

Exorcism Practices in South-West Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

In South-West Nigeria, the indispensability of services of exorcists cannot be over-emphasized as there were numerous instances when orthodox medical practitioners, after having done their utmost but unsuccessfully, would advise patients to seek spiritual remedies to their maladies. The exorcists whose services are sought after in the region abound in the three main religions namely Islam, Christianity and Yoruba Traditional Religion. This study is a survey and a comparative analysis of exorcism practices by the Muslim, Christian and Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists in South-West Nigeria purposely to determine the possibility or otherwise of interference in their practice of exorcism. Areas of comparison include the personality of the exorcists, their diagnostic methods and the exorcism modus operandi. The result showed that difference in religious calling notwithstanding, there is, to a large extent interference and borrowing in their exorcism modus operandi, since they all operate in the same milieu.

Keywords: Demonic Possession, Exorcism, Diagnosis, Traditional Medicine, Spiritual Beings

1. Introduction

South-West of Nigeria is majorly populated by the Yoruba people. Christianity, Islam and traditional religion are considered the chief religions in the region because of the large number of adherents they attract. While Christianity and Islam are considered revealed or divine religions, the third is considered traditional and believed to be indigenous to the people who in terms of culture and tradition are Africans.

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Ever before the coming of the colonial masters, who also introduced western orthodox medicine to the people of South- West Nigeria, traditional medicine according to Jimoh (2007:26) was solely what the people used to resort to in treating all ailments-physical or spiritual. Among the people of South-West Nigeria, for instance, the services of traditional medicine-men popularly referred to as *onisegun* was considered indispensable. However, with the advent of Islam and Christianity in the region, Muslim scholars and Church priests also assumed the roles of the Yoruba traditional medicine-men by attending to people's physical and spiritual problems. One nagging problem which these people often attend to is demonic-possession. However, the methods employed by them in exorcising the demonized vary as the religions vary.

This paper attempts a survey and a comparative analysis of exorcism practices of Muslim, Christian and Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists in South-West Nigeria looking at three major areas namely: personality profile of the exorcist; diagnostic methods; and the actual exorcism performance. The analysis also brings to limelight areas of similarities and dissimilarities; interference and borrowing between the three religions.

2. Demonic Possession and Exorcism

Demons are spiritual beings imbued with certain powers one of which is ability to penetrate and take control of human beings, animals and objects such as trees, stones etc. Yusuf Ali (1983:1474) relying on Qur'anic provision submits that the demon's initial creation was from fire free of smoke; he therefore argues that demons are gross-less since "smoke is the grosser accompaniment of fire". He therefore concludes that the demon's attribute of grosslessness is the very reason why they are able to penetrate and possess human beings.

The Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria hold the belief that demons are spiritual beings and that they could possess human being and make him act as if insane. They also believe that such demonic possession might be remotely caused by some wicked people such as witches and wizards or from some wicked medicine-men in response to their clientele's demand. Dopamu (1987:51), an authority in Yoruba Traditional Religion, writes that *Isasi* is the bad magic used to make a person get possessed and act as one who is insane.

To drive away demons from the body of the possessed, exorcism using prayers or magic is resorted to. Parrinder (1987:17) defines exorcism as adjuration addressed to evil spirits to force them to abandon an object, place or person. In the opinion of Thayer (1979:224), exorcism is “putting the spirit or demon on oath” to leave the possessed and not to come back again.

Every revealed and traditional religion has elaborate concepts of exorcism. Its practice is worldwide and it is present in both archaic as well as modern societies. The methods and items used by exorcists in their operations are, however, diverse as the religions and cultures are diverse. Among the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria, varying methods of exorcism are employed by the Muslim, Christian and Yoruba traditionalist exorcists.

3. Training in Exorcism in South-West Nigeria

The job of an exorcist could be likened to that of a medical doctor. One qualifies to practice as a medical doctor only after receiving the necessary training. In the same vein, to become an exorcist, there are some basic trainings one needs to receive.

