas*, 4.

## ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY

*The origin of the Yoruba nation is involved in obscurity. Like the early history of most nations the commonly received accounts are for the most part purely legendary. The people being unlettered, and the language unwritten all that is known is from the traditions carefully handed down.*

*The National Historians are certain families retained by the King at Oyo whose office is hereditary, they also act as the King's bards, drummers, and cymbalists; it is on them we depend as far as possible for any reliable information we now possess; but, as may be expected their accounts often vary in several important particulars. We can do no more than relate the traditions which have been universally accepted.*

*The Yorubas are said to have sprung from Lamurudu<sup>1085</sup> one of the kings of Mecca whose offspring were: - Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorubas, the Kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country.<sup>1086</sup> It is worthy of remark that these two nations, notwithstanding the lapse of time since their separation and in spite of the distance from each other of their respective locations, still have the same distinctive tribal marks on their faces, and Yoruba travellers are free amongst them and vice versa each recognising each other as of one blood.*

*At what period of time Lamurudu reigned is unknown but from the accounts given of the revolution among his hid descendants and their dispersion, it appears to have been a considerable time after Mahomet.*

*We give accounts as they are related: -*

*The Crown Prince Oduduwa relapsed into idolatry during his father's reign, and as he was possessed of great influence, he drew many after him. His purpose was to transform the state religion into paganism, and hence he converted the great mosque of the city into an idol temple, and as Asara, his priest, who was himself an image maker, studded with idols.*

*Asara had a son called Braima who was brought up a Mohamedan. During his minority he was seller of his father's idols, an occupation which he thoroughly abhorred, but which he was obliged to engage in. But in*

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<sup>1085</sup> The Yoruba name for the descendants of Nimrod.

<sup>1086</sup> Gogobiri and Kukawa are two cities located in Northern Nigeria and polulated by the Hausas.

*offering for sale his father's handiwork, he usually invited buyers by calling out: "Who would purchase falsehood?" A premonition this of what the boy will afterwards become.*

*By the influence of the Crown Prince a royal mandate was issued ordering all the men to go out hunting for three days before the annual celebration of the festivals held in honour of these gods.*

*When Braima was old enough he seized the opportunity of one of such absences from the town of those who might have opposed to destroy the gods whose presence had caused the sacred mosque to become desecrated. The axe with which the idols were hewed in pieces was left hanging on the neck of the chief idol, a huge thing in human shape. Enquiry being made, it was soon discovered who the iconoclast was, and when accosted, he gave replies which were not unlike those which Joash gave to Abiezrites who had accused his son Gideon of having performed a similar act (see Judges vi, 28-33). Said Braima, "Ask that huge idol who did it." The men replied, "Can he speak?" "Then," said Braima "Why do you worship things which cannot speak?" He was immediately ordered to be burnt alive for this act of gross impiety. A thousand loads of wood were collected for a stake, and several pots of oil were brought for the purpose of firing the pile. This was signal for a civil war. Each of the two parties had powerful followers, but the Mohammedan party which was hitherto suppressed had the upper hand, and vanquished their opponents. Lamurudu the King was slain, and all his children with those who sympathized with them were expelled from the town. The Princes who became kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa went westwards and Oduduwa eastwards. The latter travelled 90 days from Mecca, and after wandering about finally settled down at Ile Ife where he met with Agbo-niregun (or Setilu) the founder of the Ifa worship.*

*Oduduwa and his children had escaped with two idols to Ile Ife. Sahibu being sent with an army to destroy or reduce them to submission was defeated, and amongst the booty secured by the victors was a copy of the Koran. This was afterwards preserved in a temple and was not only venerated by succeeding generations as a sacred relic, but is even worshipped to this day under the name of Iidi, signifying Something tied up.*

*Such is the commonly received account among this intelligent although unlettered people. But traces of error are very apparent on the face of this tradition. The Yorubas are certainly not of the Arabian family, and could not have come from Mecca – that is to say the Mecca universally known in history, and no such accounts as the above are to be found in the records of Arabian writers of any kings of Mecca; an event of*



*such importance could hardly have passed unnoticed by their historians. But then it may be taken for granted that all such accounts and traditions have in some basis in actual facts, nor is the subject under review exempted from the general rule, and this will become apparent on a closer study of the accounts.*

