

THE USES OF YORUBA PROVERBS IN DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY THAT
ADDRESSES ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN WESTERN NIGERIA.

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The Uses Of Yoruba Proverbs In Developing A Theology That Addresses
Environmental Crisis In Western Nigeria.

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Dedicated to my late brother
Olusola Olabode Alu
(1972-2021)

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Abstract

Research has shown that some environmental damages are due to neglect of cultural ethics and values embedded in proverbs and Omoluabi worldview. This paper presents proverbs as an existential part of Yoruba (African) culture, emphasizing the relationship between beliefs and the natural world. These short sayings contain philosophical and theological expressions of daily wisdom, which express religious views, moral values and ethical guides of the people. However, the ecological challenges in western Nigeria are a global experience. The crisis calls for a proactive and pragmatic approach. How, then, can a sociolinguistic analysis of a specific set of Yoruba Proverbs develop theologies responding to the environmental crisis in the context of Western Nigeria? This work employs an interdisciplinary approach, sociolinguistics, of proverbs, to address environmental problems. Some selected Yoruba proverbs are arranged according to their ecological applications: warning, the right to life, community living, responsibility and responsiveness, and public health. This work asserts that cultural symbols like Yoruba proverbs can help reconstruct a viable Seventh-Day Adventist theology in addressing the environmental crisis in western Nigeria. I submit that If we take seriously the Omoluabi worldview, then, the SDA in Western Nigeria stand to benefit by incorporating this traditional worldview into managing the environment. However, if they reject this crucial aspect of the oral culture, it will be a truncated theology that does not address the social issues its members are facing.

Keywords: Yoruba proverbs, Environmental crisis, Omoluabi worldview, Seventh-Day Adventists, Western Nigeria.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Òwe l’ẹ sin ọrọ; ti oro ba sonu, owe l’a fi nwa.
(Proverb is the horse of thought; when thought is lost, it is to proverb
one turns for its recovery)”¹

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Recent uses of proverbs among scholars of different ethnic groups in Africa have demonstrated proverbs’ sociological, political, economic, religious, ethical and cultural relevance. Such scholarly appropriations have corroborated the thesis that proverbs evoke moral and spiritual values in people’s cultures. Proverbs are the philosophical and theological expression of collective intellectualism and wisdom in daily life. Further, they are the wise but short sayings of the sages, tested and trusted as repertoires that contain valid truth and wisdom for the community. Yoruba proverbs, like other African proverbs, are used to develop and affirm religious notions, an expressed way of understanding and acknowledging the existence of God and His relationship with the people. This relationship permeates the social, economic, religious, political and natural spheres. Yoruba proverbs cannot be isolated from the worldview described as Omoluabi for the Yoruba. Proverbs are an aspect of the Yoruba’s whole embroidery or culture, seen in the acquired and lived values in Omoluabi. Omoluabi is a way of life. It deals with how one lives in dialogue with the community and consonant with the natural environment. The relationship between the proverbs and the environment, as seen in Omoluabi’s worldview, forms the focus of this research, in that when we preserve the environment, we honour the Supreme

¹ T. Falola & A. Oyeade (Eds.), *Yoruba Fiction, Orature and Culture: Oyekan Owomoyela and African Literature & the Yoruba Experience*, Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2011, p. v

Being - the Creator, the ancestors and promote a sustainable ecosystem, then, we can be called “Omoluabi.” A responsible and ethical person is an Omoluabi. He/She as a member of a community is obliged to keep and uphold the social and religious values and norms and treat non-humans with honour. Proverbs serve as a medium to communicate the interrelatedness, responsibility, and harmonious relationship between humans (community) and non-humans (environment). They are also used to instil morals and build the character of an Omoluabi. Omoluabi, the end-product of cultural education in Yoruba – the essence of ethical and religious training – equipped with the words of the Elders, uses proverbs as theological and philosophical day-to-day living. Omoluabi culture in conjunction with religious beliefs² can aid effective management of the environment.

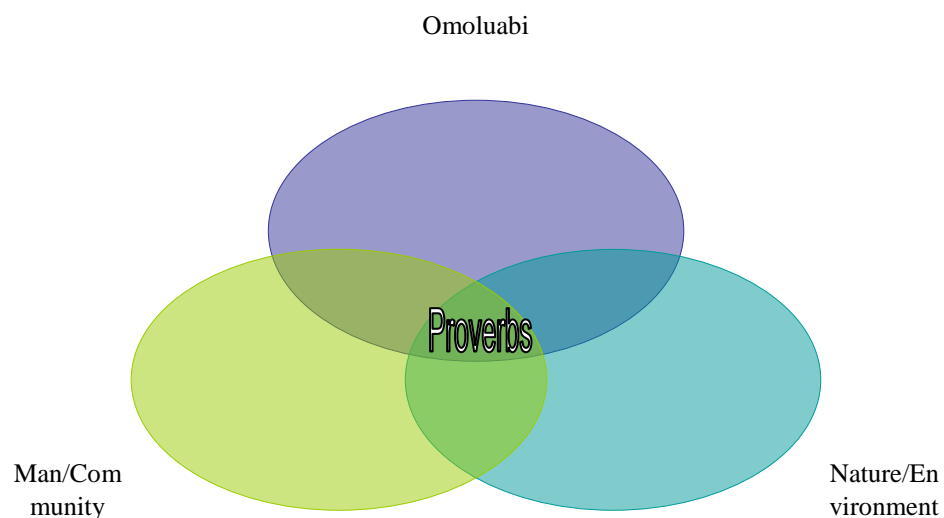


Figure 1: Proverbs as the intercept of Man, Omoluabi worldview and Nature

² African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam.

In his book *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe said, “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.”³ As a playwright, novelist and poet, Achebe’s usage suggests the communicative skills of proverbs in cultural settings. However, since the relationship between culture and language is indivisible, the role of proverbs as metaphors and the carrier of culture expressed in language should be emphasized in any discourse. Some scholars argue that proverbs are essential to understanding African Theology⁴ because they contain values able to make Christianity relevant to the African people.⁵ Mbiti posits that “Proverbs are common ways of expressing religious ideas and feelings”⁶ and remain the “oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom.”⁷ To these assertions, proverbs serve as an intellectual medium for communicating both religious and philosophical ideas. Since Africans are presumed to be religious⁸ and value communal living, proverbs are the centre of daily living. If this is true, then proverbs have a place as viable hermeneutical lenses to understand issues in African Theology.

Though the “African Theology” concept originated some decades ago, Elias Bongmba says, “The history of theology in Africa is as old as the Christian

³ C. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, New York: Anchor Books, 1994, p. 4

⁴ W. J. Moon, *African Proverbs Reveal Christianity in Culture*, American Society of Missiology, Monograph Series 5, Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2009; W. v. Heerden, “‘The Proverb Is The Drum Of God’: On The Use Of African Proverbs In The Interaction Between African Culture And The Christian Faith,” *Scriptura* 81 (2002), pp. 462-475;

⁵ E. B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1962; Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 11; Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1975; "Introduction," In: *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. Kwesi. A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth, London: Lutterworth Press, 1969, p. 16; Dr Lugira argues that Professor Bolaji Idowu was the pioneer of Contextualization in Africa, when he called African theologians to make Christian Theology relevant to the African people, A. M Lugira, "African Christian Theology," *African Theological Journal* 8:1, 1971, p. 56.

⁶ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed, Gaborone: Heinemann, 1989, p. 66

⁷ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed, pp. 66-67

⁸ J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, London: Heinemann, 1975, p. 27

tradition.”⁹ Samson Fatokun and Jacquelyn Winston trace the origin of Christianity to the first century regarding the Pentecost account in Acts 2 and 8, which was against the widespread public conception that Christianity came to Africa with the coming of colonialism. A close study of the origin of some church fathers such as Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Athanasius will refute this idea.¹⁰ These church fathers have contributed to formulating some of the core beliefs in Christian doctrine, such as the problem of evil, the trinity, the philosophy-faith connection, and other key questions.¹¹ However, the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity might have suggested the reason why Christianity now has her stronghold in the Western world and society.

Despite the presence of Christianity in Africa, as argued, the modern spread of the faith came through the activities of Western missionaries and colonialism. The mission and colonial practices seem to rub Africans off their cultural values and dignity, as seen in religious worship and rituals.¹² Hence, a gap exists between ‘imposed religion’ and Africans’ lives. In the late 19th century or early 20th century, African Initiatives in Christianity (AIC) built upon the tradition that Africa has contributed to developing a theology that reacted to colonialism and Western missionary theology, through theologies that address African needs, such as desertification, gender, HIV/AIDS, food shortage, environmental crisis. The emergence of Africans was intended to construct a form of Christianity that was

⁹ E. K. Bongmba, “Theology Today in Africa,” In: Elias Kifon Bongmba (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2020, p. 3

¹⁰ S. A. Fatokun, “Christianity in Africa: A Historical Appraisal,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* Jrg 26 (2) 2005, 357–368; J. Winston, “Listening to the African Witness,” *Christian History*, Issue 105, 2013, p. 4; cf. J Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa*, Achimota: Christian Press, 1981, pp. 5-7

¹¹ Winston, *Listening to the African Witness*, 4

¹² Fidelis Nkomazana and Senzokuhle Doreen Setume, “Missionary Colonial Mentality and the Expansion of Christianity in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1800 to 1900,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 29,2 (2016), p. 30

adaptable to Africans by using familiar concepts and ideas. We need to use African sources to formulate a proper theology for Africans. Bolaji Idowu says,

“We seek, in effect, to discover in what way the Christian faith could best be presented, interpreted, and inculcated in Africa so that Africans will hear God in Jesus Christ addressing Himself immediately to them in their own native situation and particular circumstances.”¹³

The goal of Idowu in theologizing was to make Christianity relevant and home to African people. This bid for contextualization is similar to the ‘translation’ and the ‘mother-tongue’ concept developed by Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako, respectively.¹⁴ However, the mother-tongue idea goes beyond the language of communication. It is an embedded indigenous knowledge and wisdom, full of insight, science, philosophy and theology. This position relates more to the view of Mbiti who regards proverbs as the “oldest forms of African religious and philosophical ideas.” He therefore argues that Africans use proverbs to express their knowledge of and experience with God.¹⁵ Some of these expressions are indicative of their view of nature or the environment.

Environmental issues in western Nigeria are becoming alarming. Obasola argues that “human carelessness and greed”,¹⁶ among other things, led to the environmental crisis. In the Yoruba-speaking region of western Nigeria, soil excavation, deforestation, flooding, illegal mining, food shortage, poor sanitation, pollution and city growth have resulted in significant ecological damage in the region. Even though

¹³ E. Bolaji Idowu, “Introduction,” in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. Kwesi. A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 16

¹⁴ L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989, pp. 2-3; K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995, pp. 109-125

¹⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 29

¹⁶ K. E. Obasola, *African Religion and Environmental Dynamics: Implications for Human and Sustainable Development*, 2013, p. 199.

Yoruba, as an indigenous culture, “hold the natural world to be sacred,”¹⁷ ignorance and lack of sensitivity to the Omoluabi worldview and oral wisdom found in Yoruba proverbs have continuously plunged the people into an environmental crisis.

Three religions – African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam – co-existed in all Yoruba communities. These religions possess knowledge of the environment as dictated in their religious beliefs and books. Yoruba has a deep history of interaction with the natural world. However, due to modernization and Westernization regard for nature (non-humans) has decreased and sacred objects are treated as common. Despite religious differences, a typical Yoruba strive to become an Omoluabi, someone with sound moral. Hence, cultural and religious perspectives have a greater influence on how people treat the environment. In his famous article *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*, Lynn White argues that “since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious.”¹⁸ His position on the world ecological crisis mirrored the local experience of Nigeria as a nation. Therefore, as religious ideas, proverbs can open the mind to a new way of seeing the world, though this is usually expressed using short, engaging, touching and catchy phrases. Proverbs emphasizes the relationship between beliefs and natural life. Though nature is a gift from God as a resource, they are home too. When the world is challenged by an ecological crisis, indigenous knowledge expressed in proverbial sayings, may be a solution tool. Zormpas argues that the environmental crisis is a battle that must be

¹⁷ J. O. Awolalu, *Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites*, London: Longman, 1979, p. 45, Cf. T. Adefarakan, *Integrating Body, Mind, and Spirit Through the Yoruba Concept of Ori: Critical, Contributions to a Decolonizing Pedagogy*, In: Sheila Batacharya and Yuk-Lin Renita Wong (eds), *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization*, Edmonton: AU Press, 2018. n.p <https://read.aupress.ca/read/sharing-breath/section/c53bd62e-abaf-4bd3-859d-20cf02db467a#ch08>

¹⁸ Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science*, Vol. 155, No 3767, March 1967, p. 1207

fought by all and through all means (disciplines).¹⁹ In this thesis, I aim to argue that proverbs can be viable tools that help Yoruba resolve the environmental crisis they currently face in western Nigeria if positioned under the worldview of Omoluabi

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The environmental crisis in western Nigeria has recently become a concern for the public, government and religious bodies because many actors now believe that this is the biggest challenge that “hinders efforts to achieve sustainable development”²⁰. This crisis may reflect two mutually related contexts: first, the ongoing debates about global climate change, and second, the visible signs of climate-related problems happening on the ground in western Nigeria. However, deforestation²¹, illegal mining and soil excavation, insatiable economic growth, poverty, food shortage and herders’ attacks²², ignorance and overpopulation in some cities have led to more crises. The region experienced flooding²³ due to poor housing planning, building on waterways

¹⁹ C. Zormpas, "Greeting by the General Director of Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC)," In: Louk A. Andrianos & Tom Sverre Tomren et al. (Eds), *Contemporary Ecotheology, Climate Justice and Environmental Stewardship in World Religions*, Ecothee volume 6th-Orthodox Academy of Crete Publication. Embla Akademisk, 2021.

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme, Nigeria: Climate Change and Environment, <https://www.undp.org/nigeria/climate-change-and-environment>

²¹ L. O. Alamu & B. O. Agbeja, “Deforestation and endangered indigenous tree species in South-West Nigeria,” *International Journal of Biodiversity and Conservation*, Vol. 3(7), pp. 291–297, July 2011 Available online <http://www.academicjournals.org/ijbc>; John Wajim, “Impacts of Deforestation on Socio-Economic Development and Environment in Nigeria,” *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 7(03): 5852–5863, 2020 DOI:10.18535/ijsshi/v7i03.04

²² F. O. Ajiola & T. E. Ilesanmi, “Deforestation, Food Security and Environmental Sustainability in South-west, Nigeria, 1960-2015,” *Unilag Journal of Humanities (UJH)*, Vol. 5 No. 1, 2017, 206–226; U. M. Onwunyi and A. Mba, “Fulani Herdsmen and the Challenges of Food Security in Nigeria: An Appraisal,” (20 July 2022). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4168125> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4168125>

²³ O. A. Bamisaiye, “Climate Change and Flooding in Parts of Southwestern Nigeria,” *Nigerian Meteorological Society 2019 International Conference on Climate Change: challenges and prospects*, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Oluseyi-Bamisaiye/publication/340827285_Climate_Change_and_Flooding_in_Parts_of_Southwestern_Nigeria/links/5ef8d032a6fdcc4ca437c25b/Climate-Change-and-Flooding-in-Parts-of-Southwestern-Nigeria.pdf

and canals, poor sanitation and waste management²⁴, industrial waste, pollution²⁵ and many more. As valid as these points may be, I contend that the neglect of cultural ethics and values enshrined in Omoluabi's worldview may have contributed to exacerbating the environmental damage that Western Nigeria is facing today.

Omofonmwan and Osa-Edoh argue for the indigenization of techniques used in environmental protection.²⁶ Healey and Sybertz allude that “proverbs and stories have not been considered part of proper academic theological discourse since they do not fit the propositional style and framework of theologizing.”²⁷ For Adugna “paying attention to the lore of the people aids in raising consciousness through indigenous ways and in shaping minds through the values entrenched in them.”²⁸ Adugna focuses on the place of nature in Oromo proverbs and how humans relate to the physical environment. This article identifies the use of nature in the Oromo proverbs but not how the proverbs can proffer solutions to the environmental crisis. However, the paper established the cultural pearls of wisdom long held by the indigenous societies and the relationship between humans and the physical environment they occupy.²⁹ Traditionally, on the African ecology of the Shona society, Daneel submits that “environmental protection is sanctioned by the creator God and the ancestors of the

²⁴ T. G. Apata, S. I. Ogunjimi, M. M. Okanlawon, O. Bamigboye, C. Adara, & C. Egbunonu, “Growing-city pollution and sanitation: causality and evidence from major cities of southwestern Nigeria,” *urbe, Revista Brasileira de Gestão Urbana*, v.11, 2019, e20180189, <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-3369.011.e20180189>

²⁵ F. B. Elehinafe, O. B. Okedere, A. O. Ayeni, & T. O. Ajewole, “Hazardous Organic Pollutants from Open Burning of Municipal Wastes in South-west Nigeria,” *Journal of Ecological Engineering*, 2022, 23(9), 288–296 <https://doi.org/10.12911/22998993/150647>

²⁶ S. I. Omofonmwan and G. I. Osa-Edoh, “The Challenges of Environmental Problems in Nigeria,” *Journal of Human Ecology*, vol 23, Issue 1, 2008, p. 53

²⁷ J. Healey & D. Sybertz, p. 30

²⁸ A. B. Adugna, “Exploring Environmental Discourses in Oral Literature: Ecocritical Analysis of Oromo Proverbs,” *Journal of Languages and Culture*, Vol. 5 (2), June 2014, p. 24

²⁹ Adugna, p. 24

land.”³⁰ He studied the Shona worldview concerning the environment. Ayinuola and Onwuka analyzed from the ecocritical perspective of some selected poems of Niyi Osundare. The paper’s tenet seeks to examine eco-proverbs/nature proverbs as a literary resource tool in Niyi Osundare’s literary works.³¹ Agbaje and Aransi, like some authors, see Yoruba proverbs as a vehicle for comprehending Yoruba philosophy and moral education. They argue that proverbs constitute “the wisdom lore” that enables the society to live with virtues and in harmony with themselves, the environment (cosmos) and God.³² Olabode and Siyanbola wrote about how proverbs and taboos can provide necessary solutions for the myriad environmental problems in Nigeria.³³ It was a social-linguistics analysis of proverbs without an attempt to situate it in Contextual theology.

Lonergan observed, “A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix.”³⁴ Mubangizi argues that “If culture is a set of meanings and values that informs a way of life, it follows that philosophy and

³⁰ M. L. Daneel, *African Earthkeepers: Wholistic Interfaith Mission*, New York: Orbis Books 2001, p. 90.

³¹ F. I. Ayinuola & E. Onwuka, “Yoruba Eco-Proverbs in English: An Ecocritical Study of Niyi Osundare’s *Midlife and Horses of Memory*,” *Journal of Literary Society of Nigeria*, Issue 6, June 2014, pp. 29-40

³² J. B. Agbaje & A. O. Aransi, “Yoruba Proverbs As A Means Of Comprehending Yoruba Philosophy And Education,” *International Journal of Innovative and Applied Research*, Vol. 5, Issue 8, 2017, pp. 7–12 (8); J. O. Fasoro, “Myth And Proverb As A Vehicle Of Moral Education Among Traditional Yoruba,” *International Journal Of Arts And Commerce*, Vol. 1 No. 5, October 2012, Pp. 255–262; A. Adegoju, “Rhetoric In Conflict-Related Yoruba Proverbs: Guide To Constructive Conflict Resolution In Africa,” *African Study Monographs*, 30(2), June 2009, Pp. 55–69; W. V. Heerden, “The Proverb Is The Drum Of God,” Pp. 462–475.

³³ B. O. Olabode & S. O. Siyanbola, “Proverbs and Taboos as Panacea to Environmental Problems in Nigeria, a Case of Selected Yoruba Proverbs,” *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Society*, Volume 5, Number 2, 2013, pp. 56-66

³⁴ Lonergan cited in O. Mubangizi, “Philosophy and Theology in Africa,” In: Elias Kifon Bongma (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*, p. 29

theology are part and parcel of culture.”³⁵ Mubangizi, discussing the synthetic relationship between theory, conceptual framework and praxis, argues that for “practical African philosophy and theology, the creativity framework will include proverbs, myths, poetry, dance, riddles and art.”³⁶ Proverbs as a theological and philosophical framework are sidelined as a tool containing African theology, which helps address all societal problems, especially environmental ones. Whiteman says, “I believe the only way through this maze is to discover the tools and perspectives of contextualization and then have the courage to implement them.”³⁷ Healey and Sybertz also lament its uses; they said

“Proverbs and stories have not been considered part of proper academic theological discourse since they do not fit the propositional style and framework of theologizing. Out of fear, oversight, or various pressures, even African theologians and theological conferences have not used proverbs efficiently.”³⁸

Simmons states, “An environmental construction, often of a normative kind, is frequently embedded in orally transmitted traditions and customs.”³⁹ Using African sources to address issues affecting Africans tends to be more effective. Mbiti claims, “Proverbs ... form a bridge between traditional African religiosity and biblical teaching.”⁴⁰ Mbiti’s assertion provides a theological base for proverbs in Contextual Theology. If proverbs regain their place in African theology, they will help respond to environmental issues. Since proverbs fit in as a bridge between biblical faith and

³⁵ Mubangizi, p. 29

³⁶ Mubangizi, p. 29

³⁷ D. L. Whiteman, “Contextualization: The theory, the Gap, the Challenge,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 21, no. 1 (1997), p.6

³⁸ J. Healey & D. Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996, p. 30

³⁹ I. G. Simmons, *Interpreting Nature: Cultural Constructions of the Environment*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 14

⁴⁰ J. Mbiti, “Children Confer Glory on a Home,” In: Stan Nussbaum (Ed.), *African Proverbs: Collection, Studies, Bibliographies*, n.p, CD-ROM, Colorado Springs, CO: Global Mapping International, 1996, p. 55

African religiosity, their acceptance among the indigenous people became a cherished wealth of wisdom to many. The fulfilment of reality for Africans is to live in harmony with God and their environment (man and nature). The need for a proper place for proverbs to address the environmental crisis given Omoluabi's concept is a gap in the literature on Contextual theology that this work stands to fill.

1.2 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION/SUB-QUESTIONS

This work asks the following questions: How can a sociolinguistic analysis of a specific set of Yoruba Proverbs within the Omoluabi worldview help in developing contextual theologies among Seventh-Day Adventist Church that respond to the environmental crisis in Western Nigeria? To set a framework with which this question will be explored, the research asks the following sub-questions:

Sub-questions

1. What place do proverbs have in the Omoluabi worldview of Yoruba culture that helps them properly conceive of and relate with the environment?
2. What Omoluabi values are attributed to human and non-human actors in the Yoruba proverbs that depict the cosmology of their lived religion?
3. How has the environmental crisis in western Nigeria disrupted the lived religion and cultural cosmology of the Yoruba?
4. What insights can a sociolinguistic analysis of Yoruba proverbs bring to constructing Adventist environmental theologies suited for Western Nigeria?

1.3 RELEVANCE OR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This work asserts that Yoruba proverbs as indigenous and cultural tools when adequately situated within the Omoluabi worldview could address environmental problems in western Nigeria. As argued by Zormpas, environmental crisis is a battle that must be fought by all and through all means (disciplines).⁴¹

Some Scholars have identified proverbs as a theology and theory or conceptual framework.⁴² However, using it as an active theological tool in addressing the environmental crisis received little attention. This work asserts that Yoruba proverbs can help solve the ecological problem in western Nigeria if the society imbibed the Omoluabi character and moral values in their daily lives. This concept makes every individual to be community-oriented, in which the welfare or good of the community is above personal ambition or goal. Also, this approach helps in understanding how local sources can make Christianity relevant to African people. Therefore, this research will build on the work of past and present African theologians, philosophers and historians, who have demonstrated the intertwined relationship between African cultural heritage, theology, environmental studies and African Christianity.

1.4 METHODS

This research employs sociolinguistics analysis to analyze Yoruba proverbs to develop theologies that help address the environmental crisis in western Nigeria.

⁴¹ C. Zormpas, "Greeting by the General Director of Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC)," In: Louk A. Andrianos & Tom Sverre Tomren et al. (Eds), *Contemporary Ecotheology, Climate Justice and Environmental Stewardship in World Religions*, Ecothee volume 6th-Orthodox Academy of Crete Publication. Embla Akademisk, 2021.

⁴² Mubangizi, "Philosophy and Theology in Africa," In: Elias Kifon Bongma (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*, p. 29

Sociolinguistics is the “study of the relationships between language and society”⁴³ It focuses “on how human beings use language in social interaction in real, everyday life situations and studies languages exclusively in their naturalistic social context.”⁴⁴ This study of language and society seeks to unravel how Yoruba people use language in social interaction for sociological purposes. Though there are different ethnic groups within the Yoruba nation, with various taboos, proverbs remain a unifying communication medium.

Trudgill identifies three objectives of studying Sociolinguistics - sociological, sociological and linguistic, and linguistic objectives.⁴⁵ In the course of this work, sociological aim, whose orientation is purely social and void of linguistic analysis, shall be used. The essence is to site some Yoruba proverbs, translate them and see how they address environmental issues in western Nigeria, and not linguistic analysis. Hence Ethnomethodology a subset approach in the sociological aspect of sociolinguistics will be used. The focus is the society and how it can solve the “real problems of society.”⁴⁶

⁴³ Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy, “Research Methods in Sociolinguistics,” *AILA Review* 27 (2014), 5–29 (p. 5). doi 10.1075/aila.27.01her. Cf., W. Labov, “Linguistics and sociolinguistics,” In: N. Coupland & A. Jaworski (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: A Reader and Coursebook*, 23–24. London: MacMillan, 1997; P.J. Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*, 3rd edn., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983a.

⁴⁴ Hernández-Campoy, “Research Methods in Sociolinguistics,” *AILA Review* 27 (2014), p. 5.

⁴⁵ P.J. Trudgill, “Introduction: Sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics,” In: *Sociolinguistic Patterns in British English*, P.J. Trudgill (ed.), (1978), 1–18, London: Edward Arnold, p. 2

⁴⁶ Hernández-Campoy, “Research Methods in Sociolinguistics,” *AILA Review* 27 (2014), p. 14.



Figure 1. Directions in the Language and Society paradigm
 Source: Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy

Ethnomethodology, a qualitative sociological approach focusing on practical reasoning and common-sense knowledge, will be used to analyze the proverbs in the context of Omoluabi's worldview. As a speech community, the Yoruba people use their practical reasoning in the knowledge acquired through oral tradition to define social reality and actions. “The mundane intelligibility and accountability of social actions, situations, and structures are understood to be the outcome of these constitutive methods or procedures.”⁴⁷ The method will analyze the corpus of selected proverbs as social tools to interpret tacit knowledge embedded in proverbs in solving environmental crises under the social reality of who Omoluabi is. Hence, the implication and application shall be deduced. According to Torabi, ethnomethodology emphasizes “methods and procedures employed by the people when they define and interpret everyday life. It is the study of common-sense knowledge, its creation and

⁴⁷ Douglas W. Maynard and Steven E. Clayman, *Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318322572_Ethnomethodology_and_conversation_analysis?enrichId=rgreq-3a16a4918e4f1785a5add980c2edc918-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzMxODMyMjU3MjtBUzo4Mjc3MDI1MzM3MTM5MjBA MTU3NDM1MTA3MDMxMg%3D%3D&el=1_x_2&_esc=publicationCoverPdf. p. 174

use in natural settings.”⁴⁸ It is the ‘people’s method’. “Ethnomethodology” was first used by sociologist Harold Garfinkel in 1967.⁴⁹

In the application of sociolinguistics in solving social problems, Roger Shuy says,

“In cases where real human problems are involved, theory cannot be abstract or divorced from application. If the weakness of recent applied linguistics has been its separation from linguistic theory, so has the weakness of recent theoretical linguistics been its separation from real human problems. Adequate engagement in real human problems requires the selection and development of both theory and application. Application without theory is mere methodology (an error much of applied linguistics has fallen into). Theory without application is mere speculation (an error which much of theoretical linguistics has fallen into). Theory or application absent from a real human problem is mere academic display. Life is in the doing. Faith without works is dead. Works without causes or reasons for working are frivolous.”⁵⁰

Engaging proverbs as a theory in solving real-life environmental crises remains germane in Western Nigeria. If Sociolinguistics focuses on using sociological expertise to solve social problems, then using it as a method to develop a contextual theology in addressing environmental crises is adequate.

Among the Yoruba, theology is constructed by what people say in proverbs and how they live their lives. The likes of Mbiti has emphasized the religious and philosophical aspect of proverbs.⁵¹ To synthesize and develop environmental theologies by the use of selected Yoruba proverbs, I will borrow from the sociological method, particularly by looking at ethnomethodology. I depend on Pete Ward’s analysis of “the four voices

⁴⁸ Mohammad Ali Torabi, “Ethnomethodology and Conversational Analysis,” *Journal of English Language: Teaching and Learning*, Year 53 No. 217, pp. 156 -157

⁴⁹ Torabi, “Ethnomethodology and Conversational Analysis,” p. 156

⁵⁰ R.W. Shuy, “The decade ahead for applied sociolinguistics,” *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 45: (1984), 101–111, p. 102

⁵¹ J. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed, Gaborone: Heinemann, 1989, pp. 66-67

of theology theory,”⁵² but I look at the espoused and the operant theology,⁵³ of what they say in the proverbs, and how they live their lives in the land about preserving and conserving the environment.