*That the Yorubas came originally from the East there cannot be the slightest doubt, as their habits, manners and customs, etc., all go to prove. With them the East is Mecca and Mecca is the East. Having strong affinities with the East, and Mecca in the East looming so largely in their imagination, everything that comes from the East, with them, comes from Mecca, and hence it is natural to represent themselves as having hailed originally from that city.*

*The only written record we have on this subject is that of the Sultan Belo of Sokoto,<sup>1087</sup> the founder of that city, the most learned if not the most powerful of the Fulani<sup>1088</sup> sovereigns that ever bore rule in the Soudan.*

*Capt. Clapperton (Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa, 1822-1824) made the acquaintance of this monarch. From a large geographical and historical; work by him, Capt. Clapperton made a copious extract, from which the following is taken: - "Yarba<sup>1089</sup> is an extensive province containing rivers, forests, sands and mountains, as also a great many wonderful and extraordinary things. In it, the talking green bird called babaga (parrot) is found."*

*"By the side of this province there is an anchorage or harbor for the ships of the Christians, who used to go there and purchase slaves. These slaves were exported from our country and sold to the people of Yarba, who resold them to the Christians."*

*"The inhabitants of this province (Yarba) it is supposed originated from the remnant of the children of Canaan, who were of the tribe of Nimrod. The cause of their establishment in the West Africa was, as it is stated, in consequence of their being driven by Yar-rooba, son of Kahtan, out of Arabia to the Western*

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<sup>1087</sup> Sokoto is one of the states in Nigeria occupied by the Fulani people.

<sup>1088</sup> The main occupation of the Fulani people is cattle rearing. They are mostly located in Northern Nigeria. Mohammed Belo was Fulani.

<sup>1089</sup> Is the Hausa word for Yarriba or Yoruba.

*Coast between Egypt<sup>1090</sup> and Abyssinia. From that spot they advanced into the interior of Africa, till they reach Yarba where they fixed their residence. On their way they left in every place they stopped at, a tribe of their own people. This it is supposed that all the tribes of the Soudan who inhabit the mountains are originated from them as also the inhabitants of Ya-ory. Upon the whole, the people of Yarba are nearly of the same description as those of Noofee (Nupe)."<sup>1091</sup>*

*In the name Lamurudu (or Namurudu) we can easily recognize a dialectic modification of the name Nimrod. Who this Nimrod was, whether Nimrod surnamed "the strong" the son of Hasoul, or Nimrod the "mighty hunter" of the Bible, or whether both descriptions belong to one and the same person, we cannot tell, but this extract not only confirms the tradition of their origin but also casts a side light on the legend. Arabia is probably the "Mecca" of our tradition. It is known that the descendants of Nimrod (Phoenicians) were led in war to Arabia, that they settled here, and from thence they were driven by a religious persecution to Africa. We have here also the origin of the term Yoruba, from Yarba, their first permanent settlement in Africa. Yarba is the same as the Hausa term Yarriba for Yoruba.*

*It is very curious that in the history of Mohamet we read of a similar flight of his first converts from Mecca to the East Coast of Africa (the first Hegira), due also to a religious persecution; this fact will serve to show that there is nothing improbable in the accounts as received by tradition. Again, that they emigrated from Upper Egypt to Ile Ife may also be proved by those sculptures commonly known as "Ife Marbles," several of which may be seen at Ile Ife to this day, said to be the handiwork of the early ancestors of the race. They are altogether Egyptian in form. The most notable of them is what is known as the "Opa Oranyan,"<sup>1092</sup> (Oranyan's staff) an obelisk standing on the site of Oranyan's supposed grave, having characters cut in it which suggest a Phoenician origin. Three or four of these sculptures may now be seen in the Egyptian Court of the British Museum, showing at a glance that they are among kindred works of art.*

*From these statements and traditions, whether authentic or mythologic, the only safe deductions we can make as to the most probable origin of the Yorubas are: -*

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<sup>1090</sup> This is the first mention of Egypt in Johnson's book.

<sup>1091</sup> Vide *Narratives of Travels and Discoveries*, by Major Denham and Capt. Clapperton, 1826. Appendix XII., Sec IV. *A Tropical Dependency*, by Flora L. Shaw (Lady Lugard), 1905, pp. 227-228 (This is a footnote in Johnson's text).

<sup>1092</sup> The Yorubas believe that Oranyan who became a king in Ile Ife is the heir of Oduduwa.