In lived theology, Clare Watkins asserts that “Practices are bearers of theology.”⁵⁴ The Operant theology reflects the actual practices of the group, which need to be uncovered and discovered by believers themselves. Wards argues that “it is only when they are subjected to attention and reflection that these everyday ways of believing reveal their theological nature”⁵⁵ It is intentional to apply this to religious ideas embedded in Yoruba proverbs as used in everyday life and how well it reflects in their practices. In other words, espoused theology is the articulated ideas from beliefs, tradition and experience. It is the spoken theology – what the people say. So, the daily theology of Yoruba as embedded in their proverbs and practices, can be evaluated in the context of the Omoluabi worldview. As Obasola argues “human carelessness and greed”,⁵⁶ and the need for economics have led to significant depletion of the environment and less care for the relationship between humans and nature.

⁵² The four voices of theology theory was developed by Helen Cameron and her colleagues in the ARCS (Action Research: Church and Society) project. These theological voices are: operant theology, espoused theology, normative theology, and formal theology. Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney, and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*, London: SCM Press, 2010, pp. 49-56

⁵³ Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church*, Baker Academic, 2017, ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/etf/detail.action?docID=5215140>. Created from etf on 2023-05-02 06:35:45.

⁵⁴ Clare Watkins, “Practical Ecclesiology: What counts as theology in studying the church?” In P. Ward (Ed.), *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (pp. 167-181), Eerdmans, 2012, p. 169.

⁵⁵ Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology*, n.p

⁵⁶ K. E. Obasola, *African Religion and Environmental Dynamics: Implications for Human and Sustainable Development*, 2013, p. 199.

One of the limitations of this work is the time for an ethnographic method in conducting interviews, I will construct basic ethnomethodology from the literature available on Yoruba culture concerning proverbs. I will (re)construct (a culture related to the sayings) a kind of practice that talks about the environment and Yoruba practices. I will then link to the espouse and operant theology and look at how these sayings, as well as practices of Yoruba ethnic culture, help them to address their environment. It is impossible to construct theology, an eco-theology, that addresses the environmental crises in western Nigeria based on these sayings.

In Yoruba traditional culture as espoused in the words of Samuel Johnson, in the book *“The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate,”* grooves put around communities are for the benefit of the people. Though Johnson was talking about community architecture in the building of walls and city gates, keeping grooves was intentional.

“Every town is walled, deep trenches are dug all round it outside, the more exposed to attack the more substantial the wall and for the greater security of smaller towns a bush or thicket called Igbo Ile (home forest) is kept, about half to one mile from the walls right round the town. This forms a security against a sudden cavalry attack, and a safe ambush for defence, as well as hiding places in a defeat or sudden hostile irruption. The tall trees in them are sometimes used as a watch-tower to observe the movements of the enemy except in times of profound peace, it is penal to cut trees in the home forest. Highways are made through them straight to the town gate and are always kept in excellent repair”.⁵⁷

It is traditional for Yoruba people to have grooves (thick forests) around their communities. Yoruba used a lot of taboos to protect these grooves. Somehow, taboos become a religious or theological concept in preserving sacred or communal things. For example, masquerades have their shrines in such grooves. Hence, cutting down

⁵⁷ Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, (London: Lowe & Brydone, 1921), 92

the trees and exposing the cult's secrecy is forbidden. Urbanization, Yoruba Christianity and Islam have affected the preservation of some natural environments. The two religions – Christianity and Islam – see these grooves, sacred water, etc, as idolatrous. Hence, they go against the taboo, cut down trees, and leave the grooves to mere grassland. To them, they are eradicating idolatry. However, they exposed the community to whirlwinds, frequently removing the building roofs. This act and many more negate the Christian and Islamic worldviews of stewardship. It also tends to divide the community along religious lines. Hence, many see their religious doctrine as superficial above cultural values and morals embedded in Omoluabi, which led to the breakdown of morals in destroying nature and community harmony. With this evidence, we can develop a theology of managing the environment by revisiting the Omoluabi worldview.

Proverbs naturally produce thoughts, emotions and feelings about daily living as an experiential aspect of theology. Their reflexive and reflective impact is why their production was revered and accepted. Fayemi says, “For an African, what is not in proverbs is not real.”⁵⁸ Yoruba proverbs constitute the central part of the primary sources. These selected Yoruba proverbs will form a corpus to analyze the environmental crisis in southwestern Nigeria. The corpus is arranged according to environmental applications: warning, the right to life, communal living, responsibility and responsiveness, and public health.

Some selected Yoruba proverbs of Western Nigeria.

I. Proverbs concerning warning

⁵⁸ A. K. Fayemi, “The Logic in Yoruba Proverbs,” In: Jonathan O. Chimakonam (Ed.), *Logic And African Philosophy: Seminal Essays on African Systems of Thought, Series in Philosophy*, Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2010, p. 127.

(a) Ogun àgbó télè, kii pa Aro tó bá gbón

A forewarned war does not kill a wise lame

(Heeding alert can save a life)

(b) Aşení şe ara-are; asánbànte sán ara-a re lókùn.

He who would hurt others hurts himself; he who wraps himself in a loincloth ties himself in a rope.

(He who would hurt others hurts himself also.)

II. Proverbs about the Right to Life

(a) Omọ kii í pa omọ jayé.

A child does not kill another child as a means to prosper.

(There are certain things that one may not do to others; however, great one might be.)

(b) Adiyẹ ba` l'ókùn, ara o ro`kun ara o rọ adiyẹ

“The fowl is perched on the rope, there is no peace for the rope, there is no peace for the fowl”⁵⁹.

“When any aspect of reality is dislocated, for whatever reason, unless redress is achieved, by whatever means indicated, then the dislocation will affect all aspects of reality.”⁶⁰

III. Proverbs about community living (unity)

(a) Agbajo owo ni a nfi so aya , ajeji owo kan ko gberu dori

We use a closed fist to tap our chest; a single hand cannot lift luggage to the head.

(A lack of unity can jeopardize peaceful coexistence and communal living.)

(b) Ai kowo rin ejo ni n fi iku pa won

⁵⁹ Bewaji, p. 239

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 239

It is because snakes do not move in a group, which makes them killed

(Lack of unity in the community makes it susceptible to danger)

IV. Proverbs on Responsibility and Responsiveness

(a) *Werepe gba ara re gba igi oko*

A stinging nestle saves not only itself but other trees on the farm.

(The Yoruba word, *Werepe*, which is the “stinging nestle”, burns (jo) any skin that it touches. Apart from this, it is a climbing plant, and nobody dares touch the tree that *werepe* touches, thereby protecting the tree on which it climbs from being cut down).

(b) *Die die ni imu elede n wogba*

Little by little the pig’s nose enters the garden

(Attend to a small problem before it becomes uncontrollable)⁶¹

V. Proverbs on Health and Cleanliness

(a) *Eni to ba gba’le, ni ile n mon fun*

He who sweeps the ground has a clean environment

(Healthy living is a thing of choice)

(b) *Imototo bori aarun mole boye ti I bori ooru*

Cleanliness neutralizes diseases as harmattan dispels heat

(Cleanliness is next to Godliness)

(c) *Ilu ki i kere ki o ma ni aatan*

No matter how little a town is; it must have a refuse dump⁶²

(A healthy community is a wealthy community)

⁶¹ <https://steemit.com/nigeria/@leopantro/50-yoruba-proverbs-and-idioms>

⁶² <http://docplayer.net/44116860-An-analysis-of-the-proverbs-the-yorubans-live-by.html>

1.5 THEORETICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF OMOLÚÀBÍ

Like other African cultures, the Yoruba people have developed good values, attitudes, norms and characters that sustain their cultural, religious and environmental life. The ideal Yoruba person is “qualified as *Omoluabi*.”⁶³ In the words of Fayemi,

“The concept *Omoluwabi* is an adjectival Yoruba phrase with the words “Omo+ ti + Olu- iwa + bi” as its components. Translated and separately, omo means ‘child’, ti means ‘that or which’, Olu-iwa means the chief or master of Iwa (character), and bi means ‘born’. When combined, *omoluwabi* translates as “the baby begotten by the chief of iwa”. Such an individual possesses a paragon of excellence in character.”⁶⁴

The concept of *Omoluabi* suggests that the enriched socio-religious values and character cultivated as a required functional relevance attitude of an individual in their immediate environment and the society at large. *Omoluabi* is a Yoruba word “to describe an individual that is well-cultured, morally upright and intelligently sound.”⁶⁵ Such an individual is the epitome of a ‘thorough breed’. *Omoluabi*’s concept values good character above wealth or position. In this, a classic poem of J. F. Odunjo, “*Toju iwa re, ore mi*; [Enhance your character, my friend]”, came to mind, written in the *Alawiye* series.⁶⁶

⁶³ P-K Tubi, “Afroecology of Traditional African Societies: An Anthropology Of Ecotheology, Ecophilosophy And Ecospirituality of The Yoruba,” In: Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu (Ed.), *African Ecophilosophy: Cosmology, Consciousness and the Environment*, Silver Spring, MD: The Association for the Promotion of African Studies, 2021, pp. 313

⁶⁴ A. K. Fayemi, “Human Personality and the Yoruba Worldview: An Ethico-Sociological Interpretation,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.2, no.9, March 2009, p. 167.

⁶⁵ I. O. Majebi & E. A. Oduolowu, “Concept of *Omoluabi* in Pre-Primary and Primary School Classrooms and Sustenance of Effective Democracy in Nigeria,” *Nigerian Journal Of Social Studies*, Vol.XXIII (2) Oct., 2020, p. 7.

⁶⁶ J. F Odunjo, *Alawiye*, Lagos: Longman, 1975; Cf, <https://alliusanni.blogspot.com/2018/03/toju-iwa-re-ore-mi-written-by-late-jf.html>; Webnovel, [https://www.webnovel.com/book/morenikeji_18049814106221105/chapter-28-aw%E1%BB%8Dn-igbes%E1%BA%B9-mi-si-titobi-\(my-steps-to-greatness\)8_49580710096326455](https://www.webnovel.com/book/morenikeji_18049814106221105/chapter-28-aw%E1%BB%8Dn-igbes%E1%BA%B9-mi-si-titobi-(my-steps-to-greatness)8_49580710096326455), Accessed 12 March 2023

Odunjo placed good character above wealth, beauty and education. This judgement is a reflection of what value base exists among the Yoruba. To attain the status of *Omoluabi*, an individual is required to be submissive in learning and willing to take correction and instruction from the elders. Training starts from home and a child is born into a community. To possess an *Omoluabi's* virtues such as respect, truth, good character and being community-oriented, earn an individual an *Omoluabi* status. An *Omoluabi* is not selfish but selfless. Hence, the welfare of the community is paramount. *Omoluabi* is an ambassador of their community and society at large. Such a person holds tenaciously to the elders' instructions, religious beliefs, and practices that encourage mutual living, a healthy environment and social justice.

Omoluabi possesses good character.⁶⁷ However, the concept of *Omoluabi* has attributes such as “*oro siso* (spoken words), *iteriba* (respect), *otito* (truth), *iwa* (character), *inu rere* (having good minds to others), *akinkanju* (bravery), *ise* (hard work) and *opolo pipe* (intelligence).”⁶⁸.

Though *Omoluabi* is a cultural and moral concept exhibited among the Yorubas, its values can be universal, like *Ubuntu*, which shares similar philosophical attributes. These attributes will make individuals responsible, responsive, and accountable to themselves, the community and society at large. Community members guided by this concept protect the community's cultural values, morals, taboos, beliefs, totems, and peaceful coexistence. Things like grooves, hills, sacred trees, animals and rivers are

⁶⁷ Majebi and Oduolowu, pp. 7-8; Cf. T. A. Awoniyi, *Yoruba Language in Education 1846-1974: A Historical Survey*, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1978; E. F. Akinsola, “*Omoluabi's* approach to educating the African child,” In: A. B. Nsamenang & T. M. S. Tchombe (Eds.), *Handbook of African Educational Theories and Practices*, A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum Cameroon, Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC), 2011, Accessed on 9 Feb. 2023. <http://www.thehdc.org/Handbook%20of%20African%20Educational%20Theories%20and%20Practices.pdf>.

⁶⁸ W. Abimbola, “*Iwapele: The Yoruba Concept of Good Character*,” In: Wande Abimbola (ed), *Yoruba Oral Literature*, Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1975, pp. 393-395

preserved from human destruction. Personal interests are not placed over communitarian interests. An *Omoluabi* will not build along the river channel, set fire to grooves, be involved in acts of deforestation or cause damage to the environment. *Omoluabi* possesses attributes for enviable ingredients for sustainable development. *Omoluabi*, in summary, “fosters a dynamic, positive, pleasant and rewarding human relationship. A people-centred and personality-propelled philosophy that helps advance a people’s collective vision.”⁶⁹

1.6 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

African oral literature is “literature delivered by word of mouth,”⁷⁰ broad beyond proverbs alone, as it contains riddles, storytelling, recitations, chants, songs and many more. I will use some selected Yoruba proverbs for this research. As commonly known, proverbs provide a basis for the expression of cultural and religious ideas and feelings. It is a lived theology and philosophy of life possessed by people. The implication and application are seen in every phase of society and communal life. This research emphasizes the uses of Yoruba proverbs as a genre (or tool) in light of the environmental crisis in western Nigeria.

The intention is not to develop proverbs as a tool; this has been done, but rather an application to the environmental crisis in the context of African theology. An environmental discourse is broad to navigate. However, the work is limited to the selected occurrence in western Nigeria. The developed theology will be

⁶⁹ A. O. Olatunji, “A Postmodernist Critique Of Omoluwabi In Yoruba Thought,” 2021, pp. 76-77 <http://repository.pgcollegeui.com:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/1157/A%20postmodernist%20Critique%20of%20Omoluwabi%20in%20Yoruba%20Thought.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁷⁰ I. Okpewho, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, pp. 3-4

contextualized among the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.⁷¹ The intention is not to trace the development of African theology nor its variance to African Christian Theology. However, to use it as a context to “deal effectively with problems and situations peculiarly African.”⁷²

Another limiting factor for this research is time. Too many proverbs that the schedule of this research can accommodate. According to Mbiti, studying proverbs means more than “one person cannot collect them all, cannot analyze them all, cannot put them all into their context, and cannot use them all.”⁷³ Another limitation of this work is the time for an ethnographic method in conducting interviews, and I will construct basic ethnomethodology from the literature available on Yoruba culture concerning proverbs.

1.7 STRUCTURE

Chapter One introduces the idea of the sociolinguistic effect of proverbs as a tool in addressing the environmental crisis in western Nigeria. It also evaluates proverbs based on the acquired and lived theology of the Yoruba, embedded in the Omoluabi concept. The relationship between the proverbs and the environment, as seen in Omoluabi’s worldview, forms the focus of this research. The introduction encompasses the basis for the study, the methodological structure, and the research questions. Chapter Two deals with anthropological and sociological approaches to Yoruba cosmology and proverbs. The chapter explores the world of Yoruba people, their relationship to the environment, the impact of the Omoluabi worldview on their

⁷¹ Seventh-Day Adventist Church have presence in all the western states of Nigeria.

⁷² Muzorewa. P.95

⁷³ Mbiti, “Children Confer Glory,” p. 58

daily lives, and how their perspectives towards the environment affect their communal lives. The place of proverbs in Yoruba ontology suggests an epistemological base of the people; hence, the functions and features of proverbs according to the tenet of the Yoruba and its environmental notion will be discussed. Chapter Three focuses on the environmental discourse in Western Nigeria. In this chapter, I will review the basic narrative of what the government, religious organizations and scholars say about the environmental crisis. Also, I shall evaluate government policies, religious leaders/bodies' perspectives, and public views under the lens of the Omoluabi concept. Chapter Four synthesises the three variables or dimensions – Yoruba proverbs, environmental concern and western Nigeria, in the context of the Omoluabi worldview. The first part deals with a sociolinguistic analysis of the selected proverbs and how their application deals with environmental issues. Then the chapter will present a reconstruction of Yoruba lived theology acquired in proverbs to develop Seventh-Day Adventist ecological theology. It also deals with using proverbs in the theological understanding of the African in addressing social and environmental issues. It considered contemporary perspectives on ecological issues and recommended proverbs as tools in sustainable development. The conclusion answers how a sociolinguistic analysis of a set of Yoruba Proverbs can develop theologies responding to the environmental crisis in the context of western Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

YORUBA COSMOLOGY, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, AND PROVERBS

“Knowledge matters; understanding how people and societies acquire and use knowledge—and why they sometimes fail to do so— is essential to improving people’s lives, especially the lives of the poorest.”⁷⁴

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between Yoruba cosmology and epistemological worldviews as revealed in Yoruba proverbs and the Omoluabi concept. To better understand the entanglements that these relationships create, the chapter will incorporate an indigenous knowledge systems approach to analyze some Yoruba cosmology and proverbs. In particular, the chapter will explore the world of Yoruba people and assess how their knowledge dissemination relates to their relationship with their environment. The chapter contends that the place of proverbs in Yoruba ontology reveals their in-depth knowledge about nature, environment, reality, essence, and (moral) values. Hence, the functions and features of proverbs according to those tenets will be discussed in the chapter.

2.1 Who are the Yorubas?

The Yoruba, one of the largest ethnolinguistic groups in Africa, are predominantly found on the West coast of Africa. They are also a single ethnic group located in Southwestern Nigeria. In Nigeria, over 39.5 million people speak the Yoruba language.⁷⁵ The Yoruba nation covers Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo and Lagos (South West region). Some Yoruba descendants live in Kwara, Kogi (North Central region), Edo and Delta (South-South region). Hence, Yoruba spread across ten states

⁷⁴ James D. Wolfensohn, “Foreward” In: *World Development Report 1998/99: Knowledge for Development (18445)*, World Bank: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. iii

⁷⁵ Doris Dokua Sasu, Languages in Nigeria 2021, by Number of Speakers, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1285383/population-in-nigeria-by-languages-spoken/>

out of the 36 states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

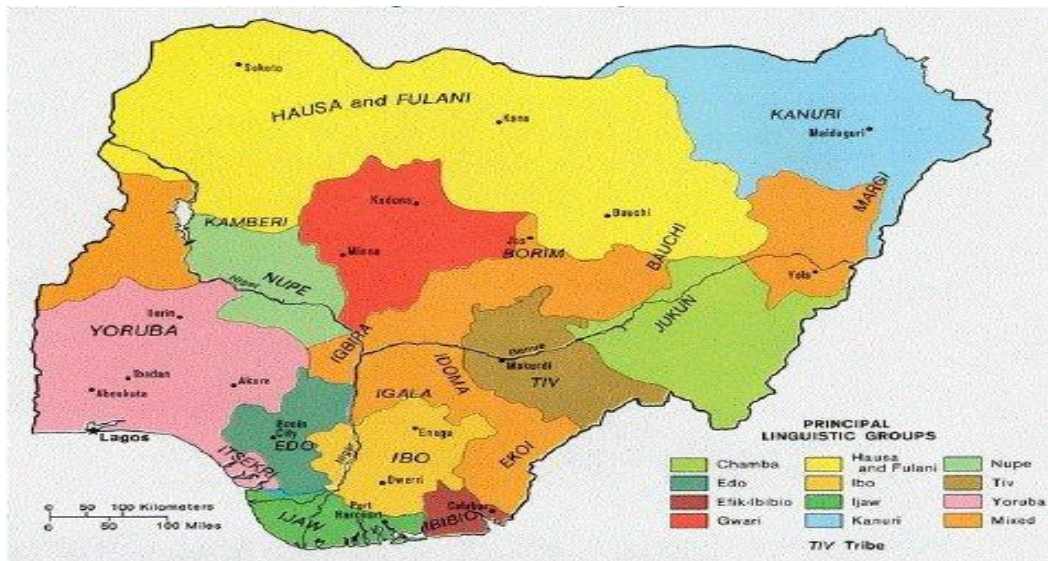


Fig. 1 Nigeria Map showing the Ethnic Groups Constituents
Source: Muideen O. Bakare, 2015

There is scholarly debate concerning the origin of the Yoruba. The historical narrative versions spread from the oral tradition and creation myth to descendants of Lamurudu (Biblical Nimrod) and archaeological evidence of prehistoric times.⁷⁶ The creation myth suggests that Olorun (the owner of heaven) let down Oduduwa by a chain with a bowl of earth, a rooster and a palm kernel. Oduduwa pours the earth (soil) into the waters and puts a rooster on it. As the rooster scratched it, the land surface grew a palm tree of 16 branches, a representation of 16 original kingdoms.⁷⁷ The scratching of the earth on water and expansion of land on water, termed *Ile n fe* – the ground is expanding. The place where the land started developing is called *Ile-Ife* today. *Ile-Ife* is the source of the human race—the cradle of the Yoruba - “as the centre of the creation of the universe, thus attracting the expression; Ife o’ndaye, ibi ojumo ti mo

⁷⁶ Biodun J. Ogundayo, “Yoruba,” In: *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, eds Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama, Los Angeles, California: Sage Publications, 2009, p. 739

⁷⁷ Ogundayo, “Yoruba,” 2009, p. 739

wa (meaning, Ife, the point of creation where the day dawns,)⁷⁸ “Ifè olórí ayé gbogbo (Ifè, the head of the world), Ifè Oòdáyé, (Ifè, where the creation of the world took place).”⁷⁹ All these appellations are to assert the place of Ile Ife in human origin. Sometimes, it is called the source.

The second view is the migration from the Middle East. Samuel Johnson, one of the foremost Yoruba historians, drew the historical origin of Yoruba from Lamurudu⁸⁰, a king of Mecca whose offspring was Oduduwa – later the ancestor of the Yoruba. Johnson argued that two of Lamurudu’s sons, supposed siblings of Oduduwa, were “the kings of Gogobiri and the Kukawa, two tribes in the Hausa country.”⁸¹ He said despite the distance in their locality and several years apart, they “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.”⁸² However, Oduduwa met “Agboniregun, the founder of the Ifa worship”⁸³ at Ile-Ife. Despite their differences, the main character in myths one and two is Oduduwa.

Gbadegesin in etymological analysis and the relationship between Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba, and Olodumare, the Creator God, suggests that:

“Etymologically Oduduwa means Odu ti o da iwa. Odu means container or author, and Iwa means existence. Thus Oduduwa means 'The container or author of existence'; or 'That which creates existence.' On the other hand, 'Olodumare' has two stems: Olodu meaning the owner of Odu i.e. the owner of the container or author. Mare means beyond which nothing can go. Thus, Olodumare means the ultimate

⁷⁸ Adebisi David Alade, “Creation Stories and History of State Foundation: A Re-assessment of Yoruba Myth and Legend of Creation,” *Researcher*, 7(3), 2015, p. 61

⁷⁹ Ayowole S. Elugbaju, “A King or A Priest in the City of 201 Gods: Interrogating the Place of the Oòni in the Religious system of Ilé-Ifè in Southwest Nigeria,” *Ufahamu* 43:1 Winter 2022, p. 87

⁸⁰ As one of the views shared by Ogundayo, “Yoruba are descended from the offspring of Lamurudu, or Nimrod of Biblical and Near Eastern legend, who had been banished and finally settled in present-day Yorubaland. Thus, some trace the origins of the Yoruba all the way back to ancient Mesopotamian Uruk or Babylon (modern-day Iraq).” Ogundayo, “Yoruba,” 2009, p. 739

⁸¹ Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, London: Lowe and Brydone, 1921, p. 3

⁸² Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 1921, p. 3

⁸³ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 1921, p. 4

author of existence or the Owner or Lord of the author of existence. It should then be understood that Oduduwa is thought of as the author of existence and at the same time, there is a belief in a final or ultimate source of being - Olodumare - who is responsible for the existence of Oduduwa too.”⁸⁴

The etymological meaning of Oduduwa indeed suggests a beginner or author of existence. However, the creation and migration myths imply a different event, “one above 2000 BC or a little later, the other is the 7th century AD.”⁸⁵ If migration was a result of war due to the rise of Islam, then it was a later period, “sometimes in the 7th century AD.”⁸⁶ Almost 3,000 years separate the two stories. This will be difficult to absorb since no known man has lived for 3,000 years! Did the later event adopt the legendary Oduduwa as leader or was there Arabic variance to his name? It could be hard to accept the creation myth as an adaptation of biblical accounts, too. If etymology explores the interconnectedness of culture and linguistics, then it can be leaned upon to “provide an in-depth analysis of the history and meaning of words.”⁸⁷ To this effect, more work needs to be done in harmonizing the stories and the role of Oduduwa in Yoruba cosmology. The Kwa family language members’ history could serve as a pointer or validation of Yoruba's historical origin.

The third is the archaeological and linguistic evidence of prehistoric times, which “supports the theory of indigenous origin.”⁸⁸ The early archaeological excavation

⁸⁴ Olusegun Gbadegesin, “Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective,” *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, Volume 7 Issue 3, September 1984, p. 174

⁸⁵ Victor Osaro Edo, “Benin–Ife Relations in Historical Perspective, A Study of two Kingdoms, one Institution,” *West Bohemian Historical Review* X:2, 2020, p. 239

⁸⁶ Edo, Benin–Ife Relations in Historical Perspective, 2020, p. 239

⁸⁷ Mirsamadova Sevara Erkinovna, “The Role of Etymology in the Development of Languages, the Future of the Field and Its Importance Today: Etymology of Words in Uzbek Language,” *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research (IJAPR)*, Vol. 4, Issue 10, October – 2020, p. 3

⁸⁸ Aribidesi Usman and Toyin Falola, “Geography and Society,” In: *The Yoruba from Prehistory to the Present*, eds., Aribidesi Usman and Toyin Falola, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 1

“indicated a wealthy, sophisticated society with an established monarchy.”⁸⁹ Evidence is not limited to Ile-Ife, a human population as early as 10,000 BC in the Idanre area of Yorubaland.⁹⁰ Adetugbo using linguistic evidence, suggests a shared common origin between the Yoruba language and other Kwa-family languages. The genetic relationship of the closeness must have occurred in prehistoric times. Hence, the language origin shared by the groups on the western coast of Africa, such as Yoruba, Idoma, Edo, Igala, Igbo, Nupe, Efik, Ijo, Fon, Twi, and Ga, must have been within and not outside of the tropical region.⁹¹ This position ruled out the migration myth based on linguistic evidence. If archaeological evidence identified life dated to the prehistoric period, could migration be from Ile-Ife by expansion to all other regions of the west coast? Furthermore, given the time lapse covered, the stories of the origin of the Yoruba have been challenged as mere myths. The intention of this thesis is not to revive those objections as it is not part of the aim.



Fig. 2 Map of Yoruba States in Nigeria
 Source: Nigerian Tribune Newspaper, 2 July 2018

⁸⁹ Usman and Falola, “Geography and Society,” 2019, p. 1; Cf, F. Willett, *Ife in the History of West African Sculpture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1967.

⁹⁰ Ogundayo, “Yoruba,” 2009, p. 739; Cf, R. S. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (3rd ed.), Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

⁹¹ A. Adetugbo, “The Yoruba Language in Yoruba History,” In: *Sources of Yoruba History*, ed. Biobaku, S. O., 176–204, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 203

The Yoruba are known for their rich culture in ivory and wood carving, crafting, blacksmithing, beading and ornament, farming, leatherworking, glassmaking, trading, cotton spinning, dyeing and textile, and weaving. Both males and females are open to this rich culture and become rich in them. Women feature more in trading.

2.2 The Worldviews of the Yoruba

Worldview is a component of life which everyone has. It deals with perceived reality about the world around us. It is a set of values, expectations, attitudes or stories that consciously or unconsciously manifest in our thoughts and actions.⁹² Worldview focuses on the world around a group of people, life in its existence, and what humanity is all about. This set of realities is believed to be found in religion, ethics and values, philosophy, etc. Peterson argues, “Religions are worldviews expressed not only in beliefs but also in narratives and symbols.”⁹³ Since proverbs are a religious idea which uses symbols, it will be apt to categorize it as a worldview. His position asserts the presence of a thin line between religion and worldview. However, not all worldviews are religious.⁹⁴ Exploring the Yoruba’s view of the world, life, and humanity will be valuable to understanding their socioreligious environment.

The world of Yoruba beliefs exists as binary complementarity: the spiritual or invisible world (*Orun*) and the physical or visible world (*Aye*).⁹⁵ Supernatural beings inhabit the invisible realm. The inhabitants include divinities, spirits and the

⁹² J. W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 2d ed., Leicester: IVP, 1988, 17

⁹³ Gregory R. Peterson, “Religion as Orienting Worldview,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, vol. 36, no. 1, (March 2001), p. 9

⁹⁴ Peterson, “Religion as Orienting Worldview,” *Zygon*, (2001), p. 9

⁹⁵ Tayo O. George and Tolulope A. Amusan, “Religion and Act of Worship Amongst the Nigerian People: Implications for Development and National Unity,” In: A.S. Jegede, O.A. Olutayo, O.O Omololu & B. E. Owumi (Eds.), *Peoples and Cultures of Nigeria*, p. 310,

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/12356481.pdf>

ancestors/the living dead.⁹⁶ *Aye*, the visible world of the living is home to humans and nature. There is a connection between these realms, as these form what Yoruba called environment. As stated by Idowu, “The divinities are often associated with nature (e.g., earth, rivers) or activities (e.g., farming, fishing), and are ministers of God and intermediaries between God and man.”⁹⁷ Hence, spiritual beings “belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man.”⁹⁸ *Olorun*, the owner of heaven, also known as Olodumare/God, exist far above the spirits and lives in the sky. He is the Creator and “is considered to be the father of all other gods. Olorun is the only god that never lived on earth.”⁹⁹ Unlike the other deities, the Creator God has no shrine among the Yoruba people. These deities received worship on behalf of Olodumare. They exist “only in consequence of the being of Deity” and are not ends in themselves.¹⁰⁰

However, the life force that binds the body, nature and spirit together is *Ase*. *Ase* is “the life force given to everything by the Creator of the universe.”¹⁰¹ This life force exists in everything in nature or activities. It is present in people, rivers, animals, plants, rocks, prayers and songs. It contains the power of happening and changes. Hence, “existence depends on *Ase*.”¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973, pp. 165-188

⁹⁷ Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, p. 169

⁹⁸ John Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 75

⁹⁹ George and Amusan, “Religion and Act of Worship Amongst the Nigerian People: Implications for Development and National Unity,” p. 310

¹⁰⁰ Hans Moscicke, “Reconciling the Supernatural Worldviews of the Bible, African Traditional Religion, and African Christianity,” *Missionalia*, 45/2, p. 129 <http://www.missionalia.journals.ac.za>

¹⁰¹ Nicole Mullen, *Yoruba Art and Culture*, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum Of Anthropology And The Regents Of The University Of California, 2004, p. 21 https://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/TeachingKit_YorubaArtAndCulture.pdf

¹⁰² Nicole Mullen, *Yoruba Art and Culture*, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum Of Anthropology And The Regents Of The University Of California, 2004, p. 21 https://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/TeachingKit_YorubaArtAndCulture.pdf

2.3 Traditional/Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (TEK or IEK) and The Environment

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) deals with the indigenous knowledge of certain cultural groups to their environment. This interaction with the natural world produces a knowledge base acquired over a long period. Traditional or Indigenous knowledge is oral, hence transmission is done verbally and retained by the people in the form of livelihood practices, proverbs, taboos and myths.

The concept of ‘tradition’ and ‘knowledge’ makes consensual definition of TEK difficult. Literature in Environmental sciences and related disciplines reveals “sufficiently large differences in definitions of TEK that may obstruct the possibility of moving toward a consensus on the best definition.”¹⁰³ However, for the sake of this work, I will make do with Berkes’ definition, as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment.”¹⁰⁴ TEK embodies the belief, practice and relationship between cultural people and their living and non-living environment.

In allusion to TEK, White Jr argues that “What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship.”¹⁰⁵ Though these institutions – religion and science - are moving to restoration of what was damaged, however, more sustainable alternatives are needed. Speth, writing about the environmental crisis, says, “To deal

¹⁰³ Kyle Powys Whyte, “On the role of traditional ecological knowledge as a collaborative concept: a philosophical study,” *Whyte Ecological Processes*, 2:7, 2013, p. 2

¹⁰⁴ Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*, Philadelphia and London: Taylor and Francis, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ White Jr, “The Historical Roots of Ecologic Crisis,” pp. 1203-1207

with those issues, we need a spiritual and cultural transformation – and we scientists do not know how to do that.”¹⁰⁶ This is what White Jr called “a new religion, or rethink our old one.”¹⁰⁷

To address this ‘new religion’ or alternative, Kanu asserts that the fundamental worldviews that drive the wheel of environmental degradation in Africa and the world are naturalist and materialistic mentality.¹⁰⁸ These worldviews form the basis for their humanistic, atheistic, and secularised tendencies. Naturalists are of the view that “there is nothing spiritual about the universe or about the human person. Thus, the universe is all that there is; there is no soul, and there are no supernatural powers.”¹⁰⁹ These proponents denied God’s existence nor His creative power. Hence, all human problems can only be solved by science.

The perspective that the earth’s resources replenish themselves and it is inexhaustible for the use of humans forms the basis “of the mismanagement, exploitation, abuse and misuse of the environment and her resources.”¹¹⁰ The evidence of this abuse can be seen around us today – in deforestation, pollution, ecosystem collapse, degradation, flooding, climate change, loss of biodiversity etc. Therefore, a human person needs to ensure a harmonious relationship with their host environment to achieve its full potential by preserving and conserving it. For this to happen, Kanu argues that “there is the need for a re-evaluation of human activity or relationship with nature,”¹¹¹ as

¹⁰⁶ Gus Speth, cited in Gregory E. Sterling, “From the Dean’s Desk,” In: *Crucified Creation A Green Faith Rising, Reflections: a magazine of theological and ethical inquiry*, Volume 106, Number 1, Spring 2019, p. 3

¹⁰⁷ White Jr, p. 1206

¹⁰⁸ Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, “Introduction,” In: Ikechukwu Anthony KANU (Ed), *African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems: Religion, Philosophy And The Environment*, Silver Spring, MD: APAS, 2021, p. ix.

¹⁰⁹ Kanu, “Introduction,” p. ix

¹¹⁰ Kanu, “Introduction,” p. x

¹¹¹ Kanu, “Introduction,” p. xi

every action has a consequence on today and the future of the earth's occupants. Speth argues that the fundamental cause of the environmental crisis is "human selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these, we need a cultural and spiritual transformation."¹¹² There is a need to appeal to Indigenous Knowledge to achieve this since "scientists do not know how to do that."¹¹³ Dasgupta and Ramanathan, however, suggest "moral leadership that religious institutions are in a position to offer"¹¹⁴ to create a sustainable harmony with nature. Francis observes, "The ecological crisis is essentially a spiritual problem, . . . requiring from the human person a spiritual and moral response".¹¹⁵ The call away from science presents a deep knowledge of the relationship between the indigenous people, morality and the environment.

2.3.1 Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines Local or Indigenous Knowledge as the "understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life."¹¹⁶ The purpose of Indigenous Knowledge is for the people in specific cultural contexts to understand their natural environment. Through continual interaction and contact with nature, human beings

¹¹² Speth, cited in Gregory E. Sterling, From the Dean's Desk, p. 3

¹¹³ Speth, cited in Gregory E. Sterling, From the Dean's Desk, p. 3

¹¹⁴ P. Dasgupta and V. Ramanathan, "Pursuit of the common good," *Science*, 345 (6203) 2014, p. 1457

¹¹⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudatio Si* (Praise be to You), Papal Encyclical on Climate, <https://www.ewtn.com>, 2015, no. 9, 206

¹¹⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS)," <https://en.unesco.org/links#:~:text=Local%20and%20indigenous%20knowledge%20refers,day%2Dto%2Dday%20life>.

gather information and reproduce it to develop skills for survival and development in their cultural settings.

The Indigenous people, before the advent of modern science, had been “generating, transmitting, and applying information about the natural world.”¹¹⁷ This knowledge is usually oral. It is an accumulation of knowledge gathered through their close and direct interaction over many generations with their natural environment. The knowledge is expressed through their cultural and religious beliefs and practices, such as proverbs, ceremonies, language, songs, and law.¹¹⁸ Yacoub argues that “investigating what local communities know and have can improve understanding of agriculture, healthcare, food security education and natural resource management issues.”¹¹⁹ Berkes adds to this debate by noting that the distinction of Indigenous Knowledge from citizen science or local knowledge, which involves “a broad spectrum of cultural and spiritual knowledge and values that underpin human–environment relationships”¹²⁰ is needed beyond observation and close contact with the environment.

Indigenous Knowledge as a science, when related to the natural environment or ecology, can be termed either Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) or Indigenous

¹¹⁷ Tyler D Jessen, Natalie C Ban, Nicholas XEMFOLTW Claxton, and Chris T Darimont, “Contributions of Indigenous Knowledge to ecological and evolutionary understanding,” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 20(2), 2022, p. 93

¹¹⁸ Mark Omorovie Ikeke, “Ecophilosophy and African Traditional Ecological Knowledge,” *IDEA – Studia nad strukturą I rozwojem pojęć filozoficznych*, xxx/1, 2018: 228-240, p. 235

¹¹⁹ Hoda Yacoub, “Indigenous Knowledge Definitions, Concepts and Applications” Convention on Biological Diversity, [https://chm.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/4A27922D-31BC-EEFF-7940-DB40D6DB706B/attachments/209070/Hoda%20Yacoub%20-%20IK%20Report%20\(1\).pdf](https://chm.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/4A27922D-31BC-EEFF-7940-DB40D6DB706B/attachments/209070/Hoda%20Yacoub%20-%20IK%20Report%20(1).pdf)

¹²⁰ Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*, Philadelphia and London: Taylor and Francis, 1999, p. 8.

Ecological Knowledge (IEK).¹²¹ These terms are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. However, African Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ATEK) is a subset of African Indigenous Knowledge and evolves from African cosmology and belief systems.¹²² It emphasizes African spirituality and interaction with nature. This contact with nature develops a set of ethics and norms for harmonious coexistence with nature and its preservation.

2.3.2 Attributes of Indigenous Knowledge and Omoluabi Worldview

The key to indigenous knowledge survival is adaptation. It is to be reproduced as an oral tradition in the form of songs, folklore, proverbs, festivals and so on. This knowledge is more often lived, forming a character. It is dynamic, as it incorporates into all areas of life – social, religious, and cultural. To this effect, indigenous knowledge understands the skills of harmonious living with the natural environment and not exploiting it. Human and non-human beings are of value to the community. To the Indigenous people, anything that has values beyond itself is an important element in the community. All these skills and experiences are expressed in songs, proverbs, stories, language, festivals and myths.

Indigenous knowledge, as a non-consumerism view, has contributed to economic and social development. In close relationship to nature, indigenous knowledge makes profitable decisions in favour of the community and the natural environment. The elders are shouldered with the responsibility as the custodian of indigenous knowledge in the community. They have to pass this knowledge to the incoming generation. Yoruba people in a proverb say that a cult that excludes young ones will

¹²¹ Tyler D Jessen, Natalie C Ban, Nicholas Xemtoltw Claxton, and Chris T Darimont, “Contributions of Indigenous Knowledge to ecological and evolutionary understanding,” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 20(2), 2022, p. 93

¹²² Ikeke, “Ecophilosophy and African Traditional Ecological Knowledge,” 2018, p. 233

not last long. Hence it is through the wisdom of old and young that the community is governed. The community believe their daily actions have an impact on nature and vis-a-vis. Hence, adequate responsibility to ensure a symbiotic relationship is made. Since this knowledge is not universal and unique to a cultural location, they do not need validation from another, especially Western science.¹²³

The essence of Indigenous knowledge in Yoruba society is to educate. This education centred around building or forming an Omoluabi character. This education existed before the arrival of Western education and values. “It was a lifelong and continuing.”¹²⁴ As stated by Fagunwa, the curriculum is all-encompassing, complex and founded on the Omoluabi ethos, “which is education geared towards producing a complete person; a person with a good character, gainfully employed and productively engaged in society.”¹²⁵ Character is important in the relationship among the Yorubas. Moral values exhibited by the people tell more of their integrity. A man of sound moral values protects and lives within the acceptable customs and traditions of the community. This value may include respect for non-human beings as entrenched in the Yoruba worldview. This is an aspect of Omoluabi that identify with and respect community living, harmony and values. Hard work is another Omoluabi ethos as identified in Fagunwa’s submission – gainfully employed! Dignity in labour is key to Yoruba Identity and integrity. They would rather be a slave than beg or steal. To them. A jobless or lazy man is a devil’s workshop and poisonous to society. Most of the local agents used in logging and mining are mostly the unemployed.

¹²³ Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., What Does Indigenous Knowledge Mean? A Compilation of Attributes, <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-does-indigenous-knowledge-mean#:~:text=Indigenous%20knowledge%20incorporates%20all%20aspects,interactions%2C%20language%2C%20and%20healing> April 06, 2018

¹²⁴ D. Fagunwa, Inclusion and Diversity in Yoruba Education, DVV International, Adult Education and Development (AED), 84/2017

¹²⁵ Fagunwa, Inclusion and Diversity in Yoruba Education, 2017

Education in Yoruba involves everyone in the community. Among the educational agents are the family, age groups, traditional organizations and the community as a whole. According to Fagunwa, teaching methods include observation, participation, practising, proverbs, repetition, etc.¹²⁶

Fadipe, an African sociologist, summarize the relationship between indigenous knowledge, education and Omoluabi ethos as thus,

“But, as a rule, the Yoruba cannot afford to pretend to be indifferent to the public — however anonymous — and its opinion. In the first place, the public has begun to have a meaning for him from early childhood, and from inside the compound. By one means or another, he has always been made amenable to the opinion of that group. Various members of the extended family have, at various times, taken their turn in bringing to bear upon him and his conduct of various methods of social control namely: instruction, advice, persuasion, reward, and punishment. And just as he learns, under pain of disagreeable consequences, to avoid doing things which will earn him the disapproval of the small group inside the compound, so also does he learn to respect the opinions and prejudices of the larger society. His respect for authority both inside the household and inside the compound has been grounded in the superior age of his mentors who approve or disapprove of his conduct.”¹²⁷

The end product of Yoruba (indigenous) knowledge, according to Awoniyi “is to make an individual an omoluwabi.”¹²⁸ As a cultural and moral concept, Omoluabi is conceived and lived by the Yorubas. These attributes make individuals responsible and morally conscious of what happens in their natural world. *Omoluàbí*, an exhibitor of sound morals, interacted with the environment with the view of making it better and sustainable not only for themselves but also for the community. They value and respect the natural environment “so that they can continue to be useful and sources of

¹²⁶ Fagunwa, *Inclusion and Diversity in Yoruba Education*, 2017

¹²⁷ N. A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970, Pp. 310 - 311

¹²⁸ T. A. Awoniyi, “Omoluwabi: The Fundamental Basis of Yoruba Traditional Education”, In Abimbola, Wande ed. *Yoruba Oral Tradition*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1975, p. 364

sustenance to future generations.”¹²⁹ This worldview also makes traditional Yoruba people accountable to themselves, the community and the Creator for the environment. Community members guided by this concept protected the community’s cultural values, morals, taboos, beliefs, totems, and peaceful coexistence. Some of these taboos and beliefs are woven to protect the relationship between man and his (spiritual) environment. These taboos and beliefs are expected to be kept and lived by Omoluabi. Personal interests are not placed over community decisions or interests. Despite the dominance of Christianity and Islam in Yoruba land, the Omoluabi worldview still acts as a reference point for what a good and responsible person should be.¹³⁰

2.4 Yoruba Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Sacred Natural World

The Yoruba believe in the existence of the spirit world in which “man lives in a religious universe so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. They not only originate from Him but also bear witness to Him.”¹³¹ The sacredness of these natural and phenomena objects indicates a knowledge-based relationship with spirituality and nature and evidence of a Creator God, Olodumare. It is a traditional belief that man should not kill what he can not create out of supreme arrogance, even “the tiniest of insects is regarded as having rights to life.”¹³² To demonstrate this, Ogunade reiterates the traditional Yoruba saying regarding the right to life of other creatures:

¹²⁹ Bewaji, “Yorùbá Values and the Environment,” 2018, p. 243

¹³⁰ More about Omoluabi's worldview and how it relates to the environment shall be extensively discussed in the next chapter.

¹³¹ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed, p. 48

¹³² H. Odora, “Indigenous knowledge systems and academic institutions in South Africa,” *Perspectives in Education* 19, 2001, p. 73

“Yi ese re si apakan	(Side step your feet)
Ma se te kokoro ni	(Do not kill that insect)
Kokoro ti iwo ko naani ni	(That insect you do not regard)
Olorun lo da a	(God also create)” ¹³³

In the Yoruba African religious context, certain natural objects are sacred. These may include animals, water/river, forest/grove, tree, mountain or land. There are phenomena, stories, taboos or natural uniqueness associated with these sacred objects. Sometimes, they are used as ‘symbols of the ancestors and deities’ and suitable offerings of sacrifice in worship.¹³⁴ Preservation under the umbrella of sacredness in African beliefs is to secure the environment as a gift from Creator God, knowing fully well that “the loss of it is more stressful than the gain of it.... And preservation ... through taboos was to avoid the stress, in the form of ecological crisis, that would come as a result of the loss.”¹³⁵ Hence, Robertson asserts that “The sacred is to be treated with a certain specific attitude of respect.”¹³⁶

2.4.1 Taboos and Environmental Preservation

Taboos are concepts of preservation and safety introduced to guide and enforce moral order in society. They form the basis by which decisions about the sacred and profane, morally approved or abominable are made by society and the deity.¹³⁷ Taboos are

¹³³ R. Ogunade, “Environmental issues in Yoruba religion: implications for leadership and society in Nigeria,” *A paper prepared for Science and Religion: Global Perspectives*, June 4-8, 2005, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, A program of the Metanexus Institute (www.metanexus.net). Available: <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/publications/raymond/ENVIRONMENTAL%20ISSUES%20IN%20YORUBA%20RELIGION.htm>. P. 5

¹³⁴ Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, “Sacred Animals And Igbo-African Ecological Knowledge System,” In: *African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems: Religion, Philosophy and the Environment*, Edited By: Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, Silver Spring, MD: The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), 2021, pp. 1-2

¹³⁵ Kanu, “Sacred Animals And Igbo-African Ecological Knowledge System,” pp. 3-4

¹³⁶ R. Robertson, *Sociology of religion*, Britain: The Chancer, 1971, p. 55

¹³⁷ Cecilia Omobola Odejobi, “An Overview of Taboo and Superstition among the Yoruba of Southwest of Nigeria,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 4, No 2, May 2013, p. 221

orally transmitted from one generation to another. “Taboos and Superstitions were found in the early man’s effort to explain nature and his own existence, to propitiate fate and invite fortune; to avoid evils he could not understand and to pry into the future.”¹³⁸ Taboos are culturally and religiously relevant to the people within a cultural context. In Yoruba culture, it is one of the major cultural components. “It is one way in which the Yoruba society expresses its disapproval of certain kinds of behaviour believed to be harmful to its members, either for supernatural reasons or because such behaviour violates a moral code.”¹³⁹ To emphasize the importance of taboos in traditional Yoruba society, Thorpe stated seven reasons: “(a) avoid an accident; (b) have respect for religion; (c) respect elders; (d) obey rules of cleanliness; (e) teach moral values; (f) guide against being wasteful; (g) explain things that are difficult to understand.”¹⁴⁰ Hence, taboos served as tools for moral obligation, religious and cultural guidance and purpose for “protecting the sanctity”¹⁴¹ of religious, cultural, environmental and social order by creating harmony between the physical and spiritual, and well-being of the community.

For example, it is said:

“A ko gbodo fi ada sa ile lasan ; ki omo onile ma baa binu si eni naa (we must not use the cutlass to till the bear ground; so as not to incur the wrath of the earth goddess).”¹⁴² The essence of this taboo is to avoid an incident that comes with willful

¹³⁸ Odejobi, “An Overview of Taboo and Superstition among the Yoruba of Southwest of Nigeria,” p. 221

¹³⁹ Adebola Adebileje, “Socio-Cultural and Attitudinal Study of Selected Yoruba Taboos in South West Nigeria,” *Studies in Literature and Language*, 4 (1), 2012, p. 94

¹⁴⁰ C. O. Thorpe, *Àwon èèwò ilè Yorùbá*, Ibadan: Onibon-Oje press, 1972 cited in Odejobi, An Overview of Taboo and Superstition among the Yoruba of Southwest of Nigeria, p. 224

¹⁴¹ Odejobi, “An Overview of Taboo and Superstition among the Yoruba of Southwest of Nigeria,” p. 222

¹⁴² Odejobi, p. 224

play with harmful objects like a cutlass. It also connotes that the ground (earth) has a guardian spirit that needs to be respected.

“Obinrin ko gbodo wo igbo Oro; ki Oro ma ba a gbe e (women must not enter the Oro grove to avoid being kidnapped by Oro¹⁴³).”¹⁴⁴ Oro groves or forests are preserved for cultic use. Preservation of this forest has led to the growth of biodiversity of flora and fauna. Some dangerous animals may live in them, such as snakes. The taboo forbids women from encroaching into an all-male fraternity grove. It was a cultural consensus for many generations that women must not enter *Oro* forest nor see it in parade. Children and non indigenous people, male or female are also prohibited. “A ko gbodo fi owo gbe ojo, ki aara ma baa san pa eni naa (we must not use bear hand to collect rainwater during rainfall so that thunder will not strike the person dead).”¹⁴⁵ The traditional Yoruba society understands, from generations of close contact with nature, the relationship between thunder and rainfall, even though they may not be explained scientifically. The taboo is to avert possible accidents that are associated with thunderstorms.

2.4.2 Sacred Groves

The management of sacred groves through the traditional indigenous knowledge in the Yoruba context has led to “rich in biodiversity because they are adequately protected and undisturbed.”¹⁴⁶ Yoruba worldview associated with divinities opines that all these groves or trees have their guardian spirits. Frese and Gray opine that, Sacred trees:

¹⁴³ Invisible supernatural being

¹⁴⁴ Odejobi, p. 224

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 226

¹⁴⁶ Gbadebo Jonathan Osemeobo, “Back to tradition: taboos in bioconservation in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, Vol. 3 (1), January, 2013, p. 351

“Are a form of nature that represents life and the sacred continuity of the spiritual, cosmic and physical worlds. A tree is usually used to symbolise a deity or other sacred beings, or it may stand for what is sacred in general... Trees represent certain deities or ancestors, serve as mediators or as a link to the religious realm, and are associated with cultural beliefs in heaven or the afterlife.”¹⁴⁷

Constant preservation of these trees or forests expresses a long-term relationship between the people and their immediate environment. For fear of ancestral spirits, people keep and transmit the taboos and punishment that may result in flaunting it. Sacred groves are associated with the community and their activities. According to Osemeobo, “Communities use taboos for prohibiting access to these groves that also serve as watersheds, habitats for endemic species and seed sources of rare species.”¹⁴⁸ However, modernity and consumerism have turned some of these groves into bare grasslands. White Jr. also argues that “the whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the west,”¹⁴⁹ reasons for Christian missionaries chopping down the sacred forest with the claim of idolatry for many generations. However, the elders say *Omode bu iroko, O boju weyin. Ojo ta ba bu Oluwere ko ni pani* (A child cursed an Iroko tree and looks back. It is not the day you cursed Oluwere¹⁵⁰ that it kills). Since it is hard to undo the damage, as the consequences stare us in the face, “the groves may continue to exist as long as the traditional religion dictates the pace of traditional activities (worship, ceremonies, festivals and rites) in many indigenous communities in the country.”¹⁵¹

Sacred groves or forests not only serve as conservation for biodiversity but also a hub for medicine, since local herbalist or healers get their herbs mostly from the forest. As

¹⁴⁷ P. R. Frese and S. J. M. Gray, “The Encyclopedia of Religion” Vol. 15, In Eliade, M. (Ed.), New York: Macmillan, 1995, p. 26

¹⁴⁸ Osemeobo, Back to tradition: taboos in bioconservation in Nigeria, P. 351

¹⁴⁹ White, Jr, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” p. 1206

¹⁵⁰ Oluwere is the spirit that lives in Iroko tree

¹⁵¹ Osemeobo, “Back to tradition: taboos in bioconservation in Nigeria,” P. 355

it is said, *ogun ti ko je, ewe e lo ku kan* (a concussion or medicine that is not potent, its ingredients (herbs) are not complete). This proverb is not only used to boast of one's potential but to emphasise the importance of varieties of herbs in the treatment of diseases. Hence, care should be taken in consciously conserving the forest for effective local treatment of the sick.

2.4.3 Sacred Animals

By the reason of phenomena encounters, personalities, and other socio-religious factors, sacredness or taboo has been placed on some animals. This functioned as a protection for many animals from going into extinction. Kanu said, "Strongly connected to the preservation of sacred animals is the preservation of sacred forests and water bodies."¹⁵² In some parts of Yoruba communities, fishing is forbidden in certain water bodies. There was a taboo that someone did break the taboo, but that the catch of fish kept joining together as a whole and refused to be cooked. As much as this may not be verifiable, the concept is to preserve the sea animals and keep the community water safe for drinking. As mentioned earlier, the fear that people have about offending the living dead, who set such a forest and water body as sacred, is still believed to be around the people. Africans do not only respect their elders while alive but also in death. These "sacred sites and strictly protected by customary laws, beliefs and enforced taboos."¹⁵³ The animals in these sacred sites flourish and may record an increased due to a lack of human activities and disturbances. In return, the ecological importance of these sacred objects is complementary to humans' existence. Some animals are scavengers or can attract unhealthy organisms for better human health.

¹⁵² Kanu, "Sacred Animals And Igbo-African Ecological Knowledge System," p. 9

¹⁵³ Kanu, "Sacred Animals And Igbo-African Ecological Knowledge System," p.9

Yoruba culture showing a deep interaction with the animal world, uses a lot of animal totems in proverbs. For example, when Yoruba want to encourage and reaffirm God's providence despite how bad the situation may be, they will say “*Àkùkọ tí yóò kọ lágba, àṣá ò ní gbe ní òròmọ* - The cock that will crow will not fall prey to the hawk at tender age.”¹⁵⁴ Hence, daily trying and focus brings perfection – “*Ìyànjú gbígba ojoojúmọ ni ọbọ fi í mọ igi í gùn* - Series of daily trials make the monkey attain perfect climbing skills.”¹⁵⁵ To inculcate respect, it is said, “*Bí ekòlọ bá jubà ilẹ , ilẹ álanu fún un* - If the earthworm acknowledges the superiority of the earth, the earth will open for it.”¹⁵⁶

2.4.4 The Sacred Water

Water is essential in Yoruba cosmology and beliefs. It is not just a body of water but part of human existence which is expressed in their identity, cultural heritage, and beliefs. “Water is a relevant and a significant variable that is also germane to the understanding of Yoruba peoples’ identity, culture and religion.”¹⁵⁷ According to the Yoruba creation story, there is an interrelatedness between first water, the environment and the people. Oduduwa, according to the myth under the directive of Olodumare, came to form the earth on the primordial water.¹⁵⁸ To this effect, some water bodies become sacred, as some came into existence through the phenomenon power of the deities and superhumans – Osun, Oya, and Oba (They all married to

¹⁵⁴ Jelili Adewale Adeoye, Adekemi Agnes Taiwo & Adeseke Adefolaju Eben, “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Animal Totems in Some Selected Yoruba Proverbs,” *SKASE Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* [online], vol. 4, no. 1, 2022, p. 41 Available on web page <http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/SJLCS06/05.pdf>. ISSN 2644-5506.

¹⁵⁵ Adeoye, et. al., “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Animal Totems in Some Selected Yoruba Proverbs,” 2022, p. 42

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 47

¹⁵⁷ George Olusola Ajibade, Water Symbolism in Yoruba Folklore and Culture, <https://journals.flvc.org/ysr/article/download/130029/132545>, 99-123, p. 99

¹⁵⁸ Adewale O. Owoseni, “Water in Yoruba Belief and Imperative for Environmental Sustainability,” *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, Vol.28, 2017, p. 14

Sango, the god of thunder and lightning).¹⁵⁹ Black affirms that “Since earliest times people have honoured water, worshipped water, granting (it) a special place in their language, myth and rituals”¹⁶⁰. However, concerning eco religion, Roger says, “Water is an ambivalent matter and resource in the history, culture, geography, and social life of the African people.”¹⁶¹ It was said *omi ko lota* (water has no enemy), water is life, and there is also life (spirit) in water. According to Parrinder,

“All the great rivers of Yoruba country have their presiding spirit. We have referred to Oya, goddess of the river Niger, wife of Shango, the thunder god; two other wives of his were the rivers Oshun east of Ibadan and Ovia at Benin. One of the most popular river spirits is Yemoja, who is called the mother of all deities and has shrines in many parts of the country, but especially rules over Ogun at Abeokuta... Olokun is the ‘owner of the sea’ in Yoruba... Olosa, the Lagoon goddess, is worshipped chiefly by those who live along the coast.”¹⁶²

Hence, the sacredness of the water bodies becomes important for humans and the environment. This sacredness must be promoted to preserve nature and reduce the environmental crisis. To fish in Osun or any other sacred rivers, especially at the point of their shrines, is prohibited. Prohibition is not limited to the rivers but their groves. A saying to affirm the relationship between rivers and other fauna and flora foes thus: *A ki s’osa lodo ki labelabe ma mo* – there is no how a sacrifice will be brought to the river and the elephant grass will not know. Elephant grass grows mostly along the riversides. Also, to emphasise this relationship, due to interaction, contact and observation with the nature, Yoruba people says, “*Bù fún mi n bù fún ọ làkèrè ñ ké*

¹⁵⁹ George Olúsolá Ajíbádé, “Negotiating Performance: Òṣun In The Verbal And Visual Metaphors,” *Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers* No 4, (October 2005) “There is even another saying that reveals that Sàngó had many wives out of whom Òṣun is one; others include Oya and Qbà who are also river deities.” P. 90

¹⁶⁰ Maggie Black, *Water: Life Force*, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2004, p. 12

¹⁶¹ S. Gottlieb Roger, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 274

¹⁶² G. Parrinder, *West African Religion*, Britain: Redwood Burn Limited, Trowbridge & Esther, 1969, p. 45

lódò - Life is symbiotic croak the frogs in the river.”¹⁶³ In Osun groves, “hunting of endangered species like white-nosed monkey and poaching of flora (herbal) varieties that have inherent medicinal values”¹⁶⁴ is taboo. Crowds were kept outside the groves during the March pilgrimage to the Osun river to demonstrate the traditional consciousness of environmental preservation in avoiding encroachment, poaching or killing of flora and fauna.¹⁶⁵

2.5 The Place of Proverbs in Yoruba Society

Proverbs in Yoruba are called *Owe*. In his classic work, *Yoruba Proverbs*, Owomoyela, says, “*Òwe* seems to be formed from the contraction of *ò-wé e*, literally ‘something that wraps it.’ The root is the verb *wé* (wrap[something] around [something else]).”¹⁶⁶ The metaphorical features of *Owe* protected it from being diminished or watered down. According to Olanrewaju, “The elders mostly use proverbs to prove to the younger ones that it is their exclusive right to use such to drive some serious points home.”¹⁶⁷ Proverbs are a flavour in conversation used in their daily activities. Proverbs are short sayings with philosophical and theological natures that reflect the wisdom of the people from generation to generation. In its canon are embedded moral values, religious beliefs and ethical guides. It possesses the appearance of the universal truth, though in metaphoric codes. Fayemi says, “For

¹⁶³ Adeoye, et. al., “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Animal Totems in Some Selected Yorùbá Proverbs,” 2022, p. 42

¹⁶⁴ Owoseni, “Water in Yoruba Belief and Imperative for Environmental Sustainability,” *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, Vol. 28, 2017, p. 15

¹⁶⁵ Owoseni, “Water in Yoruba Belief and Imperative for Environmental Sustainability,” 2017, p. 15

¹⁶⁶ Oyekan Owomoyela, *Yoruba Proverbs*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, p. 3

¹⁶⁷ Felicia Titilayo Olanrewaju, “Yoruba Proverbs as Expression of Socio- Cultural Identity in the South-Western, Nigeria,” *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 7, No. 3, September 2020, p. 70

an African, what is not in proverbs is not real.”¹⁶⁸ *Òwe l’ẹ sin ọrọ; ti oro ba sonu, owe l’a fi nwa* – “Proverb is the horse of thought; when thought is lost, it is to proverb one turns for its recovery.”¹⁶⁹ Olubode-Sawe argues, “In Yoruba society, effective speech and social success depend on a good command of proverbs.”¹⁷⁰ Lau, Tokofsky and Winnick argued that “proverbs can persuade and dissuade...express deference or confidence, show worry, instil fear or respect, or even mock listener.”¹⁷¹ Akporobaro observes that proverbs are “often very humorous, delightful to hear, morally instructive, philosophic in outlook and figuratively ornamented”.¹⁷² According to Bolaji, Adebajo and Adekoya, “With proverbs, an elder can (give) advice, settle a quarrel, warn, counsel, persuade or encourage...With proverbs, threats are breathed out, and love or affection is expressed”.¹⁷³ Proverbs apply to every sphere of life as a problem solver. It deals with laziness, emotion, peaceful coexistence, health, administration, agriculture, business and family. Proverbs are not restricted to the Yoruba society. However, the application of proverbs among them suggests an intrinsic part of their society.