1. *That they sprang from Upper, or Nubia.*
2. *That they were subjects of the Egyptian conqueror Nimrod, who was of Phoenician origin, and that they followed him in his wars of conquest as far as Arabia, where they settled for a time. How subjects term themselves “children” or offspring of their sovereigns is too well-known in this country, as we shall see in the course of this history.*
3. *That from Arabia they were driven, on account of their practicing there their own form of worship, which was either practicing paganism or more likely a corrupt form of Eastern Christianity (which allowed of image worship – so distasteful of Moslems).*

*Again, the name of the priest “Asara” is also a peculiar one; it is so much like “Anasara” a term which Moslems generally applied to Christians (which signifies ‘followers of the Nazarene’) as to make it probable that the revolution spoken of was in connection rather with Mohammedanism, and the corrupt form of Christianity of those days.*

*Lastly, the sacred relic called IDI from its being bound up and preserved, and which is supposed to have been a copy of the Koran, is probably another error. Copies of the Koran abound in this country, and they are not venerated thus, and why should this have become an object of worship? The sacred book of the party opposed to them! One can hardly resist coming to the conclusion that the book was not the Koran at all, but a copy of the Holy Scriptures in rolls, the form in which ancient manuscripts were preserved. The Koran being the only sacred book known to the later generations which have lost all contact with Christianity for centuries after the great emigration into the heart of Africa, it is natural that their historians should at once jump to the conclusion that the thing bound up was the Koran. It might probably then be shown that the ancestors of the Yorubas, hailing from Upper Egypt, were either Coptic Christians, or at any rate that they had some knowledge of Christianity. If so, it might offer a solution of the problem of how it came about that traditional stories of the creation, the deluge, of Elijah, and other scriptural characters are current amongst them, and indirect stories of our Lord, termed “son of Moremi.”<sup>1093</sup>*

*But let us continue the story as given by tradition. Oduduwa and his sons swore a mortal hatred of the Moslems of their country, and were determined to avenge themselves of them; but the former died at Ile*

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<sup>1093</sup> Moremi is the name given to a Yoruba princess who sacrificed her only son to deliver the Yorubas from foreign attacks.

*lfe before he was powerful enough to march against them. His eldest son Okanbi, commonly called Idekoseeroake, also died there, leaving behind him seven princes and princesses who afterwards became renowned. From them sprang the various tribes of the Yoruba nation. His first-born was a prince who was married to a priest, and became the mother of the famous Olowu, the ancestor of the Owus. The second child was also a princess who became the mother of the Alaketu, the progenitor of the Ketu people. The third, a prince, became the king of the Benin people. The fourth, the Oranyan, became king of Ila; the fifth, the Onisabe, or king of the Sabes; the sixth, Olupopo, or king of the Popos; the seventh and last born, Oranyan, who was the progenitor of the Yorubas proper, or as they are better distinguished OYOS.*

*All these princes became kings who wore crowns as distinguished from those who were vassals who did not dare to wear crowns, but coronets called Akoro, a high-crowned head-gear, embroidered with silver. But it may be remarked that the Olowu's father was a commoner, and not a prince of the blood, and yet he became one of the crowned heads. The following anecdote will explain how this came about.*

*The Yoruba princesses had (and still have) the liberty of choosing husbands according to their fancy from any rank in life; the King's eldest daughter chose to marry her father's priest, for whom she had the Olowu.*

*This young prince was one day playing on his grandfather's knees, and he pulled at the crown on his head; the indulgent parent thereupon placed it on the child's head, but like some spoiled children, he refused to give it up when required, and so it was left with him, the grandfather putting on another. The child had the crown on his head until he fell asleep in his mother's arms, when she took it off and returned it to her father, but the latter told her to keep it for her son, as he seemed so anxious to have it. Hence the right of the Olowu to wear the crown like his uncles. The same right was subsequently accorded to the Alaketu, i.e., the progenitor of the Ketu people.*

*It was stated above that Oranyan was the youngest of Oduduwa's grandchildren, but eventually he became the richest and most renowned of them all. How this came about is thus told by tradition: -On the death of the King, their grandfather, his property was unequally divided among his children as follows: -*