Some Yoruba proverbs demonstrate the concept of communal and peaceful coexistence: ‘*Agba ki wa loja, k’ori omo tuntun wo*’ (the presence of the elders in the

¹⁶⁸ A. K. Fayemi, “The Logic in Yoruba Proverbs,” In: Jonathan O. Chimakonam (Ed.), *Logic And African Philosophy: Seminal Essays on African Systems of Thought, Series in Philosophy*, Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2010, p. 127.

¹⁶⁹ T. Falola & A. Oyebade (Eds.), *Yoruba Fiction, Orature and Culture: Oyekan Owomoyela and African Literature & the Yoruba Experience*, Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2011, p. v

¹⁷⁰ Funmi O. Olubode-Sawe, “Interpreting Yoruba proverbs: Some hearer strategies,” *California Linguistic Notes*, Volume XXXIV No. 2 Spring, 2009, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ K. Lau, P. Tokofsky, and S. Winic (eds), *What goes around comes around: The circulation of proverbs in contemporary life*, Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004, p. 6

¹⁷² F. B. O. Akporobaro, *Introduction to African oral literature*, Lagos: Princeton Publishing Company, 2008, pp. 85, 95

¹⁷³ E. T. Bolaji, M. O. Adebajo, & E. O. Adekoya, “Complementary Yoruba proverbs: Analysis of their structure and aesthetics,” *Continuing Education Review*, 1(1), 2011, p. 11

market prevents disorderliness), *T'aba pari ija ana, a o ni ri eni ba sere* (It is pertinent to resolve all grudges for continuous friendship); *Semi n bi o, loogun ore*, (No room for malice in friendship), *Ika to ba se, ni Oba n ge*, (We are responsible for the consequence of our action). Differences are resolved to enable continuous peaceful coexistence and justice.

Diligence and hard work are also encouraged among the Yoruba people and as attributes of Omoluabi, which can be expressed in their proverbs. For example, “*Ìṣé loògùn ìṣé*” (Hard work is the antidote for poverty.) This also teaches that anyone who refuses to work will become poor and wretched.¹⁷⁴ Yoruba believe there is dignity in labour. Society frowns on laziness. It is a thing of ridicule to call someone lazy (*ole*) in the Yoruba community. This is because a lazy person has a propensity for stealing. However, stealing disrupts the harmonious relationship expected to exist in communal living.

“*O ò ṣági lógbé, oò ta ògùrò lófà, o wá dédíí òpẹ, o gbénu sókè; òfẹ ní ro, ògùrò àìdá?*” (You didn't cut a tree or tap from a palm tree. But you got to the palm tree expecting palm wine. Is it without labour that you get palm wine?)¹⁷⁵ There is always a cause for every action. Specific result demands particular action. Tapping palm wine is with effort and not a mere wish. Hence, if individuals fail to work, they can only dream but not live a good life. Palm wine is an essential item in Yoruba culture. It plays a significant role in every celebration. It is natural, and the sweetness is second to none. To have such a drink, someone must have laboured hard. Hence, to those

¹⁷⁴ Olukemi Morenike Olofinsao, “Proverbs: A Powerful Tool in Yoruba Indigenous Administration of Community Affairs in Selected Communities of Southwestern States in Nigeria,” *European Modern Studies Journal*, Vol 5 No 3, 2021, p. 553

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 553

who always want a great result without corresponding labour, this proverb is applied to them.

In areas of respect and cooperation, Yoruba will say, “Àìfì àgbà fẹ̀nì kan ni kò jé káyé rójú” (Failure to respect a leader is not conducive to the peaceful existence of the community). When there is no leader in a community, things will turn upside down; there will be disorderliness within the society.¹⁷⁶ Respect forms one of the main fabrics of Yoruba society. One of the qualities of *Omoluabi* is to be respectful. To have a peaceful society, Yoruba organised a leadership hierarchy. *Agba*, leaders or seniors, are saddled with maintaining order and peace in society. This leadership starts from the family *Baale* to quarters *Bale* and community *Oba*. Leadership, in some cases, are not by seniority, which is the reason why there is a need for cooperation and respect.

Yoruba Indigenous knowledge is transmitted through different methods including proverbs. Indigenous knowledge revolved around the Yoruba cosmology – spiritual and physical, which encompasses what they called environment. Among the Yoruba oral systems such as chants, proverbs, eulogies, talking drums, folktales, and stories; proverbs are commonly used and applicable to every occasion. Hence, environmental Proverbs are needed, not only to preserve the environment but maintain a harmonious relationship with the spirit world.

2.6 Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church in Western Nigeria

Among the twentieth-century missionary churches in Nigeria is the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. SDA established its mission in Nigeria and western Nigeria in

¹⁷⁶ Olofinsao, “Proverbs: A Powerful Tool in Yoruba Indigenous Administration of Community Affairs in Selected Communities of Southwestern States in Nigeria,” *European Modern Studies Journal*, Vol 5 No 3, 2021, p. 550.

1914, through the leadership of Elder D.C. Babcock, who left Freetown, Sierra Leone by boat in February 1914 with his family and two other African missionaries¹⁷⁷ and arrived at Lagos Port on March 7, 1914. Adventist historians like Agboola and Babalola trace DC Babcock and his associates' movement to Erunmu, a village about 26km North-East of Ibadan.¹⁷⁸ Ibadan was the capital city of the old western region and later that of Oyo State. One of the Babcock's associates, Dauphin, established an elementary school for the young ones, after learning to speak the Yoruba language within a space of five months! Today, education and health have been social tools in the hands of Adventists to address social vices and contribute to society. According to Adeleye, the President of the Western Nigeria Union Conference of SDA Church,

“The Church has impacted the citizens of Nigeria spiritually, socially, educationally, economically, and in physical wellness through the following medical and educational institutions, owned and operated by the church in Western Nigeria Union Conference: Babcock University in Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Seventh-day Adventist School of Nursing, & College of Health Technology, Ile Ife, Osun State, 11 secondary schools, 29 nursery/primary schools, Babcock University Teaching Hospital, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, Ile Ife, Osun State, Three medical centers.”¹⁷⁹

The diaconal ministry of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in western Nigeria is manifested in the mission of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). ADRA operates six main portfolios which include protecting the vulnerable, supporting families, promoting health (and adult literacy), providing food and water,

¹⁷⁷ R. P. Dauphin (a Sierra Leonian) and Samuel D. Morgue (a Ghananian)

¹⁷⁸ D.O. Babalola, *On becoming a conference: The story of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yorubaland 1914-2002*. Ibadan: OSB Design Limited, 2002, Pp. 28-30, D. T. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist history in West Africa (1888-1988): A mustard seed*, Ibadan: Lasob Production, 2001, p. 24

¹⁷⁹ E.A Adeleye, Western Nigeria Union Conference, *Encyclopedia of Seventh-Day Adventists*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=3C2M#fn34>, January 29, 2020

establishing livelihoods, and responding to emergencies.¹⁸⁰ This agency cooperates with the government in providing sustainable development and emergency relief. The mission of SDA in western Nigeria has its headquarters located at 524 Ikorodu Road, Maryland, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria. It operates the following departments: Evangelism and Global Mission, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, Stewardship Ministries, Planned Giving and Trust Services, Family Ministries, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, Health Ministries, Women's Ministries, Adventist Men's Ministries, Communication, Education, Adventist Youth Ministries, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, Ministerial Association, Ministerial Spouses Association, Publishing Ministries, Children's Ministries, Archives, Statistics, and Research, and Strategic Planning.¹⁸¹

2.7. Summary

The Yoruba, like other indigenous cultural people, are rich in cosmological worldviews and belief systems. This conscious interaction with their physical and spiritual environment has created an awareness that they are co-tenants with other beings – living and non-living. To this effect, efforts were made to preserve and conserve both their human neighbours and those in the natural ecosystem. This is done by creating socioreligious ethical values embedded in taboos and norms, and also in a lived life – Omoluabi. However, the use of these objects in daily sayings (proverbs) affirms long-time interaction with nature. The spiritual dimension of the people makes them believe that every natural object has an indwelling spirit. Hence, most of these objects are termed sacred, while others are accorded the right to life. If

¹⁸⁰ Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), <https://adra.org/> A global humanitarian organization who delivers relief and development to individuals in more than 130 countries. ADRA is changing the world through Health, Education, Livelihood, and Emergency response efforts

¹⁸¹ <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13492>

this knowledge is harnessed, it will aid the conservation and preservation of the environment and help the Adventists to contextualize their doctrines on creation, sabbath, stewardship, Christian behaviour, the second coming of Christ and the new earth.

CHAPTER THREE

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN WESTERN NIGERIA

“Nigeria currently is reeling from a range of environmental problems, including erosion in the southeast, oil spills in the south, flooding in the south-west, desert encroachment and increasing sand dunes in the north, wildlife poaching in protected areas, deforestation, unbearable heat and a scarcity of drinking water.”¹⁸²

3.0 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to set the picture of the ecological issues in western Nigeria, detailing the impact of the faith-based institutions, the government, the private sector and the local communities. It is observable that some of these agencies in Yoruba states operate with the environment against the cultural ethos of Omoluabi, which might have contributed to the environmental crisis and degradation in the region. Each region in Nigeria has peculiar environmental challenges aside from general occurrences of flooding and degradation due to mining. However, states along the coastlines in South (Western) Nigeria, like Ondo, Ogun and Lagos, face oil spillage¹⁸³ and sea surges. Overcrowding and encroachment of urban development into waterlogged areas, sea surges, and air pollution are some occurrences in Lagos State. Oyo state and Ibadan, the state capital, is not free from waste management issue

¹⁸² N. Isaac, “Experts say biotech can help Nigeria’s environment,” *Alliance for Science*, <https://allianceforscience.org/blog/2018/04/experts-say-biotech-can-help-nigerias-environment/>

¹⁸³ Ondo state in South west “Nigeria has an extrapolated reserve of 42 billion barrels and ranked second largest country with bitumen reserves, after Venezuela,” M. Alhassan, M.S. Asmau, Y. Nasiru, M. Suleiman, M.A. Safiya, A.A. Isah, B. Abdullahi, A.A. Garba and A. Kasimu, “Characterization of Nigerian Bitumen Extract Fractions,” *Journal of Ecology & Natural Resources*, Volume 4 Issue 6, 2022, p. 2.

and bad drainage.¹⁸⁴ In Ogun state, most government reserve areas are now farmland.¹⁸⁵ However, deforestation, improper waste management, flooding, clearing and burning of bushes, and wildlife poaching in the supposed game reserves are common environmental issues in all Yoruba-speaking states.

3.1 Survey of Environmental Crisis

Recently, natural disasters have been frequent and increasing, mostly leading to a loss of life, destruction of property, and a depleted environment. Aside from natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, drought, and many more, anthropocentric activity also create more tension on the world's climate – “with increased sea levels and potential disasters.”¹⁸⁶ Natural and human-activity disasters predispose all countries to “climate change and instability in weather patterns, but the poorest countries and the poorest people within them are most vulnerable, being the most exposed and having the least means to adapt.”¹⁸⁷

Nigeria is a country of over 200 million people, having a “National Poverty Line of 82.9 million poor people in 2018.”¹⁸⁸ Nigeria is therefore classified as “one of the

¹⁸⁴ A. M. Aderemi, R. O. Elesho, F. T. Aderemi, K. A. Aluko, A. P. Odetoyinbo, A.A. Raji, “Assessment of Solid Waste Management in Sabo, Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria,” *IOSR Journal of Environmental Science, Toxicology and Food Technology (IOSR-JESTFT)*, Volume 14, Issue 7 Ser. I, July 2020, pp. 17-18

¹⁸⁵ B. O. Agbeja, and A. A. Otesile, “Conflicts and Forest Land-Use: A Case Study of Forest Reserves in Ogun State, Nigeria,” *Forests and Forest Products Journal* 4, 2011, p. 62

¹⁸⁶ *Living with Risk: A global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives*, Geneva Switzerland: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction – UN, 2002, p. 6

¹⁸⁷ IMF and World Bank, “Clean energy and development: towards an investment framework. DC2006–0002”, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Vice-Presidency and Infrastructure Vice Presidency, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2006, p. viii.

¹⁸⁸ World Bank Group, Nigeria: Poverty & Equity Brief, 2021, p. 1
https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/AM2021/Global_POVEQ_NGA.pdf

highly populated nations of the Less Developed Countries (LDCs).”¹⁸⁹ According to the Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2022, an economic group led by Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, the then-vice President of Nigeria, “62.9% of people—just under 133 million people—are multidimensionally poor, meaning that they experience deprivations in more than one dimension, . . . The average deprivation score among poor people, which shows the intensity of poverty, is 40.9%.”¹⁹⁰ However, about 86 million of 133 million poor people live in the north, while the rest are in the south.¹⁹¹ Sadly, most people live in rural areas or disaster-prone areas in the cities – such as flood plains, waterlogged areas, open waste disposal areas, and noise pollution areas. Hence, they are susceptible to hazards.

According to Kwame, environmental degradation has been associated with human activities and development for centuries.¹⁹² Ibimilua and Ibimilua argue that human activities are the bedrock of the ecological crisis in Nigeria. The problem results from interaction or interference with the natural environment. Hence, they occur due to “human intent, negligence, error or failure of a human-made system.”¹⁹³ In the words of Fatubarin, anthropocentric environmental problems are the result of the activities of men in their interaction with the environment,¹⁹⁴ which is “to a large extent,

¹⁸⁹ V. J. Pontianus and E. D. Oruonye, “The Nigerian population: A treasure for national development or an unsurmountable national challenge,” *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 02(01), 2021, p. 136

¹⁹⁰ Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), p. 22, <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/NIGERIA%20MULTIDIMENSIONAL%20POVERTY%20INDEX%20SURVEY%20RESULTS%202022.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022), p. 25

¹⁹² G. Kwame, *Social studies* (2nd ed.), New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited, 2008, p. 274

¹⁹³ F. O. Ibimilua and A. F. Ibimilua, “Environmental Challenges in Nigeria: Typology, Spatial Distribution, Repercussions and Way Forward”, *American International Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 3 No. 2, March 2014, p. 248

¹⁹⁴ A. Fatunbarin, *Man and his environment*, Ilesha: Keynotes, 2009, 13

technology or culture dependent.”¹⁹⁵Some of these cultural practices may be in the area of waste disposal and pollution.

For example, in the construction industry, a lot of forest wood goes into it, leaving the biosphere vulnerable to erosion and destruction. In 2012, two significant events affected the environmental landscape of western Nigeria. These are flood¹⁹⁶ and removal of kerosene subsidy,¹⁹⁷ which will be discussed in connection to other environmental hazards in the region in this section since “the environmental problems are inter-related and inter-connected.”¹⁹⁸

3.1.1 Flooding

Flooding has become a regular occurrence in western Nigeria due to poor drainage patterns and disruption of river flow, that comes with the flash floods of rainy season. During this incident, pollutants are released directly or indirectly into rivers and wells, contaminating drinking water sources for the people.¹⁹⁹ Contaminated water and flood sediments led to water-borne diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, typhoid, malaria, Amoebiasis, hepatitis A and “heightening the chances of an epidemic and increasing

¹⁹⁵ Ibimilua and Ibimilua, “Environmental Challenges in Nigeria: Typology, Spatial Distribution, Repercussions and Way Forward”,2014, p. 248

¹⁹⁶ N. Umar & A. Gray, “Flooding in Nigeria: a review of its occurrence and impacts and approaches to modelling flood data,” *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 80:3, 2023, p. 546

¹⁹⁷ C. Akujobi, “The Impact of Kerosene Price Subsidy Removal on Households’ Cooking Energy Consumption in Nigeria: Implications for National Development”, *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research (IJMSR)*, Volume 3, Issue 5, May 2015, pp 50-54,

¹⁹⁸ Ibimilua and Ibimilua, “Environmental Challenges in Nigeria: Typology, Spatial Distribution, Repercussions and Way Forward”,2014, p. 246

¹⁹⁹ S. A. Aransiola, O. T. Evinemi, N. O. Falade, and T. T. Falese, “Assessment of Water Contamination in Nigeria – Review”, *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International*, 19 (1), 2016, p. 63

childhood illnesses.”²⁰⁰ Debris from the floods can also destroy crops and wildlife habitats. Sometimes, erosion changes the land’s topography by creating gullies and removing the fertile surface of the earth.

Agbonkhese et al. allude that the 2012 flooding was due to higher rainfall and the release of the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon, which resulted in the submerging of hundreds of communities and the destruction of thousands of hectares of farmlands in Nigeria.²⁰¹ The highest fatalities recorded in July and August were in Lagos and Oyo – especially in “Oyo state, which accounted for about 905 of the total deaths from the flood in the month.”²⁰² Since the devastating flood of 2012, a similar but less destructive flood occurred in 2022. According to UNICEF, 3.2 million people were affected, of which 1.9 million were children. About 1.4 million were displaced, 34 of 36 states were involved, with 612 lives lost.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ UNICEF, *Nigeria: Emergency Flood Response*, Flash Update, September – November, 2022, p. 1 [https://www.unicef.org/media/130026/file/Nigeria%20Flash%20Update%20\(Flood\)%20for%20September%20%E2%80%93%20November%202022..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/130026/file/Nigeria%20Flash%20Update%20(Flood)%20for%20September%20%E2%80%93%20November%202022..pdf)

²⁰¹ O. Agbonkhese, E. G. Agbonkhese, E.O. Aka, J. Joe-Abaya, M. Ocholi, and A. Adekunle, “Flood Menace in Nigeria: Impacts, Remedial and Management Strategies,” *Civil and Environmental Research*, Vol.6, No.4, 2014, p 36

²⁰² P. 35

²⁰³ UNICEF, *Nigeria: Emergency Flood Response*, Flash Update, September – November, 2022, p. 1 [https://www.unicef.org/media/130026/file/Nigeria%20Flash%20Update%20\(Flood\)%20for%20September%20%E2%80%93%20November%202022..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/130026/file/Nigeria%20Flash%20Update%20(Flood)%20for%20September%20%E2%80%93%20November%202022..pdf)

Year	Numbers of People Affected		Value of Damages ('000 US\$)		Numbers of Deaths	
	Nigeria (% contribution In Africa)	Africa	Nigeria (% contribution In Africa)	Africa	Nigeria (% contribution In Africa)	Africa
2011	30,915 (2.19)	1,414,579	4,500 (0.45)	1,006,500	174 (25.89)	672
2012	7,000,867 (75.26)	9,302,672	500,000 (49.45)	1,011,115	363 (42.81)	848
2013	81,506 (3.48)	2,345,261	-	147,024	19 (2.59)	735
2014	10,000 (1.05)	948,522	-	126,000	15 (3.02)	496
2015	100,420 (3.99)	2,519,490	25,000 (5.46)	458,000	53 (6.40)	828
2016	12,000 (0.88)	1,369,507	-	295,700	18 (1.91)	943
2017	10,500 (0.66)	1,595,141	-	12,000	20 (5.67)	353
2018	1,938,204 (56.09)	3,455,250	275,000 (35.80)	768,100	300 (40.43)	742
2019	123,640 (2.74)	4,516,338	-	57,100	36 (3.94)	914
2020	193,725 (2.95)	6,575,132	100,000 (22.52)	444,000	189 (14.09)	1,341
Total	9,501,777 (27.91)	34,041,892	904,500 (20.91)	4,325,539	1,187 (15.08)	7,872

Table 1. Summary of flood impact in Nigeria and for Africa as a whole for the years 2011–2020; Source: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters.

3.1.2 Charcoal Production and Government Policy

Aside from the large-scale flooding of 2012, the government’s removal of the kerosene subsidy brought untold pain to the people and led to the depletion of forest reserves. The essence of the subsidy was to make the “product available and accessible to all Nigerians anywhere in the country.”²⁰⁴ However, the majority of households in Nigeria couldn’t access kerosene, a standard cooking fuel among most average Nigerians. Gbadegesin and Olorunfemi argue that this was due to adulteration of the product. Hence, the average populace, with most rural dwellers, produced wood products such as firewood and charcoal.²⁰⁵ Product scarcity and high prices can be linked to the monopoly of the depot owners and the marketers for increased profit.

Before this time, rural households in western Nigeria used dry woods, shrubs and other biomass for cooking and heating. According to the National Population

²⁰⁴ A. Gbadegesin and F. Olorunfemi, “Socio-Economic Aspects of Fuel Wood Business in the Forest and Savanna Zones of Nigeria: Implications for Forest Sustainability and Adaptation to Climate Change,” *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, Volume XI Issue I Version I, February 2011, p. 50

²⁰⁵ Gbadegesin and Olorunfemi, “Socio-Economic Aspects of Fuel Wood Business in the Forest and Savanna Zones of Nigeria,” p. 50

Commission, close to 85% of Nigerian households depend on the use of kerosene and fuelwood.²⁰⁶ Relatively close to 85% of Nigerian households depend on the use of kerosene and fuelwood. Also, with the erratic power supply, relying solely on electricity for cooking and heating became difficult. Though research on fuelwood consumption in the country is relatively scanty, those available are unreliable.²⁰⁷ Since 2012, most average Nigerians have gone beyond picking dry woods to cut down trees for charcoal production.²⁰⁸ According to Chidumayo and Gumbo, charcoal, a fuel produced by the carbonization of biomass, as of 2009, contributed an average of 7% to deforestation in tropical regions.²⁰⁹ They observed, “In sub-Saharan Africa, charcoal is predominantly a household cooking energy, especially for urban dwellers.”²¹⁰ Recently, as reported by Nigeria dailies, Punch newspaper said, “Federal Government (FG) blames charcoal dealers, state governments for deforestation,”²¹¹ Thisday, “FG blames state govt for ongoing deforestation nationwide,” The Cable “FG accuses states of protecting those engaging in deforestation.”²¹² In 2022, the Kogi State government banned the production of charcoal in the state. According to

²⁰⁶ National Population Commission, *2006 Population And Housing Census Of The Federal Republic Of Nigeria: Housing Characteristics And Amenities Tables, 2006 Census: Priority Tables*, Volume II, <http://www.population.gov.ng/> or <https://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog/3340/download/48520> 2010, p. 238 56% of Nigerian households used firewood as primary cooking and heating fuel, 28% used kerosene, 7% electricity, 2% gas and other biomass and 0.5% as of 2006

²⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 45

²⁰⁸ “Trees used for charcoal production are cut with axes, machetes or chainsaws” E. N. Chidumayo and D. J. Gumbo, “The Environmental Impacts of Charcoal Production in Tropical Ecosystems of the World: A Synthesis,” *Energy for Sustainable Development*, Volume 17, Issue 2, April 2013, p. 87

²⁰⁹ Chidumayo and Gumbo, “The Environmental Impacts of Charcoal Production in Tropical Ecosystems of the World,” 2013, pp.86-87

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 87

²¹¹ Punch Newspaper, “FG blames charcoal dealers, state govts for deforestation,” 30th March 2023, <https://punchng.com/fg-blames-charcoal-dealers-state-govts-for-deforestation/>

²¹² The Cable, “FG accuses states of protecting those engaging in deforestation,” 30 March 2023, <https://www.thecable.ng/fg-accuses-states-of-protecting-those-engaging-in-deforestation>

the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), “sale of charcoal has become a lucrative business in Kogi due to its high demand due to the high cost of domestic cooking gas and kerosene.”²¹³ Due to this reality in Nigeria, “Households, restaurants switch to charcoal, firewood as gas price hits the roof.”²¹⁴ Since the demand for charcoal and firewood increased, the prices also rose. The production of charcoal, though it adds to the socio-economic well-being of the people, has contributed to the depletion of forest and forest reserves.



Figure 1. Source: The Cable, 30 March 2023

Unfortunately, less or no post-harvest management took place, resulting in the removal of woodland cover, which, according to Le Houérou, “can lead to biological processes which seal the soil and result in perhaps irreversible desertization.”²¹⁵

²¹³ The Guardian Nigeria, “Kogi bans charcoal production,” 12 March 2022

²¹⁴ Punch Newspaper, “Households, restaurants switch to charcoal, firewood as gas price hits the roof,” 22 November 2021, https://punchng.com/households-restaurants-switch-to-charcoal-firewood-as-gas-price-hits-the-roof/?utm_source=auto-read-also&utm_medium=web

²¹⁵ H. N. Le Houérou, *The Grazing Land Ecosystems of the African Sahel*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989, p. 94.



Figure 2. Source: P.O Eniola, Plate showing charcoal depot in Saki Oyo State

Eniola raises some effects of the production of charcoal on the environment. According to him, it worsens climate change and threatens biodiversity, and it may lead to deforestation and increased erosion effect. It requires commercial felling of trees, indigenous or natural trees are lost in the process, the environment of production may subsequently lose its fertility, making farming impossible or reducing yield, and exposing some biosphere to danger or being destroyed, and finally, depleting forest reserves and reduction of forest cover.²¹⁶ Gbadeyan and Olorunfemi also canvassed for Sustainable forest management to mitigate the impact of climate change in the global world.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ P. O. Eniola, “Menace and Mitigation of Health and Environmental Hazards of Charcoal Production in Nigeria,” In: W. Leal Filho et al. (eds.), *African Handbook of Climate Change Adaptation*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021, pp. 2298-2299.

²¹⁷ Gbadeyan and Olorunfemi, “Socio-Economic Aspects of Fuel Wood Business in the Forest and Savanna Zones of Nigeria,” p. 45



Figure 3. Source: P.O. Eniola, Image of the combustion process during charcoal production in Saki from a field study conducted on 19 April 2013

3.1.3 Lumbering and Logging Activities

Lumbering is an everyday activity in all the forests in Nigeria's western states aside from Lagos because of its coaster peculiarity, urbanization and small land size. According to Jimoh, "Lumbering activities destroy the forest."²¹⁸ Discussing the lumbering activities in (south)western Nigeria, Akanni observed an increase in indiscriminate and illegal actions of loggers, especially in the free zones outside "the control of the forest guards and officials."²¹⁹ The move is unconnected to Yoruba proverbs which say, "Okunrun ajowo, kiku ni n ku" (a sick that is supposed to be cared for by many people end up dying) and also, "Ibi a ba fi Elemosho so, ni n so"

²¹⁸ I. H. Jimoh, "Pattern of Environmental Degradation and Development Efforts," In: A.A. Saliu, A.A. Ogunsanya, J.O. Olujide, and J.O. Olaniyi (Ed), *Democracy and Development in Nigeria*, Lagos: Concepts Publications, 2006, p. 276

²¹⁹ K. A. Akanni, "Lumbering Activities and Market Equilibrium Analysis of Timber Industry in South Western Nigeria," *Sustainable Agriculture Research* Vol. 2, No. 1, 2013, pp. 44-45

(Elemosho ‘a guard’ will only manned where it is assigned to him). The unguided over-exploitation of wood resources has led to a shortfall of supply to the market and an increase in the price of wood products. Corruption in forest management also aids deforestation, “Timber traders called these bribes ‘operational expenses’.”²²⁰ In the research conducted in the Ondo-Edo forest belts of South-West by Ikuomola et al., they affirmed that forest guards, security operatives and ministry officials connive to issue fake permits to loggers.²²¹

In the 2010 Federal Department of Forestry report, the annual depletion rate of Nigerian forests is estimated at 3.5%. The exploitation has reduced the 20% natural forest area to 10%,²²² raising Nigeria’s forest loss to one of the world’s highest.²²³ This dilemma has “cost Nigeria six billion US dollars every year”²²⁴ as national forests lose their precious woods or indigenous trees to indiscriminate concession and agricultural farmlands. Hence, it failed “60% of its natural forests to agricultural encroachment, excessive logging and urbanization between the 1960s and 2000.”²²⁵

²²⁰ C. Palmer, “The Nature of Corruption in Forest Management,” *World Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, April–June 2005, p. 6, cf. N. Kishor and R. Damania, “Crime and Justice in the Garden of Eden: Improving Governance and Reducing Corruption in the Forestry Sector,” In: J. Edgardo Campos and Sanjay Pradhan (Eds), *The Many Faces of Corruption: Tracking Vulnerabilities at the Sector Level*, The World Bank, 2007, pp. 89-114.

²²¹ A. D. Ikuomola, R. A. Okunola and A. F. Akindutire, “Criminality: Illegal Logging of Woods in Nigeria’s South-West Forest Belt,” *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies: AJCJS*, Vol.9, Issue 1, May 2016, p. 145

²²² Federal Department of Forestry 2010 annual Report, cited in P. Ikuomola, et al., *Criminality: Illegal Logging of Woods in Nigeria’s South-West Forest Belt*, 2016, p. 142

²²³ H. E. Batta, A. C. Ashong and A. S. Bashir, “Press Coverage of Climate Change Issues in Nigeria and Implications for Public Participation Opportunities,” *Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 6, No. 2; 2013, p. 57

²²⁴ Batta, et al., “Press Coverage of Climate Change Issues in Nigeria and Implications for Public Participation Opportunities,” 2013, p. 57

²²⁵ Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), *Global Forest Reserves Assessment*, 2000, FAO Forestry Paper, 140, FAO, Rome Federal Department of Forestry, *Forestry Outlook Study for Africa: Nigeria*. Federal Department of forestry/ FAO, Rome, 2001; SFM Tropics, “Status of Tropical Forest Management: Nigeria”, *Sustainable Forest Management*, 2005, pp. 112-119, www.itto.int/direct/tropics/topics Accessed 9/8/2023.

To conserve natural forests in western Nigeria, the communities around the forest (reserved), government agencies and ministries, security operatives, foreign expatriates and civil societies must come to the round table. The local community leaders, politicians and youth are either connivance or surveillance of the logger's activities. Ikumola et al. cited the influence of unemployment among the youth as the reason for their involvement in the deforestation along the south-west forest belt.²²⁶ Federal government and state should also synergize on land use and resource control. More effort is needed from the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to sensitize society about the need for forest conservation. The environmental officers and guards must be patriotic in discharging their duties and shun corruption. In addressing the actions of foreigners in the Nigerian forest sector, Ikuomola opines that "most worrisome is the activities of illegal traders of forest produce through the aid of foreigners who need rare and hardwood species for European and American markets."²²⁷ These expatriates pay massive amounts of money to the forest guards, security operatives and unemployed youths to meet their demands. "Both the forest guards and officials have also been alleged as conniving and giving consent to foreigners through local agents to exploit the forest illegally."²²⁸ At the present rate of exploitation, Adekunle reported that many rare Nigerian plants are in grave danger.

²²⁶ Ikuomola, et al., "Criminality: Illegal Logging of Woods in Nigeria's South-West Forest Belt," 2016, pp. 143-145

²²⁷ A. D. Ikuomola, "Foreign cartels and local accomplices: Criminality and deforestation in the Nigerian forest belts," *Studia Sociologica*, 11, vol. 2, 2019, p. 50

²²⁸ Ikuomola, et al., "Criminality: Illegal Logging of Woods in Nigeria's South-West Forest Belt," 2016, P. 145

Animals are also not spared during lumbering activities, which has increased biodiversity loss in fauna and flora habitats.²²⁹

3.1.4 Mining Activities

Aside from lumbering activities, another hazard caused to the environment in western Nigeria is mining of mineral resources and sand.

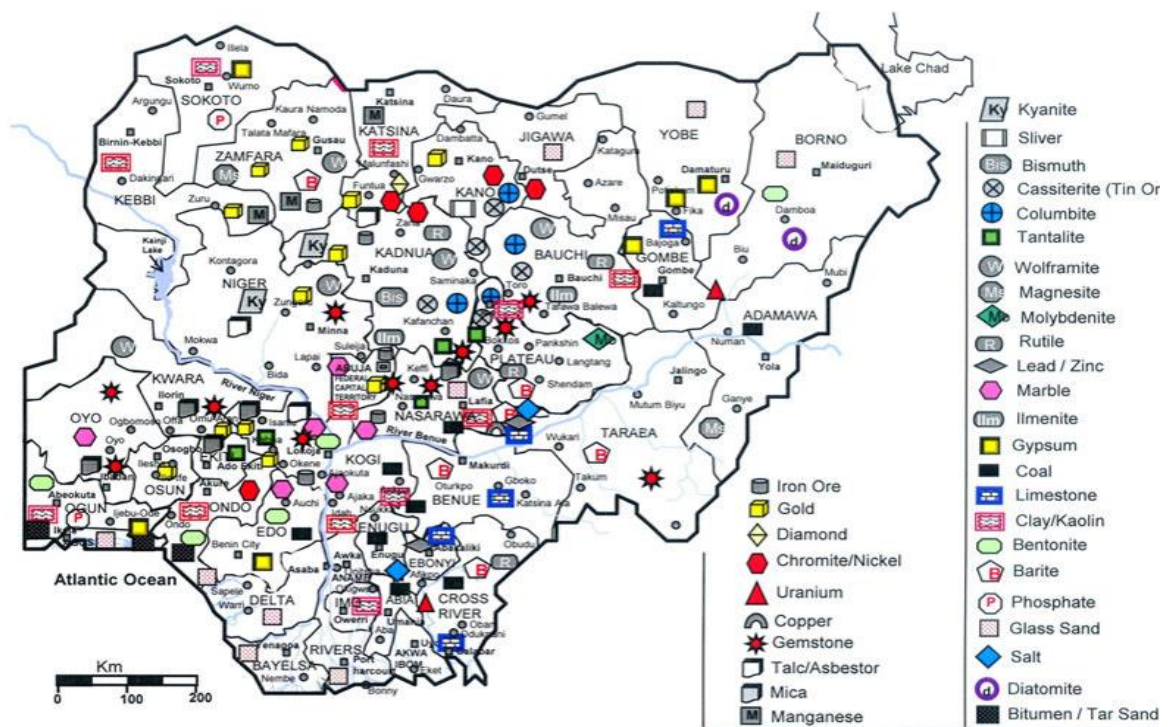


Figure 4. Mineral Resources Map of Nigeria (NV2020)

3.1.4.1 Mining of Mineral Resources

Surface mining is the most common mining technique used in Nigeria's (south) western states. "It involves the complete removal of nonbearing surface strata

²²⁹ V. A. J. Adekunle, "Trends in Forest Reservation and Biodiversity conservation in Nigeria," In: Okolo, E, Adekunle, V., & Adeduntan, S. (eds), *Environmental Sustainability and conservation in Nigeria*, Environmental Conservation Research team (ECRT), Jubee-Niyi Publishers, pp. 82-89.

(overburden) to gain access to the resource.”²³⁰ The areas under review have a lot of solid minerals, some of which were extracted by illegal miners or artisans through local tools like diggers, hoes, shovels, cutlasses, buckets, axes, and other local materials for digging.²³¹ The miners’ focus is to get the resources and care less about the state of the environment after their activities; neither is there any post-mining reform.²³² The ecological disturbance and anomalies stem from the ineffective government policy in mining and various socio-economic variables such as poverty and unemployment. The challenge is due to underdevelopment and lack of regulation of the mining industry in Nigeria.²³³ The research conducted by Adeoye on the gold mining sites in Ijeshaland, South-west Nigeria, discovered a total of 354 mining pits spreading over 25.8 ha of land.²³⁴ The communities around the mining sites bear the brunt of the land degradation, water pollution, and vulnerability to health hazards.²³⁵

²³⁰ J. J. Dukiya, “The Environmental Implication of Illegal Mining Activities in Nigeria, a Case Study of Pandogari and Barkin Ladi/Buruku Surface Mines in Niger/Plateau States,” *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 13, Issue 5, Jul. - Aug. 2013, p. 13

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 18

²³³ E. C. Merem, Y. Twumasi, J. Wesley, P. Isokpehi, M. Sheng1, S. Fageir, M. Crisler, C. Romorno, A. Hines, G. Hirse, S. Ochai, S. Leggett, E. Nwagboso, “Assessing the Ecological Effects of Mining in West Africa: The Case of Nigeria,” *International Journal of Mining Engineering and Mineral Processing*, 6(1), 2017, p. 2

²³⁴ N. O. Adeoye, “Land Degradation in Gold Mining Communities of Ijeshaland, Osun State, Nigeria,” *Geojournal*, vol. 81, No. 4, 2016, p.535

²³⁵ O. Oluwafemi, A. Akinwumiju, O. Oladepo, and D. Oladepo, “Assessment of Gold Mining Impact on the Vegetation of Itaganmodi-Igun Drainage Basin, Southwestern Nigeria from 1972-2011: A Remote Sensing,” *30th International Cartographic Conference (ICC 2021)*, 14–18 December 2021, Florence, Italy, p. 17 Cf., I. A. Akinwumi, S. A. Adegoke, O. A. Oyelami, A. E. Akinwumi and T. A. Adedeji, “High blood lead levels of children in a gold mining community in Osun State, Nigeria: an urgent call for action,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 0, 2023, pp. 1–13.



Figure 5. (Source: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/525526-special-report-osun-in-the-mud-as-mining-greed-intensifies.html>)

Egbejule and Iyora reported in an article *Gold and the Goddess: How mining polluted Nigeria's sacred Osun River, 100,000 may die in five years*, that “We thought it was a temporary thing, that maybe someone threw chemicals into the tributary along the way, and the fish became dead and floated down, [But] it became worse in 2020. The water was like tea in the middle of the dry season.”²³⁶ Punch Newspaper also reports with the caption, “*Labourers from hell: Osun gold-rich villages lament menace of miners.*”²³⁷ Unfortunately, the tributaries rivers from the mining site flow into the Osun River. Then onward to Ede and Iwo, neighbouring towns and Oyo State. The contaminated water,²³⁸ however, destroys the aquatic life and farmland.

3.1.4.2 Mining of Sand

²³⁶ Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2022/9/2/how-mining-polluted-nigerias-world-famous-river-and-upset-life>, Tribune Newspaper, <https://tribuneonlineng.com/gold-and-the-goddess-how-mining-polluted-sacred-osun-river-100000-may-die-in-five-years/>

²³⁷ Punch Newspaper, *Labourers from hell: Osun gold-rich villages lament menace of miners*, <https://punchng.com/labourers-from-hell-osun-gold-rich-villages-lament-menace-of-miners/> 9 June 2019.

²³⁸ O.O. Ayantobo, J.A. Awomeso, G.O. Oluwasanya, B.S. Bada and A.M. Taiwo, “Mining In Igun-Ijesha, Southwest Nigeria: Impacts And Implications For Water Quality,” *American Journal of Environmental Science* 10 (3), 2014, pp. 289-300.

Sand mining is another menace threatening the environmental state of western Nigeria. The removal of the topsoil, which leads to nutrient depletion and the resultant gully effect creates a threat to farming in the affected areas, which could also lead to food shortage and hunger.²³⁹ In effect to agriculture, Lai and Okigbo argue that soil degradation is “the decline in soil quality caused by misuse by humans.”²⁴⁰ This in return leads to low yield of farm produce or abandonment of the land for lack of productivity.

Akankali et al. reported a concentration of heavy metals which may affect the water quality around sand dredging areas. It also adversely affects the fish and the quality of drinking water.²⁴¹ Oladipo et al. also observed the adverse effect of mining on soil and its effect on agriculture. In the course of the study, heavy metals (pollutants) are present above the WHO recommendations, which lead to ecological degradation.²⁴² According to Atejiwoye and Odeyemi sand mining had an effect on deforestation, change in habitat and biodiversity and pollution.²⁴³ Conflict is one of the common occurrences between the community, truck drivers and mining operators, which is not limited to environmental but social issues. It ranges from “noise, truck traffic, dust

²³⁹ A. K. Aromolaran, “Effects Of Sand Mining Activities On Land In Agrarian Communities Of Ogun State, Nigeria,” *Continental J. Agricultural Science* 6 (1), 2012, pp. 41-42

²⁴⁰ R. Lal and B. Okigbo, “Assessment of Soil Degradation in the Southern States of Nigeria,” *World Bank Environment Working Paper* No. 39, September 1990, p. 1

²⁴¹ J. A. Akankali, A. S. Idongesit and P.E. Patrick, “Effects of sand mining activities on water quality of Okoro Nsit stream, Nsit Atai local government area, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria”, *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 6 No. 7, 2017, p. 460

²⁴² O. G. Oladipo, A. Olayinka, O. O. Awotoye, “Ecological impact of mining on soils of Southwestern Nigeria,” *Environmental and Experimental Biology*, vol 12, 2014, pp. 182-183

²⁴³ A.A.Atejiwoye ,C.A.Odeyemi, “Analysing Impact of Sand Mining in Ekiti State, Nigeria Using GIS for Sustainable Development,” *World Journal of Research and Review (WJRR)*, Volume-6, Issue-2, February 2018, pp. 26-27.

stream water quality, reclamation, bio-degradation, pollution and visually unpleasant landscapes.”²⁴⁴

The survey has shown that western Nigeria is blessed with natural resources such as water (rivers and sea), minerals (gaseous, liquid, and solid,), arable land, forestry vegetation and a good climate. However, anthropocentric activities have caused a lot of damage. The impact of the government, security operatives, enforcement agencies and the community can not be overemphasized. The cause for this degradation is mostly hinged on the socio-economic situation of the society. Survival mechanisms and poverty led many to become unconscious or insensitive to the environmental and cultural values embodied in the Omoluabi ethos. Personal interest is now above community interest. The spirit of consumerism over that of conservationists.

3.2 Causes of Environmental Crisis

The factors responsible for environmental crises are mostly human or natural.²⁴⁵

Jimoh argues that the fundamental cause of environmental degradation is anthropogenic.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Atejioye and Odeyemi, p. 26

²⁴⁵ P. K. Maurya, S. A. Ali, A. Ahmad, Q. Zhou, J. da Silva Castro, E. Khane, and H. Ali, “An introduction to environmental degradation: Causes, consequence and mitigation,” In: *Environmental Degradation: Causes and Remediation Strategies*, Eds. V. Kumar, J. Singh, and P. Kumar, Volume 1, 2020, p. 2.

²⁴⁶ Jimoh, “Pattern of Environmental Degradation and Development,” 2006, p. 275

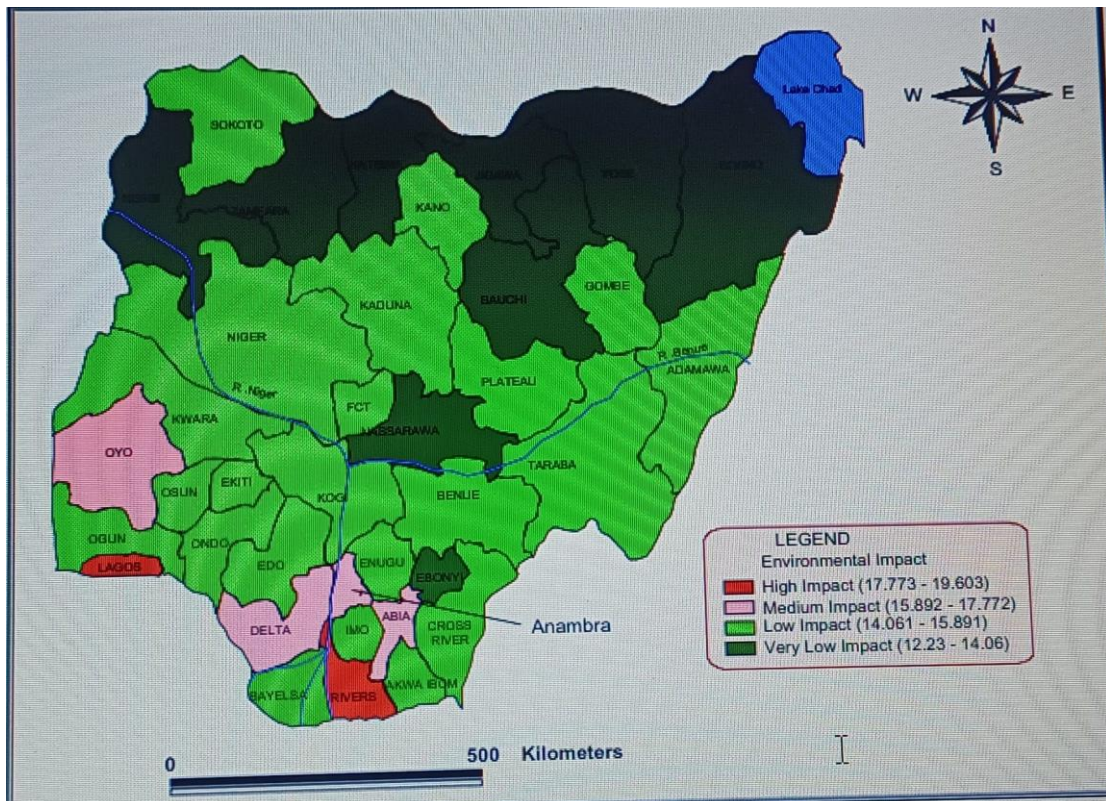


Figure 6: The pattern of anthropogenic-induced environmental impacts in Nigeria (Source: Madu, 2009).

An environment becomes degraded “when natural habitats are destroyed or natural resources are depleted,”²⁴⁷ this is a result of the inability of an individual or community to mitigate the “hazard within their human-environment domain.”²⁴⁸ According to USAID, “many disasters are either caused or exacerbated by environmental degradation.”²⁴⁹ Hence, any disturbance unpleasant or harmful to the environment is perceived to be degradation. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the drivers of environmental degradation. As stated, it could be human or natural.

²⁴⁷ M. P. Choudhary, G. S. Chauhan and Y. Kushwah, “Environmental Degradation: Causes, Impacts and Mitigation,” *Conference paper: National Seminar on Recent Advancements in Protection of Environment and its Management Issues (NSRAPEM-2015)*, At: Maharishi Arvind College of Engineering and Technology, Kota, Rajasthan, India, February 2015, Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279201881_Environmental_Degradation_Causes_Impacts_and_Mitigation [accessed Aug 23 2023].

²⁴⁸ Jimoh, “Pattern of Environmental Degradation and Development,” 2006, p. 275

²⁴⁹ USAID, *Introduction to Disaster Risk Reduction*, USAID Disaster Risk Reduction Training Course for Southern Africa, 2011, p

However, human activities have contributed to a more significant percentage of environmental crises in western Nigeria.

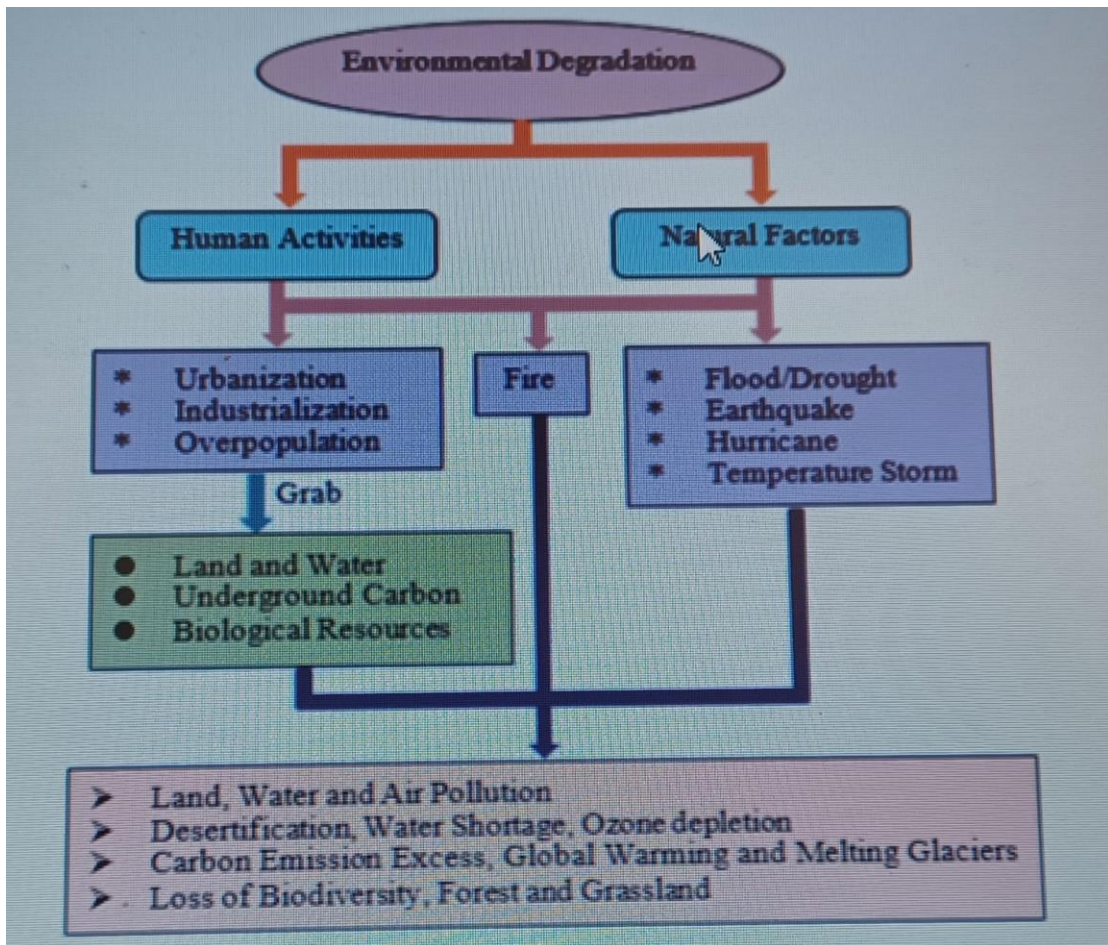


Figure 7. Causes of Environmental Degradation (Sources: Maurya, et al, 2020)

The figure above describes the effect of human-environment interaction. Unfortunately, human interaction with the environment is more of consumerism. Humans explore every opportunity to their advantage without considering the consequential impact. Human exploitation of natural resources can also trigger natural disasters. For example, encroachment of urban development into waterlogged areas or river channels can lead to flooding. Preservation and conservation of forest trees can also limit the possible temperature storms. Most households in urban areas in western Nigeria today have borehole drills in their residence. This could be a driver for tremors and earthquakes, especially as it is a region with the highest number of

tremors/earthquakes since 1933.²⁵⁰ According to Premium Times Newspaper, the presidential committee report on the cause of Abuja's earthquake was linked to indiscriminate boreholes sinking.²⁵¹ The research conducted by Olugboji et al. titled “On the Origin of Orphan Tremors and Intraplate Seismicity in Western Africa” also confirmed the September 5–7, 2018 tremor in Nigeria was induced and anthropogenic.²⁵² However, since public (tap) water is no longer effective in most Nigerian states, public results in the sinking of boreholes or wells in the residence or community.

The study conducted by Olorode et al. on five main rivers in Port Harcourt City confirmed the effect of human activities such as urbanization, sewage waste, and industrialization as causes of water pollution.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ A. A. Adepelumi, “Abuja Tremor: A Closer Look On Seismic Data Gathering In Nigeria,” 2nd National Borehole Master Drillers Conference At The Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, 26th November, 2018, P. 3

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338343300_Abuja_Tremor_A_Closer_Look_On_Seismic_Data_Gathering_In_Nigeria_A_Paper_Presented_At_The_2_Nd_National_Borehole_Master_Drillers_Conference_At_The_Transcorp_Hilton_Hotel_Abuja

²⁵¹ Premium Times, “Nigeria panel releases report on cause of Abuja ‘earthquake’,” September 21 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/284873-nigeria-earthquake-panel-completes-probe-in-two-weeks-blames-boreholes.html?tztc=1>

²⁵² T. Olugboji, M. Shirzaei, Y. Lu, A.A. Adepelumi and F. Kolawole, “On the Origin of Orphan Tremors and Intraplate Seismicity in Western Africa,” *Frontiers in Earth Science*, Volume 9, Article 716630, 2021, p. 1. doi: 10.3389/feart.2021.716630

²⁵³ O. A. Olorode, E. A. Bamigbola, and O. M. Ogba, “Comparative Studies of some River Waters in Port Harcourt based on Their Physico - Chemical and Microbiological analysis, Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, Vol. 03, No. 03, January 2015: 29-37

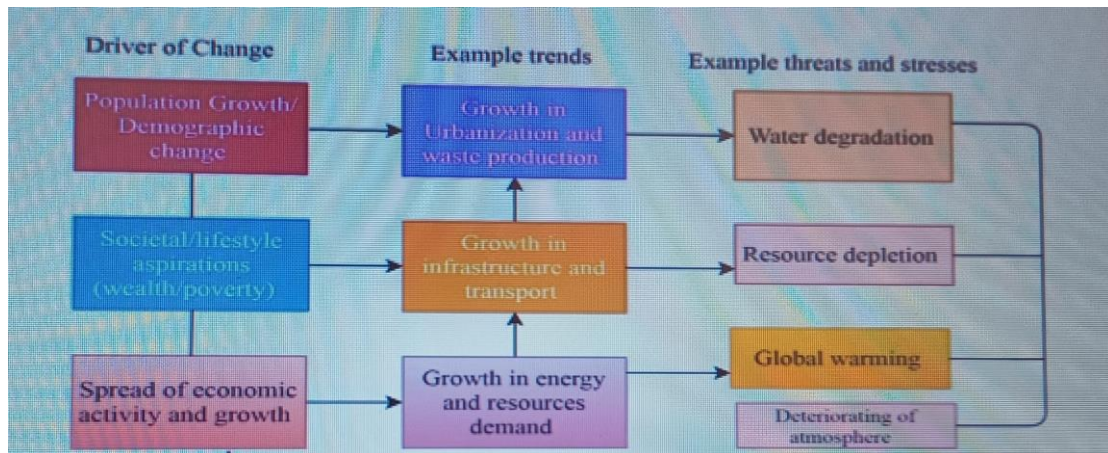


Figure 8. The flow chart indicates human developmental activities in the environment (Adapted: Foresight, 2000).

The foresight identifies population growth, infrastructural development and economic growth as drivers for environmental disturbance or change.²⁵⁴ An increase in population leads to urbanization and waste production. Expansion in the urban city due to migration for opportunity creates vulnerability to the poor living in disaster-prone areas such as waterlogged and polluted environments. Rapid urbanization is also responsible for sand mining and unsustainable exploitation in most states in western Nigeria.²⁵⁵ Urbanization also entails more energy consumption and expansion. Ulucak argues that “overconsumption, overexploitation, pollution and deforestation”²⁵⁶ contribute to the environmental crisis. As a result, this jeopardized the lives of other living organisms, such as plants, animals, and microorganisms. Another cause of environmental degradation is Agricultural expansion. More forests must be cleared in farming at a population growth rate, contributing to deforestation.

²⁵⁴ Foresight, *Making the Future Work for You*, London: Department of Trade and Industry 2000, pp. 23-59.

²⁵⁵ Atejiye and Odeyemi, “Analysing Impact of Sand Mining in Ekiti State, Nigeria Using GIS for Sustainable Development,” 2018, p. 26

²⁵⁶ Z. Ulucak, Causes, “Consequences and Preventive Measures of Environmental Degradation,” *Journal of Ecosystem and Ecography*, Volume 11, Issue 7, 2011, p.1

The degraded environment has a socio-economic impact on people with low incomes because they “depend directly on nature.”²⁵⁷ This can form a cycle of impoverishment – poverty as a cause of environmental degradation and degradation as a response to people’s being poor since the environment creates all essential life support for human society.²⁵⁸ It is, therefore, correct to state that an increase in population, rapid industrialization, agricultural intensification, infrastructure development, technology, urbanization, exploitation of natural resources, increase in energy utilization, poverty, and economic growth are drivers for the environmental crisis.