*The King of Benin inherited his money (consisting of cowry shells), the Grangun of Ila his wives, the King of Sabe his cattle, the Olupopo the beads of the Olowu the garments, and the Alaketu the crowns, and nothing was left for Oranyan but the land. Some assert that he was absent on a warlike expedition when*

*the partition was made, and so he was shut out of all movable properties. Oranyan was, however, satisfied with his portion, which he proceeded forthwith to turn to good account with the utmost skill. He held his brothers as tenants living on the land which was his; for rents he received money, women, cattle, beads, garments, and crowns, which were his brothers' portions, as all these were more or less dependent on the soil, and were deriving sustenance from it. And he was the one selected to succeed the father as king in the direct line of succession.<sup>1094</sup> To his brothers were assigned the various provinces over which they ruled more or less independently, Oranyan himself being placed on the throne as the ALAFIN or Lord of the Royal Palace at Ile Ife.*

*According to another account, Oranyan had only a bit of rag left him, containing earth, 21 pieces of iron, and a cock. The whole surface of the earth was then covered with water. Oranyan laid his portion on the surface of the water, and placed on it the cock, which scattered the earth with its feet; the wide expanse of water became filled up, and the dry land appeared everywhere. His brothers preferred to live on dry land rather than on the surface of the water were permitted to do so on their paying an annual tribute for sharing with their younger brother his own portion.*

*It would be noticed that both traditions attribute the land to Oranyan; hence the common saying "Alafin I' oni ile" (the Alafin is the lord of the land): the pieces of iron representing underground treasures, and the cock such as subsist on the land.*

*The former account seems more probable, the latter being little else but a travesty of the story of the creation or the flood. But it is fair to mention that the more generally received opinion is, Oranyan became more prosperous than his brothers owing to the fact of his living virtuously, they being given to a life of unrestrained licentiousness; and being also by far the bravest of them all, he was preferred above them and was seated on the ancestral throne at Ile Ife which was then the capital of the Yoruba country.*

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<sup>1094</sup> The reason assigned for this was that he was "born in the purple," that is to say born after the father had become King. This was at one time the prevailing custom for the Aremo Oye," i.e., the first born from the throne, to succeed the father (This is a footnote from Johnson's text).

*The Alake and the Owa of Ilesa said to be nearly related to ALAFIN; the former was said to be of the same mother with one of the earliest Alafins. This woman was called Ejo who afterwards took up her abode with her youngest son until her death: hence the common saying "Ejo ku Ake" Ejo<sup>1095</sup> died at Ake.*

*The Owa of the Ijesas claimed to be one of the younger brothers, but his pedigree cannot now be traced; the term "brother" being a very elastic one in Yoruba and many be applied to any relative far or near, and even to a trusty servant to one adopted into the family.<sup>1096</sup> In olden times when there was universal peace throughout the country, before the commencement of the destructive intertribal wars which broke up the unity of the kingdom and created the tribal independence, this relationship was acknowledged by the Owa paying a yearly tributes of a few heads of cowries, mats and some products of his forests to the ALAFIN, while the latter sent him presents of tobos and vests, and other superior articles well worthy of him as an elder brother.*

*The ALAFIN, the Alake, and the Owa were children or grandchildren of Oranyan seems probable from the fact that to this day none of them is considered properly installed until the sword of state brought from Ile Ife where Oranyan was buried is placed in his hands.*

*Oranyan was a nickname of the prince his proper name being Odede. He was a man of great physical powers. He first obtained renown as a mighty hunter; and in process of time he also became, like Nimrod, a mighty conqueror.*

*The expedition again Mecca- when Oranyan was sufficiently strong, he set off for an expedition against "Mecca" to which he summoned his brothers, to avenge the death of their great-grand father, and the expulsion of his party from that city. He left Adimu one of his father's trusty servants in charge of the royal treasures and the charms, with a strict injunction to observe the customary worship of the national gods IDI and ORISA OSI.*

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<sup>1095</sup> Ejo means a palaver. The phrase then means a case decided at Ake is final (This is a footnote from Johnson's text).

<sup>1096</sup> A fuller account will be found under "The origin of the Ijesas" (This is a footnote from Johnson's text).