3.3 Omoluabi and the Environmental Care

The place of agency is central in the Yoruba cultural epistemology and creation story. As explored in chapter two, humans and their surroundings are seen as necessary in the cosmos, as well as every being in the environment. The co-habitats could be plants, animals, mountains, hills, wind, rivers, oceans, lightning, etc. According to Bewaji, “the environment—gbogbo ohun tí ó n bẹ láyé àti àjùlé òrun (“everything that exists on earth and in heaven”)—must be understood as the aggregate of surrounding beings, things, conditions, or influences.”²⁵⁹ Hence, Yoruba accord values to every being, be it humans or those connected with the natural environment. Reflecting on the creation story and how it affects Yoruba cultural values for every being aside from humans, Bewaji states that “The way Yorùbá narrative of origins indicate that the world was created through many agencies,”²⁶⁰ The Olodumare (The Supreme Being),

²⁵⁷ C.Hamsaveni And D.Kanchana, “The Impact Of Environmental Degradation On Human Health,” *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, Volume 6, Issue 5, May 2019, pp. 82-83

²⁵⁸ D. O. Siyanbade, *Disaster management in Nigeria: Preparedness and prevention*, Lagos: Olive Tree Publishing Ventures, 2006, p. 3

²⁵⁹ J. A. I. Bewaji, “Yorùbá Values and the Environment,” *Yoruba Studies Review* Volume 3, Number 1, Special Edition, Fall 2018, p. 244

²⁶⁰ Bewaji, “Yorùbá Values and the Environment,” 2018, p. 238

Oduduwa (or Orunmila), the rope, the cock, the sand, the palm kernel and the water. These factors shaped the Yoruba “relations with nature, all material beings and non-material beings.”²⁶¹ The rope acts as a link from heaven to the earth and is also the medium of the descent for Oduduwa in creation according to the command of Olodumare. The safety of the rope is the safety of all. Hence, lack of equilibrium may lead to chaos, as “the dislocation will affect all aspects of reality,”²⁶² For this reason, Yoruba accord close attention, respect, value and importance to the natural environment, “so that they can continue to be useful and sources of sustenance to future generations.”²⁶³ Having established the interconnectivity and interdependency with nature, the Yoruba believe that “*bi itàkùn ò bá já, ọwọ kò ní tẹ ọkéré l’óko* (“if the rope is not broken, there is no way the squirrel can be captured/killed in the bush”),”²⁶⁴ and also *ìròrùn igi, ni ìròrùn eye* (“When a tree is at rest, the bird on it will also be at rest”). Omoluabi value is needed to maintain relationships with human and non-human beings such as nature. An Omoluabi seeks for harmonious relationship between the physical and spiritual. Knowing fully that it costs more to pacify the spirit than to obey them

To sustain and maintain the equilibrium between humans and the natural environment, Yoruba places values on everything essential to life. These values are profound and broad, recognizing validity in certain things despite the continuous change of everything around them.²⁶⁵ One of the values that is valid and unchanging is the good character – *ìwà Ọmọlúàbí*. According to Dada, the Ọmọlúàbí concept is a

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 238

²⁶² Ibid., p. 239

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 243

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 239

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 243

“correlate of Aristotle’s person of character - result of being habituated in what is good and noble.”²⁶⁶ So also Ọmọ̀lúàbí derives from being habitually moral. Bewaji describes Ọmọ̀lúàbí as a “morally upright person.”²⁶⁷ It is not a title that an individual can unilaterally bestow on themselves, but a perception and evaluation of the community/society where such belongs. Awoniyi asserts that “the end-product of education in Yoruba culture is to make an individual an omoluwabi.”²⁶⁸ This results from continuous education (imo) in moral, spiritual, social, physical, environmental, mental and orality. A person can be addressed as àbííkó (born but not culturally or morally educated) or àkóìgbà (one who refuses to be culturally or morally educated). However, according to Fayemi and Macaulay-Adeyelu, “both àbííkó and àkóìgbà are regarded by the Yoruba as omokomo (a worthless child).”²⁶⁹ Omokomo (a worthless child) does not only lack moral training but possesses a character opposite to Ọmọ̀lúàbí. One can compare Omokomo to environmental degradation among the Yoruba cultural ethics, which is harmful, polluted and antisocial. To expound this, Oluwole says “omoluwabi means omo ti o ni iwa bi eni ti a ko, ti o si gba eko (a person (child) [sic] who behaves like someone who is nurtured and lives by the precepts of the education he/she has been given)”²⁷⁰ It is worthy at this point to assimilate Ọmọ̀lúàbí as a good Christian in Christian terminology. Being an Ọmọ̀lúàbí

²⁶⁶ S. O. Dada, “Aristotle and the Ọmọ̀lúwàbí Ethos: Ethical Implications for Public Morality in Nigeria,” *Yoruba Studies Review* Volume 3, Number 1, Special Edition, Fall 2018, p. 266

²⁶⁷ J. A. Bewaji, “Ethics and Morality in Yoruba Culture” in Kwasi Wiredu (ed.) *Companion to African Philosophy*, London: Blackwell, 2004, p. 399

²⁶⁸ T. A. Awoniyi, “Omoluwabi: The Fundamental Basis of Yoruba Traditional Education”, In Abimbola, Wande ed. *Yoruba Oral Tradition*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1975, p. 364

²⁶⁹ A.K. Fayemi and O.C. Macaulay-Adeyelu, “A Philosophical Examination of the Traditional Yoruba Notion of Education and its Relevance to the Contemporary African Quest for Development,” *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK) New Series*, Vol.1 No.2, December 2009, p. 45

²⁷⁰ S.B. Oluwole, “Who are (We) the Yoruba?” A key note paper delivered at a Pre-World Philosophy Day Conference, June 12, at the National Theatre, Lagos, 2007, p. 13

does not mean a flawless person²⁷¹ but someone striving towards an acceptable or ideal character in society.²⁷² Hence, in the Yoruba cultural setting, Ọmọ́lúàbí is the standard ethical norm. Wande said without morality, and as exhibited in the person of Ọmọ́lúàbí, “the world will be a very difficult place to live in,”²⁷³ as Omokomo will abound and a replica of when everyone do what was right in their eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25). Unfortunately, this is the reality in western Nigeria, where no regards for cultural values and tradition has led to flagrant contravention to nation’s constitution. Yoruba Ifa literary corpus sums it up this way:

“Aimowahu ni ko je ki aye gun. Ologbon ni eni ti oti ko eko ogbon mimowahu. Ogberi ni eni ti ko ko ogbon.

It is want of knowledge of right conduct that has made the world a horrible place to live in. He is a wise man who has studied the possession of the act of good, moral conduct. He who has not done so is a novice.”²⁷⁴

Ọmọ́lúàbí, an exhibitor of sound morals, interacted with the environment with the view of making it better and sustainable not only for themselves but also for the community. They value and respect the natural environment for the inherent values in them that juxtapose the interdependency and interrelatedness among the elements in the cosmos. Ọmọ́lúàbí, equally abide by the cultural and religious taboos associated with the natural environment, because bí èwò kò bá pa ni, a má pón ni l’áso (If violation of taboo does not bring death, it may make someone poor). They, as Ọmọ́lúàbí, sees themselves as representative of their family and community by extension. Hence, they reflect and contemplate their course of action before making

²⁷¹ Fayemi and Macaulay-Adeyelu, “A Philosophical Examination of the Traditional Yoruba Notion of Education and its Relevance to the Contemporary African Quest for Development,” December 2009, p. 47

²⁷² A. K. Fayemi, “Human Personality and the Yoruba Worldview: An Ethico-Sociological Interpretation”, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.2 No.9, 2009a, p.171.

²⁷³ A. Wande, “Iwapele: The Concept of Good Character in Ifa Litrary Corpus” in Wande Abimbola (ed.), *Yoruba Oral Literature*, Ibadan: University Press Ltd., 1975, p. 401

²⁷⁴ M. A. Makinde, *African Philosophy: The Demise of a Controversy*, Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd, 2007, p. 306

them. This reflection is subject to the impact or effect it will have on their image, family and community.²⁷⁵ They value their family's name rather than getting rich, by harming society and the environment. They say, *mi ò ní ba orúko bàbá mi jé* (I will not 'spoil' my father's name). To Gbadegesin,

“From this it follows that there need not be any tension between individuality and community since it is possible for an individual to freely give up his/her own perceived interest for the survival of the community. But in giving up one's interests thus, one is also sure that the community will not disown one and that one's well being will be its concern. . . . The idea of individual rights, based on a conception of individuals as atoms, is therefore bound to be foreign to this system. For community is founded on notions of an intrinsic and enduring relationship among its members.”²⁷⁶

Community honours a well-bred citizen who places the community's interest as paramount to their interest. The interest of every Yoruba community is peaceful coexistence between man and the environment. In dealing with the environment, Omolúábí believes that “a little effort, a little care exercised by each individual in the society could eliminate the entire problem”²⁷⁷ because “the welfare of the community requires the initiative and talents of its individual members.”²⁷⁸

3.4 Federal Ministry of Environment

Principle 10 of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World says

“Each country bears the primary responsibility for protecting its own people,

²⁷⁵ Bewaji, “Ethics and Morality in Yoruba Culture,” 2004, p. 395

²⁷⁶ S. Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary Realities*, New York: Peter Lang, 1991, pp. 66-67

²⁷⁷ D. K. Asthana & M. Asthana, *Environment: Problems and Solution* (2nd ed.), New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Limited, 2013, p. 348

²⁷⁸ M. Ajei, “Africans development: the imperative of indigenous knowledge and Values,” 2007, p. 201. Retrieved on 20 July, 2023, from <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/1266/thesis.pdf;jsessionid=966AAB2F78C8EC4FB7379A715ADD554E?sequence=1>

Infrastructure and other natural assets from the impacts of natural disasters.”²⁷⁹

The vision of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) on the environment, as stated in the website of the Federal Ministry of Environment is “to be a nation that develops in harmony with the environment.”²⁸⁰ The FGN acknowledge and identifies the importance of the environment in sustainable development. This harmonious relationship with natural habitats embedded in international environmental obligations²⁸¹ and traditional African values is the drive for the government. This agrees with the position of Bewaji concerning how Yoruba place values on the environment, “so that they can continue to be useful and sources of sustenance to future generations.”²⁸² To achieve this, the FGN in 1988 made legislation on environmental protection: the Federal Environmental Protection Agency Act, the Harmful Waste (special criminal provisions) Act, and in 1989, the National Policy on the Environment. All these policies are to secure a harmonious relationship with the environment in preserving, conserving and reclaiming.

The FGN established the Ministry of Environment with the mandate to ‘serve our fatherland’ through environmental standards regulation and enforcement (i.e. environmental protection), through forestry research and natural park service (i.e.

²⁷⁹ United Nation – World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, *Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World : Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation*, Yokohama, Japan : UN, 25 May 1994, p. 4

²⁸⁰ <https://environment.gov.ng/>

²⁸¹ <https://www.unep.org/>; cf. “Nigeria is also a signatory to the following relevant international conventions: The African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, The African Convention, 1968; The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, The World Heritage Convention, 1972; The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES, 1973; The Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol, 1995; The Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992; The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Waste, MARPOL, 1972.” World Bank, Federal Republic of Nigeria: environmental and Social Management Framework, march 2010, p. 21 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/ru/388461468147009423/pdf/E24470v10P10341nal0GEMS0ESMF0Report.pdf>

²⁸² Bewaji, “Yorùbá Values and the Environment,” 2018, p. 243

natural resources conservation), and lastly, through natural biosafety management (i.e. sustainable development). The focus of the ministry is to secure a quality environment, promote sustainability, restore, maintain and preserve ecosystem biodiversity, create/raise public awareness, and cooperate with relevant partners on environmental matters.²⁸³ The initiative is to work with local and international allies to develop and carry out environmental policies that protect, conserve and develop an ecosystem and make it “thrive for Nigerians of today and Nigerians of the future.”²⁸⁴

It is safe to say that the survival of humanity depends on sustainable environmental management. To this effect, the FGN create six agencies to see to the environmental issues, and these are National Oil Spillage Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA),²⁸⁵ National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency (NESREA),²⁸⁶ Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN),²⁸⁷ National Park Services (NPS),²⁸⁸ National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA),²⁸⁹ and National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGWA).²⁹⁰

All the states in the country are empowered to set up their agency and act, to protect and improve the environment. States under review have agencies like (state) Environmental Protection Agency, (State) Environmental and Waste Management Agency, and many more. As laudable as these legislations and policies may be, according to Okafor et al., they can only be effective, efficient and achievable if

²⁸³ <https://environment.gov.ng/>

²⁸⁴ <https://environment.gov.ng/>

²⁸⁵ <https://nosdra.gov.ng/>

²⁸⁶ <https://www.nesrea.gov.ng/>

²⁸⁷ <https://frin.gov.ng/>

²⁸⁸ <https://nigeriaparkservice.gov.ng/>

²⁸⁹ <https://nbma.gov.ng/>

²⁹⁰ <https://ggwnigeria.gov.ng/>

citizens imbibe “practices that will sustain the environment and abstain from that which deplete and degrade it.”²⁹¹ They also argue that the government rarely enforced “various instruments of intervention.”²⁹² This the former Minister of Environment, Mohammed Abdullahi, on the Land Acts Use, lamented, “The federal government is just a policy provider and doesn’t have that control over state government land.”²⁹³ Hence, the challenge facing Nigeria is not policy formulation but implementation.

The limitation of some states in western Nigeria to enforce and execute environmental policies may revolve around ethical issues. Some elements in the state Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Solid Minerals or Environment connived with loggers and miners against the extant laws. State Ministry of Housing and Urban Development do avoid their oversight and monitoring duties in maintaining environmental safety of building construction. Incessant building collapse has exposed this to be true.²⁹⁴ Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) is empowered by law to standardize and regulate the quality of all products in Nigeria. Sometimes bureaucratic bottlenecks, and removal from Nigerian ports, have incapacitated their functions and increased substandard products, especially in building construction. State Town planning hardly monitor buildings for which they approved. Even when it contravenes approval and environmental purposes. Some religious organizations build

²⁹¹ E. E. Okafor, A. R. Hassan And A. Doyin-Hassan, “Environmental Issues and Corporate Social Responsibility: The Nigeria Experience,” *Journal of Human Ecology*, Volume 23, Issue 2, 2008, p. 107.

²⁹² Okafor, et al, “Environmental Issues and Corporate Social Responsibility,” p. 107.

²⁹³ Thisday Newspaper, “FG blames State Govts for ongoing deforestation nationwide,” 30th March 2023, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/30/fg-blames-state-govts-for-ongoing-deforestation-nationwide?amp=1>

²⁹⁴ A. R. Kolawole, K.G.K. Oladunjoye and O.B.A. Adeyemi-Doro, “Prevalent Rates of Building Collapse in Southwest Nigeria: Professional Challenges to Architects,” *Journal of Environmental Sciences and Resource Management*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Pp. 94 – 106, p. 103

on a waterway, and for the religiosity of Yoruba people, sentiment takes ride instead of safety. The heavy presence of solid wastes in the streets confirmed the negligence of the Environmental and Waste Management Agencies and the uncultured spirit of the citizenry.

It is observable that lack of political discipline, lack or inadequate resources, rhetoric without willpower, lack of continuity, lack of clear definition of goals, responsibility and coordination, corruption, need analysis, personal interest, overambitious policy goals and power of control are the bottlenecks against effective and efficient policy implementations.²⁹⁵

In the case of the Land Use Act, the state government takes control of lands within their territories except the plots of land that have been allocated to the federal government. With this, FGN and its agencies on the environment are limited in enforcement against environmental violators. In some cases, the violators are either high-rank politicians, public servants, international allies or/and people under their influence. A Yoruba proverb says, *kí ológbò tó pa àgbò, gbogbo ilé gbódò ti jí* (before a cat could kill a ram, the whole household must be awake). It is difficult for the environment to degrade without public knowledge. The Western Nigeria states have

²⁹⁵ T. Makinde, "Problems of Policy Implementation in Developing Nations: The Nigerian Experience," *Journal of Social Sciences*, vol 11, Issues 1, 2005:63-69; S. D. Bolaji, J. R.Gray and G. Campbell-Evans, "Why Do Policies Fail in Nigeria?" *Journal of Education & Social Policy* Vol. 2, No. 5; November 2015: 57-66; I. Dialoke, F. O. Ukah and I. V. Maduagwuna, "Policy Formulation And Implementation In Nigeria: The Bane Of Underdevelopment," *International Journal of Capacity Building in Education and Management (IJCBE)*, Vol. 3, No 2, March, 2017: 22-27; B. I. Ugwuanyi and E. E.O. Chukwuemeka, "The Obstacles To Effective Policy Implementation By The Public Bureaucracy In Developing Nations: The Case Of Nigeria," *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* Vol. 2, No.7; March 2013: 59-66.

more to do in implementation and enforcement to create a sustainable environment for developmental projects.²⁹⁶

3.5 Faith-Based Organization and the Environmental Discourse

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “All religions agree that nature is an act of divinity and should be treated as such.”²⁹⁷ One of these occasions was the Assisi declarations, which brought together the world’s five major religions to discuss a perspective that seeks to ascertain the relationship between humanity and nature.²⁹⁸ During this Initiative program, religious leaders address the issue of environmental protection and conservation. This follows the belief in creation and the universe being an act of the Creator God. As argued by White Jr., religious beliefs play a significant role in how people relate to the environment.²⁹⁹ When adherents of world religions behave primarily according to the dictates of their religions, these individuals or leaders can become protectionists, conservationists or reclaimers of the environment, by making public commitments and leading by example – role models. Bhagwat posits that the world’s religions can help in environmental conservation through their investment policies. According to Gong et al., for the world’s religions to effectively contribute to environmental protection and

²⁹⁶ B. I. Njar and D. A. Enagu, “Development and Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria: An African Perspective,” *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, Vol. 2(1), 2019: 43-52, p. 51

²⁹⁷ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment-programme/faith-earth-initiative/religions-and-environmental-protection>

²⁹⁸ Alliance of Religions and Conservation, “The Assisi Declarations: Messages on Humanity and Nature from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam & Judaism” *WWF 25th Anniversary*, Basilica Di S. Francesco Assisi, Italy, 29 September 1986, <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/THE%20ASSISI%20DECLARATIONS.pdf>. Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam & Judaism.

²⁹⁹ L White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science*, Vol. 155. No 3767, (March 1967), p. 1205

preservation, they must incorporate ecological understanding into their beliefs and practices.

Three major faiths exist in Nigeria: Traditional African Religion, Christianity, and Islam. According to a 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, the (South) Western Nigeria has an estimated population of "49.3 percent Christian and 48.8 percent Muslim, while the remaining 2 percent belong to other or no religions."³⁰⁰ However, it is common for Christians and Muslims to be involved in dual religion, in this case, passively increasing the percentage of Traditional Religion. The parity between the population of Christians and Muslims is so close and can swing to the other side.³⁰¹ It is, however, necessary to reflect on how religions have addressed their obligations to the natural world.³⁰² This section discusses how some religious bodies' environmental beliefs and practices in western Nigeria conflict with their lived religion.

3.5.1 Christian Religion

Christianity views that humans are God's stewards and must take care of what He has created, and also that Creator God has controlling power over what He has created and can fix it.³⁰³ Ultimately, stewardship and dominion permeate the Christian worldviews on the environment, which invariably alludes to caring for nature. Ottuh

³⁰⁰ Nigeria 2018 International Religious Freedom Report, International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/NIGERIA-2018-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>

³⁰¹ M. I. Nolte, R. Jones and C. Ancarno, "Inter-religious relations in Yorubaland, Nigeria: corpus methods and anthropological survey data," *Corpora* Vol. 13 (1), 2018, p. 30

³⁰² B. Gong, R. Hamer, X. Meng, Q. Meng, J. Feng, & D. Xue, "Limits to Religious Conservation Efforts," *Science*, vol 338, 9 November 2012, p. 740

³⁰³ K. Eom, T. Q. H. Tok, C. S. Saad, and H. S. Kim, "Religion, Environmental Guilt, And Pro-Environmental Support: The Opposing Pathways Of Stewardship Belief And Belief In A Controlling God," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 78 (2021) 101717, p. 1

argues that Christianity found bases for environmental care in Genesis 2:15 with the use of (עָבַד, abad) and (שָׁמַר, shamar), which could mean ‘to dress’, ‘to serve’, to ‘tend’, or to ‘care’.³⁰⁴ The position of Kulikovsky on the dominion terminology of Genesis 1:28 is to have “an active role for mankind to take charge of the resources God has provided us in the natural world, and to use them for their benefit.”³⁰⁵ Though kēbāš, the Hebrew verb for ‘to subdue,’ connotes forceful dominance,³⁰⁶ Beisner asserts that command to rule, as stated in Genesis 1:28, supposes “subduing and ruling something whose spontaneous tendency is to resist dominion.”³⁰⁷ God created humans as the crown of His creation in His image to take charge of what has been made. At the time of this command, man and his environment were in harmony; hence, there was no reason to resist dominion. Could this be a predictive command consequential to the fall? Then, Beisner's position may be acceptable. However, dominion does not mean destruction or spoiling the environment.

Christianity teaches that environmental responsibility is a duty that must be done collectively and individually as stewards of God’s creation. This obligation involves the responsible use of natural resources and the preservation of the planet Earth. Abraham addressed God as the “Possessor of heaven and earth” (Genesis 14:22). Psalm 24 verse 1 affirms that “The earth and everything it contains are the LORD's. The world and all who live in it are his (GW).” The Bible also warn that “[God will] bring to ruin those ruining the earth” Revelation 11:18. This is contrary to the notion

³⁰⁴ J. A. Ottuh, “Christianity and Environmental Care in Nigeria: The Role of Christians in Addressing Indiscriminate Refuse Disposal,” *Pharos Journal of Theology* ISSN2414-3324 online Volume 103-(2022) p. 1

³⁰⁵ A. S. Kulikovsky, “Creation, preservation and dominion: part 1—God, humanity and the created order,” *Journal Of Creation* 23(1) 2009, p. 89

³⁰⁶ Numbers 32:20–22, 32:29, Joshua 18:1, 1 Chronicles 22:17–19, 2 Chronicles 28:9-10, Nehemiah 5:5, Jeremiah 34:11, 16, Esther 7:8, Zechariah 9:15, Leviticus 25: 39, 43, 46.

³⁰⁷ E. C. Beisner, “Imago Dei and the population debate,” *TrinJ* 18(2), Fall 1997, pp. 184-185

of anthropocentric dominance and evidence of misuse of *kěbǎš* (to subjugate, to subdue). The Book of Numbers states the law concerning pollution, “You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land (35:33).” For a contemporary application, this could be avoidance of war or any pollutants.

The Yoruba land contains the most prominent Christian churches in Nigeria. Aside from the mainline churches like Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, ECWA, Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Presbyterian, the region houses founders of leading Pentecostal and African Initiatives in Christianity (AIC) churches. For example, Deeper Life Bible Church, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church Worldwide, Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM), The Synagogue Church Of All Nations, Christ Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Celestial Church of Christ, Aladura Worldwide, etc., all have a firm base in western Nigeria.

Falako, observes that eighteen religious groups are occupying the axis between the Old Ibadan toll gate and the Lagos end. “The highway has earned the name ‘Church Highway’ or ‘Heavens Gateway’”.³⁰⁸ The region is known for its forestry. However, the construction of religious camps and prayer centres has contributed to various environmental problems such as deforestation, flooding, biodiversity loss, and loss of arable lands.³⁰⁹ Aside from ‘Heaven Gateways’ many Christian bodies today have their prayer camps in the villages, depleting the forest reserves. Many of the forest reserves are located in the rural areas. Even the sacred lands are possessed by these Christians as a sign of supremacy above traditional religion.

³⁰⁸ F. O. Falako, “New religious movements and space contestation: A study of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway,” Paper presented at The 4th *African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) Conference in Africa*, 16-20, January 2010, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 2010, p. 113

³⁰⁹ Falako, “New religious movements and space contestation,” p. 116

In most of these gatherings, human and material wastes threaten the environment. Possible water contamination occurs during the ritual healing services conducted mainly by the Aladura Movement, the Cherubim and Seraphim, and the Celestial Church of Christ's use of rivers. Churches on waterways or canals threaten life and properties, not only of the members but the neighbourhood and the environment "when the channels naturally revolt against the diversions and obstructions."³¹⁰ Though some of these churches acknowledge the supernatural power of rivers and the associated spirits, their belief hampered the environment as obstruction leads to flooding.

Adebayo asserts that using a powerful public address system during worship and public campaigns resulted in noise pollution among religious bodies. He challenged these religious bodies' consciousness to dictate their religion harmoniously with their neighbourliness.³¹¹ As true as the impact of 'noise' from Christian worship centres might be pollution, this is not limited to Christian bodies alone. Another abuse of religion to the environment is vehicular hazards, roadblocks, and gridlock around religious meeting centres.³¹²

Yoruba Christians believe in human welfare and stewardship obligation towards the environment and natural world. However, some denominations are insensitive to their neighbourhood's interest, which negates Christian and Omoluabi ethos. Depletion of natural forests and loss of biodiversity shouldn't be seen as a mission, but as

³¹⁰ H. K. Anjorin, "Attitudinal and Conceptual Considerations of the Church in Nigeria, in respect to Environmental Management," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Volume 24, Issue 10, Series 6, October 2019, p. 81

³¹² F. O. Falako, "Faith-Based Organisations and Environmental Hazards: A Study of Lagos-Ibadan Expressway," A paper presented at the 2nd Annual *Conference of Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) (West)* under the theme Biblical Studies and Environmental Issues in Africa held between 11th and 14th March 2008 at the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago - Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria, p. 11

reclaiming, preserving and conserving the environment. Unfortunately, religious bodies in Western Nigeria, against their religious obligations, perceived environmental protection and preservation as secular and should be handled by the government, NGOs, and academia.³¹³ Talabi et al., in a study of *Theological Evaluation of Christians' Attitude to Environmental Preservation in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos*, reported that 523 of 1000 respondents (i.e. 52.3%)

“agreed that the churches are committed to human development, . . . 550 (55%) respondents disagreed that pastors in the local government area have proven themselves to be good environmental stewards. . . 764 (76.4%) respondents agreed that church members contribute to littering and degradation of Alimosho Local Government Area.”³¹⁴

The study not only showed that society expects more from the Church but also observed and acknowledged the role of the Church in environmental management.

There is more information about what the Church should do than what it is doing. Many Christians today allude to the saying that ‘this world is not our own’. They became more eschatologically conscious at the expense of their immediate environment. Hence, “It became common wisdom that the environment was a secular concern.”³¹⁵ Contrawise, God made a covenant with Noah and all the creatures with him, “See, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark,” (Gen. 9: 9 – 10).

³¹³ In my 17 years as religious leader, who had served in almost all the Yoruba speaking states in Nigeria. I have not for one engaged, coordinated or participated in environmental awareness. The same is the response that I got from church leaders and members from other denominations. As Adventist, we do have Creation Sabbath and/or nature Sabbath. However, it is more of a fellowship than awareness.

³¹⁴ J. M. Talabi, O. O. Akitoye, & S. O. Okusanya, “Theological Evaluation of Christians' Attitude to Environmental Preservation in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos,” *Abraka Humanities Review Volume 12: No.1, 2022*, pp. 146-147

³¹⁵ L. Kearns, “Saving the Creation: Christian Environmentalism in the United States,” *Sociology of Religion*, 57: 1, 1996, p. 55

Mugambi and Mika assert that “clearly the guiding principle of equity is central to the Biblical tradition. God’s inheritance is the communal body, which includes all of nature.”³¹⁶ As posited by Kearns, “The problem is not with Christianity, but with not being true to Christianity.”³¹⁷

3.5.2 Islamic religion

Islam, as an Abrahamic religion like Christianity, had robust injunction on the environment. Quran and Sunnah teachings instruct that Allah created the environment perfectly and harmoniously. Allah declared in the Quran, “Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts); for the mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.” Quran 6:95. The text obliged humans to protect and preserve the environment from misuse. “He has created everything and has measured it exactly according to its due measurements (*faqaddarahu taqdiran*),” Quran 25:2. In Islam, God (Allah) is acknowledged as the Creator of heavens and earth (everything). Humans must sustain a harmonious relationship or due balance between the created. Quran also warns against wastefulness, “But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones, and the Evil One is to his Lord (himself) ungrateful.” Quran 17:26, 27 “. . . But waste not by excess: for Allah loveth not the wasters.” 6:141. Hence, the Islamic motive of environmental protection revolves around value, unity and harmonious relationships in the natural universe.

In the words of Jum‘a, the Mufti of Egypt:

“God made the human a responsible trustee *amīn* and simply an agent who should preserve the universe and not exclusively monopolise or dominate it. This is because God has made this universe a shared right

³¹⁶ J. N. K. Mugami and V. Mika, *Christian theology and environmental responsibility*, Nairobi: Acton, 2001: 29

³¹⁷ Kearns, “Saving the Creation,” 55-70.

between all creatures therefore, man should not deprive others from using it, including the animals.”³¹⁸

Jum‘a’s position highlights humans as stewards, agents of preservation, shared relationships with other creatures, and lack of dominance as the foundation for the Islamic environmental perspective. In summary, the Islamic perspective on the environment could be:

“i. Respecting nature. ii. Keeping the natural resources from waste and misuse. iii. Increasing the amount of Trees. iv. Increasing the Suitable Lands for Agriculture through Encouraging Reclaiming Dead Lands.”³¹⁹

Some of the notable Islamic groups in Yoruba land are Ansar-Ud-Deen, Jamat-ul Islamiyyah, Zumratul-Islamiyyah, Nawair-ud-Deen Societies of Nigeria, Izālah Movement, Tijaniyyah Movement, and Ahamadiyya Muslim Jama’at Movement Nigeria. A survey conducted by Dankani et al., with 125 Islamic scholars, reveals the levels of environmental commitment among the *Ulamas* – religious scholars and authorities. This research was vital because it was conducted at the seat of Islam in Nigeria – Sokoto Caliphate³²⁰ and with Islamic scholars. Though 87% of the Islamic scholars claimed awareness of climate change and its effects, the survey indicates none of these respondents heard about climate change in their religious gatherings. Concerning the cause of environmental disaster or climate change, 15% said they had

³¹⁸ A. Jum‘a, *Al- bī‘a wa al ifaḥ’alayha min maḥū -r islāmi*, Cairo: Al wābil al-sayyib Publication, 2009, p. 11

³¹⁹ I. M. Dankani, H. M. Raliya & H. H. Dankani, “Perception and Role of Religious Leaders in Climate Change Awareness and Mitigation in Sokoto State,” *Jalingo Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, Volume 3, Number 1, December, 2020, p. 223

³²⁰ M. U. Bunza and L. Abdulkarim, “Scientific Education among Muslims in Northern Nigeria: The Influence of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Scholarship,” *Dinamika Ilmu*, Volume 21(1), 2021, p. 3

no idea, 22% claimed deforestation, and 21% believe it is an emission of gases (22% and 21% are anthropogenic effects).³²¹

In comparison, the majority, 42%, attribute it to inevitable casualty – act of God. The result shows that 62% of the Islamic scholars play no role in creating environmental awareness.”³²² This doesn't sound comforting since Sokoto is one of the focus of the FG Great Green Wall project, launched to cater for worst-affected deforestation states such as Bauchi, Adamawa, Kano, Katsina, Borno, Zamfara, Yobe, Gombe, Jigawa and Kebbi.³²³ If less is done Islamically in this region, then little may be expected in the southern part of the country. In the real sense, the Yoruba Islamic groups' participation in environmental preservation, just like their Christian counterpart, is sketchy.