*This is an office of the greatest importance pertaining to the King himself but how slaves or high servants are often entrusted with the duties of the master himself is well-known in his country as we shall see in the course of this history.*

*It is said that the route by which they came from “Mecca” and which occupied 90 days, was by this time rendered impassable owing to an army of black ants blocking up the path, and hence Oranyan was obliged take another route which led through the Nupe or Tapa Country. All his brothers but the eldest joined him, but at Igangan they quarreled over a pot of beer and dispersed refusing to follow his lead. The eldest brother calculating the distance through the Tapa country lost courage and went eastward promising to make his attack from the quarter should his brother Oranyan be successful in the West.<sup>1097</sup> Oranyan pushed on until he found himself on the banks of the River Niger.*

*The Tapas are said to have opposed his crossing the river, and as he could not force his way through, he was obliged to remain for a while near the banks, and afterwards resolved to retrace his steps. To return, however, to Ile Ife was too humiliating to be thought of, and hence he consulted the King of Ibariba near whose territory he was then encamping as to where he should make his residence. Tradition has it, that the King of Ibariba made a charm and fixed it on a boa constrictor and advised Oranyan to follow the track of the boa and wherever it remained for 7 days and then disappeared, there he was to build a town. Oranyan and his army followed his directions and went after the boa up to the foot of a hill called IJAKA where the reptile remained 7 days, and then disappeared. According to instructions Oranyan halted there, and built a town called OYO AJAKA. This was the ancient city of OYO marked in ancient maps as Eyeo or Katunga (the latter being the Hausa term for Oyo) capital of Yarriba (see Webster’s pronouncing Gazetteer). This was the Eyeo visited by the English explorers Clapperton and Landers.*

*Oranyan remained and prospered in the new home, his descendants spread East, West, and South-west; they had a free communication with Ile Ife, and the King often sent to Adimu<sup>1098</sup> for whatever was required by him out of the royal treasures for the new city.*

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<sup>1097</sup> The geography of our historians may be excused. – ED (This is a footnote from Johnson’s text).

<sup>1098</sup> One of Oranyan’s workers who was in charge of preserving the king’s treasures. He later became of the renowned Yoruba kings.

*In the process of time Adimu made himself great because he was not only the worshipper of the national deities, but also the custodian and dispenser of the King's treasures, and he was commonly designated "Adimu Ola" i.e. Adimu of the treasures, or Adimu La i.e. Adimu is become wealthy.*

*But this Adimu who became of so much consequence from his performing royal functions was originally the son of a woman condemned to death, but being found at the time of execution to be in the way of becoming a mother she was temporarily reprieved, until the child was born. This child at its birth was dedicated to the perpetual service of the gods, especially the god Obatala, to which his mother was to have been sacrificed. He was said to be honest, faithful and devoted to the King as to his own father, and therefore he was loved and trusted.*

*When Adimu was announced to the Kings and Princes all around as the person appointed by the King to take charge of the treasures, and to worship the national deities during his absence, it was generally asked "And who is this Adimu? The answer comes "Omo Oluwo ni" the son of a sacrificial victim: this is contracted to Owoni (Oluwo being the term for a sacrificial victim). So in subsequent years when the seat of government was removed permanently to OYO but the national Deities, Adimu became supreme at Ile Ife and his successors to this day have been termed the Olorisas i.e. high priests of fetish worshippers to the King, and people of the whole Yoruba nation. The name Adimu has since been adopted as the agnomen, and the term Owoni as the title of the "Kings" or more properly the high priests of Ife to this day, the duties of the office being not local or tribal, but national.*

*According to another account, after the death of Okanbi, Oranyan having succeeded and assumed the command emigrated to Oko where he reigned and where he died, and the seat of government was removed thence in the reign of Sango to Oyokoro, i.e., the aforesaid ancient City of OYO.*

*Oranyan may have actually adied at Oko, but his grave with an obelisk over it is certainly shown at Ile Ife to this day. It is a custom among the Yorubas – a custom observed to this day – to pair the nails and shave the head of any one who dies at a considerable distance from the place where they would have him buried. These relics are taken to the place of internment, and there decently buried, the funeral obsequies being scrupulously observed as if the corpse itself were buried there. Hence although (as we have on probable grounds assumed) Oranyan may have died at Oko, and art of embalming lost or unknown, his relics could*



*thus have been taken to Ile Ife where to this day he is supposed to have been buried. A more romantic account of his death, however, will be given in Part II of this history.*

*As the Yorubas worship the dead, and have the belief that prayers offered at the grave of the deceased ancestors are potent to the procure temporal blessings, all succeeding Yoruba Kings on their accession and before coronation are expected to send to perform acts of worship at the grave of Oduduwa and to receive the benediction of the priest. The sword of justice known as IDA ORANYAN (Oranyan sword) is to be brought from Ile Ife and ceremoniously placed in their hands; without this being done, the King has no authority whatever to order an execution. Oranyan's descendants in process of time were divided into four distinct families, known by their distinctive dialects, and forming the four princes of Yoruba proper viz. the Ekun Otun, Ekun Osi or right and left, i.e., Eastern and western provinces are the towns lying to the East and West of the city of OYO.*

- 1. The Ekun Otun or western province included all the towns along the right bank of the River Ogun down to Ibere Kodo, Igana being the chief town. The other important towns are: - Saki, Oke' ho, Iseyin, Iwawun, Eruwa, Iberekodo, etc. In this province two distinct dialects are spoken; the people inhabiting the outermost borders are known as Ibarapas and are distinguished by a nasal twang in their speech:*
- 2. The Ekun Osi or Metropolitan province comprised all the towns east of OYO, including Kihisi and Igboho in the north, Ikoyi being the chief town. Other important towns are, Ilorin, irawo, Iwere, Ogbomoso etc. including the Igbonas in the utmost limit eastwards, and the Igbo-nas as far as Oro. The Igbonas are distinguished by a peculiar dialect of their own. The Ekun Osi Oyos are regarded as speaking the purest Yoruba. The ancient city of OYO also lies in this province.*
- 3. The Ibolu province lies to the south-east of the Ekun Osi towns as far down as Ede, Iresa being the chief town. The other important towns are Ofa (?) Oyan, Okuku, Ikirun, Osogbo, Ido, Ilobu, Ejigbo, Ede.*
- 4. The Epos are the towns lying to the South and South-west of OYO the chief of which is Idode. Other important towns in this division are: Masifa, Ife odan, Ara, Iwo, Ilora, Akinmoirin Fiditi, Awe, Ago Oja. They are called Epos (i.e. weeds) because they were then in the remotest part of the kingdom, rude and uncouth in manners, very deceitful, and far from being as loyal as the other tribes. The Owus were usually reckoned*

*amongst them, but they are rather a distinct tribe of Yoruba although now domiciled amongst the Egbas.*

*Great changes have been effected in these divisions by means of the revolutionary wars that altered the face of the country about the early part of the XIXth century.*

*In the Ekun Otun district Igana has lost its importance and its place taken by Iseyin.*

*In the Ekun OSI, Ikoyi the chief town has been destroyed by Ilorin, and Ilorin itself brought under foreign allegiance by the Fulanis. The city of OYO now lies ruins, its name and position being transferred to Ago Oja in the Epo district. In the Ibolu district Iresa has ceased to exist being absorbed by Ilorin and its place taken by Ofa, which in its turn was partially destroyed by the Ilorins in 1887 with several other towns in this district. Modakeke a large and growing town, peopled by Oyos of the Ekun Osi, has sprung up in the Ife district just beyond the borders of the Ibolos.*

*Owu has been destroyed never more to be rebuilt.*

*The Epo district now includes Ibadan, Ijaye and other towns formerly belonging to the Gbaguras. Idode has ceased to be the chief town, that position now properly belongs to Iwo, being a royal city. But Ibadan which was originally an Egba village then the military station of the confederate army which destroyed the city of Owu and the Egba villages, and afterwards a settled Oyo town, has by means of its military force assumed the lead not only over the Epo district, but also over a large sarea of the country as well. It has a mixed population including every tribe of the Yorubas.*

*Ijaye formerly an Egba town became peopled by Oyos chiefly from the Ekun Osi (Ikoyi) districts.*

*All these including hundreds of important towns within the area are peopled by Yorubas proper or Oyos as they are generally called, and constitute the more important portion of Yoruba proper.*

*The Egbas, who were for the most part off-shoots of these, and formerly living in hamlets and villages independently of one another have through the exigencies of these wars collected themselves from 153 hamlets or "township" to form one town, Abeokuta. A further account of this will be given in its place. All these are reckoned as descendants of Oranyan.*

*By the advent also the white men from the coast, the centre of light and civilization has removed to the south, so that the Epos may soon cease to be the "weeds" of the country, as they may receive the inspiration of civilization from the south instead of from the north as hitherto.*