It is to be restated that Islamic religious bodies' involvement in prayer camps has contributed to the environmental crisis in Yoruba land. Like their Christian counterpart, less concern for the forest and promotion of deforestation is consciously or unconsciously exhibited. Aside from corporal guilt, individual Muslims are involved in unlawful activities which degrade the environment. The environmental crisis is an ethical issue that Omoluabi's worldview stands to address. Mattson argues that “Greed, selfishness and avarice, . . . are human failings to which all people are subject.”³²⁴ Therefore, forgetfulness (*nisyan*) in fulfilling Quranic dictates concerning

³²¹ Dankani et al., Perception and Role of Religious Leaders, 2020, Pp. 223-226

³²² Ibid., pp. 224 -227

³²³ A. A. Geidam & L. Z. Mohamad, L. Z, “Factors Effecting Afforestation Program in Nigeria: Building a Conceptual Framework,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(12), 2022, p. 1446

³²⁴ I. Mattson, The Islamic View on Consumption & Material Development in Light of Environmental Pollution, In: *Islam, Christianity & the Environment*, MABDA, English Monograph Series, No. 9, 2011, p. 8

the environment and judgement, makes some Muslims involved in injustice and ignorance in treating the natural world.³²⁵

Another form of environmental disturbance according to Ajayi and Eyongndi, is noise pollution.³²⁶ “Noise is one of the most dangerous and silent environmental pollutants and its effects on the human body system could lead to death.”³²⁷ Conjoining with noise pollution is the blocking of the major and street roads for religious processions or worship. These anti-Omoluabi activities are not limited to the most populous city in Nigeria – Lagos, but all parts of western Nigeria.³²⁸

³²⁵ A. S. Hardi, T. Widodo, D. Putriani, S. Kayadibi, The Root Cause of Deforestation in Indonesia: An Islamic Economics Approach (132-152), in: F. Dhont, T. W. Webster, and R. A. Curaming (eds.), *Between the Mountain and the Sea: Positioning Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2013, p. 161,

³²⁶ M. O. Ajayi and D. T. Eyongndi, “An Examination Of Noise Pollution: A Call For Regulation And Stringent Enforcment Of Existing Laws,” *Benson Idahosa University Journal of Private and Property Law* 88, 2018, pp. 88-108

³²⁷ Ajayi and Eyongndi, “An Examination Of Noise Pollution”, 2018, p. 89; Cf A.P. Adamu “The Legal Regulation of Noise Pollution in Nigeria,” *The University of Jos Law Journal*, 9(2) (2010- 2014), p. 447.

³²⁸ R. I. Adebayo, “Abuse Of Religion And Environmental Pollution,” *Intellectual Discourse*, Vol 21, No 1, 2013, p. 113



Fig. 9: September 27, 2023 Eid El Maulud at Agege (Lagos-Abeokuta Expressway)

3.5.3 Traditional Religion

Yoruba environmental consciousness or worldview is mostly seen among the traditional or indigenous adherents since most Yoruba who belong to Christianity and Islam abandon their culture for ‘Western’ or ‘Arabian’ culture as the case may be. Religious identity among foreign religion adherents (Christians and Muslims) has taken over cultural identity. Hence, to understand the rudiment of Yoruba environmental knowledge and perspective, to the traditionalists, the custodians of culture and tradition we go. To them, environmental preservation and conservation are guided by socioreligious taboos or norms, which invariably define and guide their behaviour towards the use of natural resources.³²⁹ “The Yoruba do not usually tamper

³²⁹ A. Rim-Rukeh, G. Ierhiewwie and I. E. Agbozu, “Traditional beliefs and conservation of natural resources: Evidences from selected communities in Delta State, Nigeria,” *International Journal of Biodiversity and Conservation*, Vol. 5(7), July 2013, p. 427

with nature carelessly,”³³⁰ though urbanization and modernization have negatively affected this consciousness, as do other aspects of life. The fact that “man is a tenant on God’s earth”³³¹ sustained their relationship with other created beings/things³³² and defined their stewardship roles to the Creator - Olodumare. To this effect, the environment is to be treated with utmost respect and responsibility, to create a harmonious, beautiful, sustaining and healthy habitat for all – humans and non-humans.

In Yoruba religion deities play important roles,³³³ “each of them oversees a particular aspect of the Yoruba life - this includes nature and the environment.”³³⁴ For instance, Osun, orisha goddess, is associated with water³³⁵, love, fertility and purity. Obatala is known as sky father, Sango is associated with thunder and lightning. Orisa Oko is the god of agriculture, rurality and open fields. Osanyin deals with plants, magic, herbs, healing and charms. To Oya is associated with winds, tempest and storms. Olokun is the goddess of the sea and ocean. Orunmila is the god of knowledge and divination.

According to Ogunade, Yoruba life in theory and practice gave reverence and adoration to all creatures.³³⁶ He concludes:

³³⁰ R. Ogunade, “Environmental issues in Yoruba religion: implications for leadership and society in Nigeria”, A paper prepared for *Science and Religion: Global Perspectives*, June 4-8, 2005, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, A program of the Metanexus Institute (www.metanexus.net). Available: <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/publications/raymond/ENVIRONMENTAL%20ISSUES%20IN%20YORUBA%20RELIGION.htm>. P. 2

³³¹ E. B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1978, p. 206

³³² J. O. Awolalu and P. A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan: Onibonoje Publishers, 1979, p. 73 “For instance, the myriad spirits which populate the world of Yoruba belief are associated with hills, mountains, rivers, rocks, caves, trees, brooks, lakes, and thick forests.”

³³³ Awolalu and Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, 1979, p. 75

³³⁴ Ogunade, “Environmental issues in Yoruba religion,” p. 2

³³⁵ Olokun, Oya and Yemoja also have relation with water.

³³⁶ Ogunade, “Environmental issues in Yoruba religion”, p. 3

“Indeed, it will not be an exaggeration to say that (the) Yoruba religion has always been a highly environmentally respectful religion. Adherents of (the) Yoruba religion are regularly involved in reforestation and preservation schemes, and their shrines are protectors of nature, with some even doubling as nature preserves (as we have noted in the case of Osun groove). The religion has much to say about conservation. Throughout the ages, the Yoruba people are constantly learning what their faith has to say about preserving the environment.”³³⁷

To the Yoruba, nature and spirituality are connected. The interconnectivity bestows respect for the environment and their indwelling spirits. To this effect, Yoruba sees more than mere nature – tree, water, mountains, land, thunder etc, but seek peaceful coexistence and responsible use of the natural resources to avoid angering the spirits. “Any violation of nature's integrity requires rituals to appease the spirits that dwell in the environment . . . This is an integral part of the reasons why Yoruba people are very careful about their interaction and use of resources in nature - because these "corrective" rituals are also very expensive.”³³⁸ Most of these spirits are symbolic and contextualized in sacredness. For example, the Osun shrine is in a (sacred) grove, just like many other gods in the land. To preserve and conserve, hunting and fishing are thereby prohibited around the grove. This encourages biodiversity, the relationship between the people and the environment, and the responsible use of herbs conserved for healing purposes.

However, modernization in urbanization and religion has greatly affected the sacred forests or groves. The reason is that some born into the traditionalist found it not civilized and attractive, hence the tendency to be converted into modern religions becomes high. Christianity mostly takes advantage of this by destroying the forest in a bid to expel the ‘evil’ spirits. If an evil spirit is in the tree, why not cast it out? No

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 3

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 5

human has been killed for being possessed by an evil spirit. Other reserved forests have become prayer centres and camps “at the expense of many forest lands and landscapes. These developments, which are advancing at an alarming rate, are located in places far from civilization where the remaining endemic wilderness can be found.”³³⁹ Yoruba tradition remains the most environmentally friendly religion in belief and practice in the land and should be encouraged despite the continuous look down from modern religions and Western science, who see environmental protection as purely aesthetic and economic purposes.³⁴⁰

3.6 Seventh-Day Adventist Church and The Environment

The name Seventh-Day Adventist reveals two things that can be linked to the environment – Seventh day and Adventism. The seventh day is the climactic act of God’s creation,³⁴¹ a reflection of wonders in nature and humans. An atmosphere of love and order. An environment of abundance and balance. Every seventh-day sabbath is a memorial of God as Creator and His creative power. The Sabbath’s fellowship links creation with spirituality, creating social equality and value (Exd. 20:10) among all creation.

The Literary Structure of the First Creation Account

Forming The Unformed (tohû) Is Formed Space	Filling The Unfilled (bohû) Is Filled Inhabitants (Content)
1st Day: Light—Division Day Night	4th Day: Luminaries Sun Moon
2nd Day: Firmament—Division	5th Day: Inhabitants of Water and Sky

³³⁹ F. D. Babalola, “Roles of and Threats to Yoruba Traditional Beliefs in Wilderness Conservation in Southwest Nigeria,” *USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-64*, 2011, p. 128

³⁴⁰ Ogunade, “Environmental issues in Yoruba religion”, p. 3

³⁴¹ J. Moskala, The Sabbath in the First Creation Account, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 13/1 (Spring 2002): 55–66, p.

Water Sky	Fish Birds
3rd Day: Dry Land—Separated from the Sea Earth Vegetation	6th Day: Inhabitants of Land Animals; Humans (Man / Wife) Food for Humans and Animals
7th Day: Sabbath—God in Relationship with Man A Day of Rest Is Formed and Filled with Holiness	

Adapted from Moskala, *The Sabbath in the First Creation Account*, Spring 2002, p. 57

However, Adventism is the belief that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world is imminent. This eschatological tenet impacts how Adventists view their environment. It is a relational and accountability perspective of eschatology, rather than anthropocentric. This eschatological view is redemptive, as Paul says, “Not only the creation, but we ourselves [...] groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for [...] redemption” (Rom 8:23). Adventists care and value for other created beings in the environment is reflected in one of their practices – vegetarianism. Adventists’ consciousness and belief that the human body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19) regulates all areas of their lives in response to “God’s moral and natural laws.”³⁴² Hayes and Hayes argue that “living the ideal Adventist lifestyle reduces an individual’s ecological footprint”³⁴³ Ellen G. White,³⁴⁴ one of the leaders in the Adventist movement and a prolific writer once counselled the church to imbibe country living lifestyle in preparation for Jesus’ second coming. She said,

“To many of those living in the cities who have not a spot of green grass to set their feet upon, who year after year have looked out upon filthy courts and narrow alleys, brick walls and pavements, and skies

³⁴² Floyd E. Hayes and William K. Hayes, “Seventh-Day Adventist Faith And Environmental Stewardship” (141-160), In: H. Thomas Goodwin (ed.), *Biology: a Seventh-day Adventist approach for students and teachers*, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2014, p. 148

³⁴³ Hayes and Hayes, “Seventh-Day Adventist Faith And Environmental Stewardship,” 2014, p. 148

³⁴⁴ Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one’s faith. <https://whiteestate.org/about/egwbio/>

clouded with dust and smoke,—if these could be taken to some farming district, surrounded with the green fields, the woods and hills and brooks, the clear skies and the fresh, pure air of the country, it would seem almost like heaven. Cut off to a great degree from contact with and dependence upon men, and separated from the world's corrupting maxims and customs and excitements, they would come nearer to the heart of nature. God's presence would be more real to them."³⁴⁵

What is the position of the Adventists on the environment?

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church has made several statements about environmental stewardship and concerns. "From time to time, Seventh-day Adventists find it important to articulate their understanding of certain important topics in light of their understanding of biblical values and teachings."³⁴⁶ These are called 'Official Statements'. The official statements about the environment were approved by vote in 1992, 1995, and 1996 covering areas like, caring for the environment, the dangers of climate change and stewardship of the environment (see Appendix).

The first official statement of 1992 reflected Adventist beliefs in God as the creator, the Sabbath as a memorial of creation and an emphasis on integration with the total environment. It also stresses disobedience to the original order of creation resulted in disharmony and environmental degradation. The statement also called for mutual respect among the created and that human dignity is a gift from the Creator. The second statement addresses the dangers of climate change, as voted in 1995. It acknowledges the anthropocentric effect of climate change due to the overutilization of natural resources. The church, however, warns against unbridled consumerism and advocates for responsible use of resources and respect for creation. Hence, need for a simple but wholesome lifestyle. The third official statement reevaluates humans'

³⁴⁵ E. G. White, *Country Living: An Aid to Moral and Social Security*, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1946, p. 19

³⁴⁶ <https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/>

position as a steward of God. The stewardship of the environment calls for a faithful and fruitful management of the natural world. It acknowledges nature as a gift from the Creator. It emphasized human selfishness and greed as a source of ecological crisis.

“Although Adventist leadership has voiced clear concern for environmental stewardship, no institution, department, or appointed leader has been tasked with meeting this important need. In August 2009, the Loma Linda University board approved the creation of a new Center for Biodiversity and Conservation Studies in an effort to fill this void.”³⁴⁷

A conscious, consistent and committed effort is needed on the part of the church to domesticate these ‘doctrines’. As said by White “God's great book of nature is open for us to study, and from it, we are to gain more exalted ideas of His greatness and unexcelled love and glory.”³⁴⁸

3.7 Summary

Religion plays a significant role in Yoruba society. Like many African cultures individual or community life revolves around religion. Hence, both traditional and contemporary life possess an element of religiosity. It is apt to consider the religious tendency of the people in dealing with daily social and spiritual challenges. Okeke and Okafor argue that as far as “religion is concerned, it is absolutely immoral to abuse the natural world.”³⁴⁹ However, as reviewed, religions that emphasize conversion – Christianity and Islam have contributed a lot to the environmental crisis in western Nigeria. Scholars like Opoku, Uche and Anyanwu posit that the beauty of

³⁴⁷ Hayes and Hayes, “Seventh-Day Adventist Faith And Environmental Stewardship,” 2014, p. 149

³⁴⁸ E. G. White, *The faith I live by*, Takoma Park, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958, p. 26

³⁴⁹ R. U. Okeke, and E. Okafor, “Religious and Ethical Evaluation of the Attitudes of Some Contemporary Nigerians to the Environment: An Issue in Nation-Building,” *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3(4), 2019, p. 11.

religions (ATR, Christianity and Islam) lies in the fact of matching words with action.³⁵⁰ Since religion has a great influence in the life of the people, “all genuine religions must directly and practically respond to the plaguing issues in the society.”³⁵¹

Christianity and Islam must live their religious dictate in keeping the environment, as much is to be learned from the traditional religion. Busia, an Oxford-trained sociologist, warns that

“for conversion to the Christian faith to be more than superficial, the Christian church must come to grips with traditional beliefs and practices and with the world view that these beliefs and practices imply.”³⁵²

Yoruba's traditional consciousness and worldview about the environment remain an effective tool in dealing with environmental degradation in western Nigeria. It is absolutely important for the adherents of Christian and Islamic religions, to explore cultural values embedded in Yoruba traditions without the fear of conversion or being labelled as pagans. As demonstrated in 3.7 Adventists have robust environmental beliefs and teaching, in which adequate contextualization may create mutual harmony with the Yoruba traditional values and Omoluabi ethos.

³⁵⁰ A. Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ghana: Fep International Private Ltd, 1978, p. 8; C. Uche, *Introductory Islam*, Owerri: Global Press, 2006, pp. 27-28; D. Anyanwu, *Christianity in Igbo and Nigerian Society*, Owerri: Uzopietro Publishers, 2013, pp. 46-47

³⁵¹ Okeke and Okafor, , “Religious and Ethical Evaluation of the Attitudes of Some Contemporary Nigerians to the Environment,” p. 11

³⁵² K. A. Bukia, *Christianity and African Culture*, Accra: Christian Council of the Gold Coast, 1955, p. 1

CHAPTER 4 SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

The Yoruba people of western Nigeria have a strong relationship between their language and how it relates to the everyday life interactions of people in the society. Though there are different ethnic subgroups within the Yoruba nation³⁵³, with various taboos, proverbs remain a unifying communication medium for all dialects within the Yoruba. This Sociolinguistics approach focuses on how proverbs can solve everyday situations of society in their naturalistic social context. Therefore, this common sense knowledge of the people serves as a tool to unravel how Yoruba people use language in social interaction for environmental purposes.

4.1 Sociolinguistics Analysis of Selected Proverbs

According to Fayemi, “For an African, what is not in proverbs is not real.”³⁵⁴ This position emphasizes the centrality of proverbs in the day-to-day life of the people. Taking this premise as my point of departure, this chapter analyzes Yoruba proverbs that address environmental issues. Hence, some of the selected proverbial corpus is arranged according to environmental applications in the areas of warning, the right to life, communal living, responsibility and responsiveness, and public health, under the social reality of *Ọmọ̀lúàbí*'s worldview. To reiterate, *Ọmọ̀lúàbí* as a concept is the

³⁵³ "The Yorùbá are divided into many different ethnic subgroups, such as Okun, Ìgbómìnà, Ìbòlò, Ọ̀yọ́, Onḡdó, È gbá, Ifẹ̀, Àwòrì, Ọ̀ wò, Ijẹ̀bú, Èkitì, Ijèsà, Àkókó, È gbádò, Ìbàràpá, Ìlorin, Ìlájẹ, Itsekiri, Kétu, Sábe, Ifọ̀nyin, Ìdásà, Pópó, Ifẹ̀ (or Aná, in the Republic of Togo), Àhòrí, Itsha, and M̀ahi." Aríbidésí Usman, Subgroups, In: Toyin Falola and Akinyemi (eds.). *Encyclopedia of the Yoruba*, 2016, Pp. 312-313 (p. 312)

³⁵⁴ A. K. Fayemi, "The Logic in Yoruba Proverbs," 2010, p. 127

“standard which determines the morality and the immorality of an act in Yorùbá society in Africa”³⁵⁵.

4.1.1 Proverbs concerning warning

One of the roles of Proverbs is to warn against bad conduct, to point to the reality of a disastrous consequence, or to call attention to a responsibility that cannot be reneged. These are done concerning individuals, authorities or the community. The essence is to guide and enhance faithfulness in the discharge of duties for harmonious community relationships. Since “*Enikan lo foju nilu kan ti gbogbo ilu di ilu afoju* (a single blind man in a community makes it a community of the blind),” hence, one bad apple may spoil the whole.

Proverb: *Ogun àgbó télè, kii pa Aro tó bá gbón*

Translation: A forewarned war does not kill a wise lame

Cultural Metaphor: Yoruba people culturally use symbols to illustrate the reality of daily life. In this proverb, three words are key to this understanding, *Ogun* (war), *Aro* (lame) and *gbón* (wise). Intercommunal wars in Yoruba were pre-informed through a traditional semiotic sign, *Àrokò* - a non-verbal communication code. When a community send fig “Odan” tree leaves, a broomstick or nine cowries to another community, it signifies a severance of relationship and impending war.³⁵⁶ This information creates room for the receiving community either to make peace or accept to go into war with the sending community. During this period, discerning members of that community, including the lame who are wise have an opportunity to escape.

³⁵⁵ S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorùbá*, Lagos: C. S. S. Bookshops, 1921, p. 101

³⁵⁶ M.S. Abdullahi-Idiagbon, “African Traditional Semiotics: The Example of ‘AR’OKO’ in Yoruba Tradition,” *Signs* vol. 3, 2009, pp. 128, 132

Implication: The proverb implies that preparedness is key to avert future problems or disasters. This can also mean heeding to alert or warning can save a life. It is one of the most used proverbs in the media gingles to sensitize the public to possible disaster.

Environmental Application: The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMET) is the government parastatal saddled with observing, collating, and analyzing meteorological data to provide timely and accurate reporting of weather and climate information for socio-economic development and the safety of lives and property.³⁵⁷ NiMET has issued many warnings to the public of impending floods in recent times.³⁵⁸ In October 2023, The Lagos state government also asked all residents along River Ogun to relocate to the upland.³⁵⁹ However, from experience and research conducted by Olokesusi et al., though 77.2% of the respondents were aware of the flood warnings, only 6.2% were willing to relocate.³⁶⁰ Defiance of the warning does not stop it from happening. Unfortunately, some religious leaders are sceptical about climate change.

Proverb: *Aṣení ṣe ara-are; asánbànte sán ara-a re lókùn.*

³⁵⁷ The Nigerian Meteorological Agency, <https://nimet.gov.ng/about-nimet/>

³⁵⁸ As appears in media, “Flood: NiMET issues red alert to Northeast, Southwest states,” <https://www.capitalpost.ng/flood-nimet-issues-red-alert-to-northeast-southwest-states/>, “Why Government must act immediately on NiMET warnings,” <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/05/19/why-government-must-act-immediately-on-nimet-warnings>, “NiMET warns of impending flood,” <https://radionigerialagos.gov.ng/nimet-warns-of-impending-flood/>,

³⁵⁹ <https://www.tvcnews.tv/2023/10/lagos-asks-residents-around-ogun-river-bank-to-relocate/>

³⁶⁰ F. Olokesusi, F.B. Olorunfemi, A. Onwuemele, and M.O. Oke, “Awareness of and Responses to the 2011 Flood Warnings Among Vulnerable Communities in Lagos, Nigeria,” In: B. Werlen (ed.), *Global Sustainability: Cultural Perspectives and Challenges for Transdisciplinary Integrated Research*, Switzerland: Springer, 2015, pp. 213-215

Translation: He who would hurt others hurts himself; he who wraps himself in a loincloth ties himself in a rope.

Cultural Metaphor: In Yoruba culture, *bànte* is a piece of cloth with a triangular shape and ropes tied to the edges of two angles. This serves as a pant for the people. However, it can't be useful unless the ropes are tied around the body. Hence, to tie *bànte*, you invariably tie yourself.

Implication: This proverb warns against some individuals who for personal interest put the lives of others in the community in danger. Not knowing that he who would hurt others hurts himself also.

Environmental Application: This proverb can be applied in the area of irresponsible use of natural resources such as logging, mining and other forms of pollution. However, while those who engage in such behaviour receive immediate economic benefits, in the long run, it will be disastrous. For instance, flooding can also result from obstruction of waterways by certain individuals or organizations during construction. Hence the proverb says when you think of empowering yourself, be careful of the process.

4.1.2 Proverbs about the Right to Life

Right to life is an existential leverage in traditional Yoruba society. This has nothing to do with social status, gender or age. Life is precious, it must not be taken unlawfully, as this may contaminate the land and result in calamity. These proverbs promote value for human life and that of other co-tenants in the ecosystem.

Proverb: *Omọ kì í pa omọ jayé.*

Translation: A child does not kill another child as a means to prosper.

Cultural Metaphor: *Omọ*, a child, in Yoruba tradition is cherished and adored. Every child is seen as a blessing and should be catered for, in training, provision and

protection. Even though a child may not be responsible for his/her actions, it behoves him/her to note that life is not lived at the expense of others.

Implication: This proverb calls for caution and limitation in power. There are certain things that one may not do to others; however, great one might be.

Environmental Application: Especially in the mining sector, some operators care less about the lives of many who survive on the depleted plots of land. More often, they care less about post-mining recovery. Their target is the resources and not the people. This proverb warns such people to be conscious of their actions as they affect others, no matter their interests.

Proverb: *Adiyẹ ba l'ókùn, ara o ro'kun ara o ro adiyẹ*

Translation: "The fowl is perched on the rope, there is no peace for the rope, there is no peace for the fowl"³⁶¹.

Cultural Metaphor: Yoruba people believe in harmony and equilibrium of life. Their sense of interrelatedness and interconnectivity as presented in this proverb affirm their worldview on cause and effect. The rope symbolizes a connection in Yoruba cosmology. If equilibrium is not formed, the fowl who seek to find rest on it, will not be at rest, too.

Implication: "When any aspect of reality is dislocated, for whatever reason, unless redress is achieved, by whatever means indicated, then the dislocation will affect all aspects of reality."³⁶²

Environmental Application: The survival of man is tied to his environment. A harmonious relationship between humans and non-humans, where respect, value and dignity exist, always creates sustainability. Environmental disasters such as flooding, pollution, deforestation, desertification etc are evidence of dislocation or nonequilibrium in humans' relationship with their environment.

³⁶¹ Bewaji, p. 239

³⁶² Ibid., p. 239

4.1.3 Proverbs about communal living

Traditional Yoruba community sees unity as an essential tool in fostering harmonious relationships with each other. Life in the community is about ‘us’ and not ‘I’. Yoruba people believe no one has a sufficiency of everything, hence, we need others to live and fulfil. Communal living engages people of different ages, both young and old, of different genders, both male and female, and of different statuses, both rich and poor.

Proverb: *Agbajo owo ni a nfi so aya , ajeji owo kan ko gberu dori*

Translation: We use a closed fist to tap our chest; a single hand cannot lift luggage to the head.

Cultural Metaphor: The symbolic representation of *Agbajo owo* (close fist), *aya* (chest), *ajeji owo kan* (a single hand), *eru* (load) and *ori* (head) in Yoruba traditional setting as reflected in this proverb indicate the needs for joint action. The relationship between *Agbajo owo* (close fist) and *aya* (chest), reveals a sense of confidence in unity. When one taps his/her chest with a closed fist, it alludes to ‘conviction, trust or dependability.’ On the contrary, *ajeji owo kan* (a single hand), is limited to achieve much. *Eru* (load) in this context may mean project, work or goal, while *ori* (head) could be fulfilment or satisfaction. Therefore, there is strength in multitude or number.

Implication: Each individual is important to the survival and peaceful coexistence of the community. A lack of unity can jeopardize harmonious relationships and communal living.

Environmental Application: An environmental crisis is a battle that must be fought by all and through all means. Individual and corporate assessment of environmental

consciousness and value is paramount. Moral and political will is needed to fight the environmental menace in our society.

Proverb: *Ai kowo rin ejo ni n fi iku pa won*

Translation: Because snakes do not move in a group, they become an easy prey to be killed

Cultural Metaphor: Among the Yorubas, *ejo* (snake) is known to be a dangerous animal, feared and frightful. However, a group of people can easily kill a snake. Yoruba people believe that if snakes move in a group in their different species, it will be difficult for anyone to stand them.

Implication: This proverb encourages unity and depicts the effect of lack of it. The community becomes strong when united and vulnerable to danger when divided.

Environmental Application: The urgency for environmental preservation and conservation requires it to be in the mouth of everyone. Public awareness should not be left to the hands of the government alone. Family heads, traditional leaders, local and state authorities, civil organizations, religious leaders and the federal government should work and walk together to promote a sustainable environment.

4.1.4. Proverbs on Responsibility and Responsiveness

One other requirement expected of a member of a Yoruba community is a sense of responsibility. A responsible person is always responsive to issues in the community.

Proverb: *Werepe gba ara re gba igi oko*

Translation: A stinging nestle saves not only itself but other trees on the farm.

Cultural Metaphor: *Werepe* (stinging nestle) is a climbing plant that burns (*jo*) the skin of whoever touches it or that it touches. As a climbing tree, it serves as a protection for the main tree and prevents it from being cut down. Yoruba uses this to illustrate a powerful person who delivers or protects himself and the people around him.

Implication: This could be illustrated by the roles of the protective agency or security operatives, who have been saddled with the responsibility to protect and were also protected by the law.

Environmental Application: The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) empowered by law in 2007 to enforce and ensure compliance to a cleaner and healthier environment in Nigeria serves as *Werepe* (stinging nestle) in preserving and conserving the environment. Among other *Werepe* (stinging nestle) in securing environmental sustainability are the forest guards, Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), State environmental taskforce, Western Nigeria Security Network (Operation Amotekun), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and other commissioned security operatives. Unfortunately, some of these *Werepe* were burnt, and their stinging potentials were removed by wildfire. Instead of protecting the environment, they end up protecting those degrading the environment. It is high time that our *Werepe* should function as their name is. As Yoruba people say *A ki fi eniyan joye awodi, ko ma le gbe ediye* (You can't be a hawk, and afraid to catch a fowl). Every position entails responsibility.

Proverb: *Die die ni imu elede n wogba*

Translation: Little by little the pig's nose enters the garden

Cultural Metaphor: The traditional Yoruba farming system comprises *oko eti'le* (nearby farm) which are subsistent and *oko ona jinjin* (far away farm) known for commercial purposes. Mostly, *oko eti'le* are fenced with palm fronds (branches) against activities of domestic animals such as pigs, goats and sheep. Pig (*elede*) in this case is more destructive. It can use its nose to pull down the fronds and create an entrance to the garden. Hence, the farmers are obliged to be conscious of diggings around the garden caused by pigs.

Implication: The proverb advises that when a small problem is attended to, it won't become uncontrollable.

Environmental Application: Flooding may be mitigated if drainage systems such as canals, primary channels and secondary collectors are dredged. A quick alarm by the community leaders to the activity of loggers may prevent the forest from being depleted. Proper waste disposal can prevent flooding associated with drainage blocking.

Proverb: *Kokoro to n jo lebaa ona, onluu re n be ninu igbo.*

Translation: "The insect that is dancing near the road, its drummer is in the bush"³⁶³

Cultural Metaphor: Yoruba's cultural knowledge about their environment creates a symbolic representation useful for everyday life. One of those symbols is the relationship between *Kokoro* (insect) and *igbo* (bush). More often, insects are found in the bush. In a case where they create activities near the road, it is associated with effect from the bush.

³⁶³ O. O. Adegboyega, "Philosophical Issues In Yoruba Proverbs," *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.5, No.2, September 2017, p. 26 Cf. T. Falola, *African Spirituality, Politics, and Knowledge Systems: Sacred Words and Holy Realms*, Bloomsbury Studies in Black Religion and Cultures, London: Bloomsbury, 2022, p. 31

Implication: Yoruba people believe there is no effect without a cause. For every action seen, there are underlining acts. Hence, we need to look beyond the obvious.

Environmental Application: This has to do with some prominent politicians or government parastatals who have turned themselves into toothless bulldogs. Who also sponsored some businesses that degraded the environment. Sometimes, they turn other eyes to environmental issues because they benefit from it. Many companies involved in deforestation, mining and pollution are business partners to community leaders or the public ‘servants’.

4.1.5. Proverbs on Health and Cleanliness

Yoruba traditional society cherishes healthy life, both physically and spiritually. To them, a healthy spiritual life will make a healthy community life. To this effect, many taboos and proverbs are constructed around health and cleanliness.

Proverb : *Eni to ba gba’le, ni ile n mon fun*

Translation: He who sweeps the ground has a clean environment

Cultural Metaphor: Yoruba society operates on gender roles. One of those roles is, that females (women) are to sweep in the house and the surroundings every morning. The common sense knowledge reveals that a clean environment wards off diseases and creates freshness in the family.

Implication: The proverb implies that one can create what he wants, and what one does is what he gets. Hence healthy living is a thing of choice.

Environmental Application: Crises may occur when changes to the environment destabilize its survival. Accumulation of solid waste may have adverse effects on people living in the surroundings. This may result in endemic diseases such as cholera and associated water pollution.

Proverb: *Imototo bori aarun mole boye ti n bori ooru*

Translation: Cleanliness neutralizes diseases as harmattan dispels heat

Cultural Metaphor: Another form of language used in Yoruba culture is an analogy, it helps create a visual element in the minds of the audience. Using opposite words like *Imototo* (cleanliness) and *aarun* (diseases), *oye* (harmattan) and *ooru* (heat) affirms Yoruba's close contact and acquired knowledge from the environment. The proverbial lesson is about the beneficiary nature of *Imototo* (cleanliness) over *aarun* (diseases), and that of *oye* (harmattan) over *ooru* (heat). This implies clean environment neutralizes diseases. Yoruba culture sees cleanliness beyond the physical. When someone is clean both morally and mentally such is said to be *Omoluabi*. The dirt of any form serves as a hindrance or irritation to the gods. Hence, spiritual cleanliness is extolled among the community.

Implication: It is evident that illness hardly occurs in a clean environment. Cleanliness keeps diseases at a distance. As it is said, cleanliness is next to godliness.

Environmental Application: It is obvious that to win a battle against environmental crisis, members of the society need to war against indiscipline. Inculcation of the importance of a sustainable environment among the populace may reduce the culture of consumerism. They are to be morally, mentally and spiritually connected to the environment. It will be morally right to extol environmental preservation above environmental degradation.

Proverb: *Ilu ki i kere ki o ma ni aatan (akitan)*

Translation: No matter how little a town is; it must have a refuse dump.

Cultural Metaphor: Yoruba society is organized and guided by law. One of the indications of the traditional Yoruba community is the presence of a refuse centre where all refuse collected is dumped. Yoruba society is pragmatic in ensuring a cleaner environment. This necessitates for each community to have a refuse site

(*aatan*). This *aatan* is located outside the village and accessible by all. Each household must sweep its surroundings every morning, if not, the other households will call them to attention. *Aatan* (refuse site) not only serve as a collector of the community's dirt but also promotes a healthy community.

Implication: The health of a community rests on the personal hygiene of its members.

Environmental Application: Urbanization has made Yoruba society horrible in the area of waste management. There is a daily high volume of municipal and industrial waste. To some, independent refuse collectors charge high, and some argue that the refuse bins provided by the government are either not accessible or far away. Sometimes, the bins are not emptied on time, and this results in littering of the streets or bus stops. Many citizens wait for the rain to empty their refuse in the drainage channels. As a matter of urgency, the state waste management authority responsible for the collection and disposal of waste should keep above the increasing volume of waste in the streets and industrial zones.

4.2. Yoruba Proverbs and SDA Ecotheology Reconstruction

Proverbs form a part of Yoruba traditional theology and philosophy as reflected in their practices and lived religion. Theology is constructed by what people say in proverbs and how they live their lives. The likes of Mbiti has emphasized the religious and philosophical aspect of proverbs.³⁶⁴ The main function of Yoruba proverbs conceived in the Omoluabi ethos is to instil knowledge and moral values. The knowledge of the Creator God (Olodumare), the creation, humanity and communal living, the divinities, and magic and healing.

To maintain interrelatedness and harmonious relationships, quality moral values and good character came first among the Yoruba people. This relationship is not limited to

³⁶⁴ J. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed, 1989, pp. 66-67

humanity but other creations - the environment. A good and noble character is a result of being habituated with these sound moral values, which is the end-product of knowledge acquisition in Yoruba culture. To such a person is addressed as *Ọmọ́lúàbí* a person who habitually exhibits sound moral values, respect for the culture and socioreligious norms.

The environmental preservation knowledge and obligations embedded in Christianity and Islam became less effective due to a lack of respect for Yoruba culture. For instance, Yoruba Christians would rather cut down an 'evil' possessed tree, than cast the evil out. It is a common practice among Christians and Muslims to look down on cultural and traditional practices without evaluating their social value. To be a good Christian and Muslim is often equated to one's ability to abandon their traditional customs.³⁶⁵ Hence, a good and effective religion must lead to praxis in response to social, economic, and environmental crises.

In the Yoruba context, 'believing' is not as important as 'revealing' all the articulated ideas from beliefs, tradition and experience. What the people say must match with what they do. What people do, can be evaluated in the context of the *Omoluabi* worldview. In as much as the belief systems of religious bodies in Yoruba land are mostly contrary to their practices in addressing environmental crises, it is paramount to reconstruct or restore certain ecotheological doctrines as related to Yoruba proverbs in response to environmental issues. To offer a platform that can synthesise the three religions without the fear of falling into pantheism or syncretism.

Seventh-Day Adventists have robust environmental beliefs and teaching (3.7), in which adequate contextualization may create mutual harmony with the Yoruba

³⁶⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1989, p. 232

traditional values and Omoluabi ethos. However, maybe out of omission, oversight or fear of syncretism, Yoruba Adventists have not employed the use of proverbs to illuminate their biblical understanding of the environment. As argued by van den Toren and Tan with respect to Interreligious dialogue, "...it does mean that you can only start to disagree legitimately after you have understood why these ideas and practices make sense to those who hold them."³⁶⁶ Adamo argues that "by using proverbs, Christianity is at home amongst the Yoruba people of Nigeria."³⁶⁷ According to Mbiti, "Proverbs ... form a bridge between traditional African religiosity and biblical teaching."³⁶⁸ Effective use of this tool could be a theological base for proverbs in Contextual Theology.

4.2.1 Elements in Adventists' Ecotheology

The belief 21 of the 28 fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church is the doctrine of stewardship. It captures the environmental concept of the Adventists. It reads, "We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use."³⁶⁹ The following elements can be deduced from the above doctrine:

1. God is the Creator of the universe
2. Human beings are His stewards of care for the environment

³⁶⁶ Benno van den Toren & Tan Kang-San, *Humble Confidence: A Model for Interfaith Apologetics*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022, p. 56; "Members of particular religious traditions will of course initially look at other traditions from within their own religious tradition. In most cases, when looked at from within a particular religiously and culturally embedded rationality, other traditions will most of the time not appear very rational." p. 51

³⁶⁷ D .T. Adamo, "Ancient Israelite and African proverbs as advice, reproach, warning, encouragement and explanation", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 71(3), Art. #2972, 11 pages, 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2972>

³⁶⁸ J. Mbiti, "Children Confer Glory on a Home," 1996, p. 55

³⁶⁹ <https://www.adventist.org/stewardship/>

3. Blessings and resources of the earth are given on trust
4. Human beings are accountable for the use of natural resources

These elements are what is expected of an ideal Adventist. These elements are biblical and applicable to Christians and non-Christians. However, as demonstrated in the official statements (Appendix) of SDA, it is obvious that there are violations. It is notable that:

1. Disobedience to the original order of creation caused disharmony and environmental degradation
2. Call for mutual respect among the created beings
3. Human dignity is a gift from the Creator
4. Irresponsible use of natural resources opens the way for climate change
5. Caution against uncontrolled consumerism
6. Anthropocentric activities resulted in the environmental crisis
7. Need for a simple but healthy lifestyle
8. Need for faithful and fruitful management of the world's resources
9. Nature is a gift from God
10. Human selfishness and greed as a source of ecological crisis

The official statements on the environment are hinged on value and respect for the natural world, environmental stewardship and care, harmonious relationship between the created beings, and moral aspect of environmental crisis. All these are interrelated and interconnected. However, the cultural lens of Omoluabi and Yoruba proverbs will be used to view these elements and develop a contextual theology suitable for the Yoruba Adventists.

4.2.2 Proverbial Analysis of SDA Ecotheology

Yoruba Adventists call for mutual respect and harmonious relationships among the created beings. They advocated for “a reformation of lifestyle ..., based on respect for nature, restraint in the use of the world’s resources, reevaluation of one’s needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.”³⁷⁰ A step to mutual respect is the acknowledgement of common origin. Mutual respect also entails the right to life. Because of the danger of ‘violating’ natural order, Yorubas are very conscious and cautious “about their interaction and use of resources in nature.”³⁷¹ In the proverb they say, *Omọ̀ kì í pa omọ̀ jayé* (A child does not kill another child as a means to prosper). A few points can be deduced from the application of this proverb.

1. All creations are from the same source. Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God, the Creator (Ps. 24:1, 89:11, Deut 10: 14). He created them for a purpose and He cares for them (Matt. 6:26). Everything was ‘born’ from Him. Rev 11:18 talks about “destroying the destroyers of the earth.” A text González exegetically interprets as “the moral destruction of the world.”³⁷² We can further submit that “God is passionately concerned for what he has created and works to affirm his creation against those who destroy it.”³⁷³ All created beings/things are valuable like a ‘child’ in the hands of the Creator. The proverbs emphasise that certain things are not honourable to do, however, great ones might be. Hence, all creations have the right to live.

³⁷⁰ <https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/stewardship-of-the-environment/>

³⁷¹ R. Ogunade, “Environmental issues in Yoruba religion: implications for leadership and society in Nigeria”, A paper prepared for *Science and Religion: Global Perspectives*, June 4-8, 2005, in Philadelphia, PA, USA, A program of the Metanexus Institute (www.metanexus.net). Available: <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/publications/raymond/ENVIRONMENTAL%20ISSUES%20IN%20YORUBA%20RELIGION.htm>, p. 5

³⁷² Eliezer González, The “Destroyers of the Earth” in Revelation 11,18 – Who are they?, *DavarLogos* 14, 1, 2015, pp. 91-107

³⁷³ M. Bredin, *The Ecology of the New Testament: Creation, Re-Creation, and the Environment*, Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2010, pp. 168

2. Live and let's live. Adventists affirm that God has provided for humans sufficiently enough than they need, except for greed and selfishness that resulted in uncontrolled consumerism. The dominion commission (Gen. 1: 26, 28) came before sin (Gen. 3: 21) and permission to eat flesh (Gen. 9: 3). The diets for humans and animals are plant-based (Gen. 1: 29-30). Adventists promote healthy living through vegetarianism. It is a healthy living decision, but gave birth to moral empathy for animals and a sense of mutual respect. Dairy and meat production are also hazardous to the environment.³⁷⁴

Yoruba Adventists can easily relate to the doctrine of vegetarianism (healthy living) with this proverb. Yoruba people frown against disturbance to other co-tenants in the universe. They say, “*Agbonmi ní ñwólé eja, apàjùbà ní ñwólé àparò*, Who drains the stream destroys the home of the fish; who clears the forest for farming destroys the home of the partridge.”³⁷⁵ Humans are morally obliged to care for the creation and take responsibility for interacting with natural resources.

Yoruba Adventists, like traditional Yoruba people, also develop interaction with the environment. Every last Sabbath (Saturday) in October is declared by the World Church as ‘Creation Sabbath’ aside from local arrangement. In most cases, worship services are held close to the nature. They seek and promote a harmonious relationship with God and the natural world. They believe the reality of life rests in how sustainable the environment is. It will be home to Yoruba Adventists to say *Adiyẹ ba` l`ókùn, ara o ro`kun ara o rọ adiyẹ*, The fowl on the rope, can only be stable if the rope is stable. Man’s existence is domiciled in his environment, Hence,

³⁷⁴ Joan Sabaté and Sam Soret, The Hidden Costs of Eating Meat, In: Christians and Environmental Stewardship, Adventist Review, January 5, 2016, Pp. 9-10, <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/christians-and-environmental-stewardship/>

³⁷⁵ Owomoyela, Yoruba Proverbs, p. 361

selfish and greedy exploitation of natural resources will invariably lead to catastrophe. Since natural disasters can't be controlled, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), is saddled with providing emergency relief for the affected. Yoruba people see a 'violation' of tripartite relationships (Spirit, nature and community) as expensive, all efforts are being made to maintain peaceful relationships. This assertion will help curb the incessant and uncontrolled exploitation of the natural world

Yoruba society developed a contact and experience with the natural world. They see non-human beings as an agency for sustainable living. They have a moral obligation toward them, not even a tiny ant is looked down on. Yoruba proverb says, *Ati kekere la ti n peka Iroko, ko to ma gbebo lowo eni* (Iroko tree branches are pruned while young, otherwise, they will require sacrifice when mature). Even though this proverb means doing the right thing at the right time, it can also imply one's responsibility to nature as a living being. Moral values regulate how humans treat non-human beings. In Yoruba just like every African society, worldviews are interpreted "theologically rather than in materialistic terms."³⁷⁶ The moral and spiritual connection between human and non-human if well explored may reduce or mitigate the attitude of consumerism. Conradie argued that environmental crisis is "not primarily a crisis pertaining to nature but to the dominant and increasingly global economic system and the consumerist cultural values supporting it."³⁷⁷ Northcott and Conradie attributed this consumerist culture to a moral crisis.³⁷⁸ This I see as a lack of ecological consciousness and value for non-human beings. Barman argues that,

³⁷⁶ Kavusa, "Sustainable eco-theology for African churches: Imagining a home-grown hermeneutics of sustainability," p. 11

³⁷⁷ E. Conradie, *An ecological Christian anthropology: At home on earth?* Aldershot, United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing, 2005a, p. 2

³⁷⁸ M. S. Northcott, *The environment and Christian ethics*, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. 1996, p. 41; E. Conradie, "What on earth did God create? Overtures to an ecumenical theology of creation," *The Ecumenical Review*, 66(4), 2014 p. 452

“Ecological consciousness safeguards against cruelty to all creatures. Rather it involves a safe and sustainable temperament in order to live happily with nature. Due to lack of ecological consciousness, we pollute our environment.”³⁷⁹

Olodumare (Creator God) holds together all elements in the universe. His power and glory are manifested in nature. All the creature looks up to Him, as the Yoruba proverb says, “*Òkùtù opẹ kii wo ojù ẹlòmíràn bíkòṣe ojù Ọlorun* (Young palm leaves do not raise their eyes to anyone other than God).”³⁸⁰ God is sovereign and all universe affairs are under His charge. In a sense of stewardship, He gave man the responsibility to cater for nature, for in it he will live and survive. In Yoruba cosmology, this came as devotion and a sense of piety. A theological reflection rather than a materialistic purpose. More of a moral cosmos rather than a mechanistic cosmos.³⁸¹ Home to both human and non-human, to maintain an interrelatedness, mutual dependency and harmonious relationship. In this situation, nature and man are inseparable, not a resource to be subdued and exploited but to nourish and manage. This is contrary to the position of Descartes, as he said, “We can thus render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature.”³⁸²

“Theology is not only about God and humans, since a biblical view of theology is inclusive of all creation. After all, Jesus, in his teaching, frequently draws upon natural surroundings and fellow creatures in his parables and narratives. As his disciples, we should also consider ourselves as part of creation, neither above it nor outside the vulnerable natural web of life of which we are part. Green theology is hence about relationships and mutual dependency. Celebrating these relationships makes it possible to confront the ecological crises (climate change, loss

³⁷⁹ M. Barman, “Importance Of Environmental Ethics And Its Approaches In Our Present Society,” *XVIII Annual International Conference Proceedings*, January 2017, p. 118

³⁸⁰ Olowomoyela, *Yoruba Proverbs*, p. 299

³⁸¹ H. Sindima, “Community of Life,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 41(4), 1989, p. 540

³⁸² R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, Informations, Inc. [Online]. Available: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/huberlin-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3314500>, 2000, pt. 6

of biodiversity, and resource exhaustion) from a perspective of hope – central to Christian faith – rather than despair.”³⁸³

The ‘groaning of creation’ in Romans 8:18-23 though with an eschatological focus, contains elements relevant to the contemporary environmental situation. This concept of ‘groaning’ manifests in some selected Yoruba proverbs: *Oju ni malu n ro, obe o da lorun* (A cow only endures it, putting a knife to any neck is far from good.) Cow endures death at butcher’s slab. Also, a similar expression is, *Malu to su’ke, idunnu alapata ni* (A cow with a hunchback is a joy to the butcher). Yoruba proverbs also express the groaning of a fowl by saying, *Adiye n la a gun, iye ni ko je ka mo* (fowl also sweat if not for the feathers). Not only the animals have experienced the decadence of nature, but the land also. Yoruba says, *ka ka ki ile o ku, ile a sa ni* (For land to ‘die’ it will rather lose its fertility). The concept of the moral dimension of nature, and the doctrine of stewardship and creation raised in this section should be a focus for ecological restoration among the theologians and Yoruba Adventists. The eco-theologians should consider moral worldviews of nature embodied in Yoruba (African) cosmology and proverbs as reflections of the Creation theology, in order to appreciate and reach the indigenous people.

4.3. Conclusion

Yoruba proverbs in response to environmental issues have proven to be an effective tool using the sociolinguistics approach. Proverbs as lived theology of the people has been challenged by civilization, modernization and westernization. Reintroducing it to African ecotheology will revive the environmental consciousness of the people and promote ethical values embodied in the *Omoluabi* worldview.

³⁸³ K. Nieuwerth, P. Pavlovic, and A. Shaw (Eds), “A Relational Eco-Theology – A Founding Stone Of Caretaking For Creation: A Biblical Frame,” In: *Every Part of Creation Matters A discussion paper*, Globethics.net CEC Series No. 8, Geneva: Globethics.net, 2022, p. 19

Central to the heart of the environmental crisis is the anthropocentric activities that this work critically challenged. Degradation of the environment is a moral issue that should be treated morally. Many believe exploiting natural resources for personal gain is amoral since humans have dominion over nature. This could be the result of abandoning cultural and timeless values in Omoluabi worldview. However, the tenets of all religious bodies, as analysed in the beliefs of the SDA church imply a displace of purpose. Maybe out of forgetfulness, humans do not remember their roles as stewards accountable to the Creator. Aside from religious bodies in western Nigeria, the government has also failed in enacting laws that are not morally implemented. Some individuals also prioritize immediate economic benefits over the future of society. This is against the ethos of Omoluabi and communal living.

The appropriateness of the proverbs used in addressing the environmental crisis in western Nigeria, confirms their theological and philosophical applicability. Recently, a more sociological consciousness of the use of proverbs became visible in most social media. This proverbial inclination among the 21st century people affirms the invaluable nature of Yoruba proverbs. Though this research is not asking for the return of a traditional society void of modernization, however, traditional values such as proverbs and Omoluabi ethos are indispensable for a sustainable society.

The proper application of proverbs also creates a platform for contextualization. It is right to propose that Yoruba proverbs could address moral issues and its attendant environmental crisis. For the SDA church in western Nigeria to actively engage in addressing the sociological problem, and contextualizing their doctrines, they need to find wisdom in Omoluabi's ethos. Even if they disagree with the cultural taboos or tradition. It is observable that their ineffective fight against the environmental crisis in western Nigeria can be drawn from their closed perspectives of Yoruba culture. They

have separated themselves from the culture and religion of the people, despite numerous similarities. However, they faced difficulties in domesticating their doctrines among the indigenous people. Inward evaluation and crucial identification with wisdom in Yoruba oral tradition will help broaden the Adventists' message of environmental stewardship embedded in the creation and eschatological doctrines. If we take seriously the Omoluabi worldview, then, the SDA in Western Nigeria stand to benefit by incorporating this traditional worldview into managing the environment. However, if they reject this crucial aspect of the oral culture, it will be a truncated theology that does not address the social issues its members are facing.

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<https://www.adventist.org/stewardship/>

<https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/stewardship-of-the-environment/>

Appendix: SDA official statement on the Environment

<https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/>

Caring for the Environment

The world in which we live is a gift of love from the Creator God, from "Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water" (Revelation 14:7; 11:17, 18). Within this creation He placed humans, set intentionally in relationship with Himself, other persons, and the surrounding world. Therefore, as Seventh-day Adventists, we hold its preservation and nurture to be intimately related to our service to Him.

God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment.

The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited. Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet.

Seventh-day Adventists are committed to respectful, cooperative relationships among all persons, recognizing our common origin and realizing our human dignity as a gift from the Creator. Since human poverty and environmental degradation are

interrelated, we pledge ourselves to improve the quality of life for all people. Our goal is a sustainable development of resources while meeting human needs.

Genuine progress toward caring for our natural environment rests upon both personal and cooperative effort. We accept the challenge to work toward restoring God's overall design. Moved by faith in God, we commit ourselves to promote the healing that rises at both personal and environmental levels from integrated lives dedicated to serve God and humanity.

In this commitment we confirm our stewardship of God's creation and believe that total restoration will be complete only when God makes all things new.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992.

The Dangers of Climate Change

Scientists warn that the gradual warming of the atmosphere as a result of human activity will have serious environmental consequences. The climate will change, resulting in more storms, more floods, and more droughts.

To keep climate change within bearable limits, the emissions of greenhouse gasses, especially carbon dioxide (CO₂), need to be significantly reduced. Industrialized countries are the main source of these emissions, while the first victims are the small island states and low-lying coastal countries.

Despite the clear risks, governments appear slow to act.

The world membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church requests that the governments concerned take steps necessary to avert the danger:

1) By fulfilling the agreement reached in Rio de Janeiro (1992 Convention on Climate Change) to stabilize carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 at 1990 levels,

2) By establishing plans for further reductions in carbon dioxide emissions after the year 2000, and

3) By initiating more forcefully public debate on the risks of climate change.

In signing this statement, Seventh-day Adventists declare their advocacy of a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled consumerism and production of waste. They call for respect of creation, restraint in the use of the world's resources, and reevaluation of our needs as individuals.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on December 19, 1995.

Stewardship of the Environment

It is the belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that humankind was created in the image of God, and is thus to represent God as His steward and to manage the natural environment in a faithful and fruitful way. Nature is a gift from God.

Unfortunately, men and women have been increasingly involved in the irresponsible destruction of the earth's resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental degradation, and the threat of climate change. While scientific research needs to continue, it is clear from the accumulated evidence that the increasing emission of destructive gasses, the massive destruction of the American rain forests, and the depletion of the protective mantle of ozone (the so-called greenhouse effect), are all threatening the earth's eco-system. There are dire predictions of global warming, rising sea levels, increasing frequency of storms and destructive floods, and devastating desertification and droughts.

These problems are largely due to human selfishness and greed which result in ever increasing production, unlimited consumption, and depletion of nonrenewable resources. Solidarity with future generations is discussed, but the pressure of

immediate interests is given priority. The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind's greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship.

The government and people of Costa Rica are to be commended for their support of a comprehensive policy of sustainable development in harmony with nature.

Seventh-day Adventism advocates a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled over-consumption, accumulation of goods, and production of waste. A reformation of lifestyle is called for, based on respect for nature, restraint in the use of the world's resources, reevaluation of one's needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) for release by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the Annual Council session in San Jose, Costa Rica, October 1-10, 1996.

Data management plan

> See explanation at the end of this document.

1. General information

Name of student: Caleb Olayiwola Alu

Names of thesis supervisor(s): Dr. Joseph Bosco Bangura

Date: 06-11-2023

Version: Not applicable

2. General information about research and subject of the thesis

(Provisional) title of the research / thesis:

The Uses of Yoruba Proverbs In Developing A Theology That Addresses Environmental Crisis In Western Nigeria.

Short description of the research project and method(s):

This research employed sociolinguistics analysis to analyze Yoruba proverbs to develop theologies that help address the environmental crisis in western Nigeria. I constructed basic ethnomethodology from the literature available on Yoruba culture concerning proverbs related to environmental issues. These selected Yoruba proverbs form a corpus to analyze the environmental crisis in western Nigeria. The corpus is arranged according to environmental applications: warning, the right to life, communal living, responsibility and responsiveness, and public health.

Type of research data to be collected: Secondary

Period in which the data will be collected: not applicable

3. Technical aspects of the data storage

Hardware and software: Not applicable

File formats: Not applicable

Size of the data (estimate in MB/GB/TB): Not applicable

Storage of data while conducting research: Not applicable

Storage of data after completion of research: Not applicable

4. Responsibilities

Management of data while conducting research:

Not applicable

Management of data after completion of research:

Not applicable

5. Legal and ethical aspects

Owner of data: Not applicable

Are data privacy sensitive? YES / NO no

If YES: How will you arrange safe storage and consent of the persons and organisations involved in your research?

6. Other aspects

=====
=====

(The following has to be filled in by the thesis supervisor:)

- Approved
- Not approved, because:

Name

Signature:

Date:

=====
=====

Explanation

Ad 1 General

Fill in the date on which you completed the data management plan and indicate which version, e.g. 1.0. During the research the research methods might be altered or unforeseen issues with regard to privacy sensitive data might arise. In that case you will need to update the corresponding paragraphs of the data management plan and the date and version number accordingly.

For a complete data management plan, you are required to fill in all the fields, even if that be with the term 'not applicable'.

Ad 2. General information on the research project and the subject of the thesis

Describe briefly your research and what research methods will be used. Describe the type of research data, like written sources (archives, literature), transcriptions, interviews (video or audio tapes), reports, surveys, (survey results), pictures.

You have also to mention the use of raw or secondary data.

Ad 3. Technical aspects

Will specific hardware be used besides a pc/laptop? Will you use specific software for data analysis?

File formats can be: DOCX, TXT, XLSX, PDF, WAV, JPG.

The size of the files can be given in megabyte, gigabyte or terabyte. You can fill in an estimate size, since at the start of the research your exact data file size will not yet be known.

Save the data during your research at a good and safe storage. Privacy sensitive data can safely be stored on the Home-Directory of the VU. De H:disk is usually the most safe data storage location. Do **not** save privacy sensitive data in the cloud! Cloud services can only be used for saving standard data like scientific articles in PDF. Do **not** use USB-storage or your personal device for saving (privacy sensitive) data either. These might be stolen, get lost or get damaged.

Please note the importance of regularly saving the versions of your master thesis in a safe storage.

After the research has been completed, the data used may be published as part of your master thesis, in an appendix. That holds mainly for small data collections which do not contain privacy sensitive information.

(Anonymized) Data can be stored in separate files along with the thesis in the PThU library. Files with privacy sensitive data can be archived in a data storage specifically for that purpose, G:drive Secured Data Storage. Arrangements can be made via the PThU library.

Ad 4. Responsibilities

For the sake of the academic integrity it is important to describe in what manner the data will be safely saved and managed That is also important for the verifiability of the data. You can find the Dutch Conduct Code Academic Integrity here: www.pthu.nl/Onderzoek-PThU/Academic_Integrity/

Describe who will manage the data during the research. In most cases this will be the student. If your thesis supervisor also can access the data, you must mention that. After completion of the research the management of the data should be transferred to the PThU library.

If you interview persons in the research, inform them how the (privacy sensitive) data will be managed and by whom.

Ad 5. Legal and ethical aspects

Indicate who is (co-) owner of the data.

If you collect privacy sensitive data in the research process, it is necessary to very carefully manage the data once collected. Think about personal information like name, address, age, but also the Dutch Service Number (BSN), gender or religious beliefs. That must be done properly and safely. (See also Ad 3.) Make sure no data leaks occur. Inform the interviewees (or other concerned persons) how the data will be used. Ask them to fill in and sign an 'Informed consent form'. With that form they grant permission (consent) for collecting, storing and using the research data. Inform them that the collected data will be used only for your research. Anonymize the data as extensively as possible.

Ad 6. Other aspects

Any aspects not covered by the other questions can be filled in here.

You can always consult your thesis supervisors about questions which are unclear or if you have doubts about the proper manner to collect and/or, store data. The staff members of the library can also offer advice.

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