3.1 Training among the Yoruba Traditionalist Exorcists

Among the Yoruba Traditionalists, exorcists are referred to as *Babalawo* or *Onisegun*. To qualify as *Babalawo*, one must undergo training and receive certification from a renowned master. The duration of the training, however, depends largely on the brilliance and maturity of the apprentice. A very important training given to a would-be *Babalawo* is in the area of diagnosis. He is taught the *ifa* odes as well as their interpretations. He is also given training in exorcism operations. Usually, these two trainings go *pari-pasu* and they are practical. Apprentices learn as their master attends to cases. There are only few theoretical classes (A.O. Odumosu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2013).

Sound moral training is another very important aspect of the trainings an apprentice receives under his master. He is taught lessons in uprightness, truthfulness and trustworthiness. He is also made to realize the indispensability of these qualities in achieving success in his exorcism endeavors (A. Akintaro, Personal Communication, February 14, 2012).

3.2 Training among the Yoruba Muslim Exorcists

The exorcism training received by Yoruba Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria in their own case span between a minimum period of three to five years. Hardly there is a Muslim exorcist in South-West Nigeria that was not once an apprentice before becoming a practitioner. There are some among them who acquired the skill from their fathers who were renowned exorcists in their life time. They loved that their children should succeed them and continue with the job after their demise, they therefore imparted unto them all the necessary training. There are, however, some others who did not have such opportunity of being children of exorcists but took interest in the job and therefore enrolled as apprentices under renowned exorcists or even travelled out for the purpose to places like Sudan, India, Tel-Aviv etc. to acquire the knowledge and the skill (R. Salahudeen, Personal Communication, February 16, 2012).

The training a potential Muslim exorcist receives from his master covers diagnosis and treatment methods; knowledge of the ingredients and their uses; behaviors of the possessed and how to relate to them. An apprentice is also trained to be compassionate and to see his calling as a humanitarian one. He should not be wicked or unnecessarily harsh to his patients. He is also trained to be righteous, God-fearing and prayerful. He is taught some daily routine prayers which he has to do in the morning and in the evening. These prayers are to serve as *husnu* (protection) for him against possible attacks of demons (L. Abdul Qadir, Personal Communication, February 20, 2012).

Permission (*'ijazah*) to leave, practice and train others is granted the apprentice only when the master is satisfied that he has imbibed all these qualities theoretically and practically.

It should, however, be mentioned that there are some few Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria who practice without receiving any formal training. This set, having read and digested works on exorcism practices written by renowned Muslim theologians such as Ibn Taymiyyah (1995), Ibn Qayyim (1994), Bali (1989,1997), Ash-Shihawi (1993) etc, practice exorcism following the expositions given in such works.

3.3 Training among the Yoruba Christian Exorcists

Among the Catholic and Anglican churches in South-West Nigeria, exorcists must be ordained priests, who will also have to perform exorcism only with the express permission of a local bishop. The information gathered reveal that exorcism is not commonly performed in these churches, based on the presumption that most cases thought to be demonic possession are rather mental or physical illnesses and that with 'salvation' through the blood of Jesus Christ, demonic possession is almost impossible (S. Kuponu, Personal Communication, March 5, 2012).

On the part of the Pentecostal churches in South-West Nigeria, 'deliverance' and actual exorcism are common experiences. Deliverance is however more common than exorcism. Exorcism is performed only when the demon has taken total control of the possessed and robbed him of his personality. But, where the possession is partial, such as when the 'possessed' takes to one vice or the other like drug-addiction, theft, adultery etc., he only requires deliverance from the demon that spurs him to commit the vice (M. Atere, Personal Communication, May 12, 2012).

The White Garment churches also known as *Aladura* (i.e the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Celestial churches etc.) are other prominent churches in South-West Nigeria. These churches in principle claim not to perform exorcism, but the truth is that practically, exorcism performances are given prominence. Most often, victims of demonic possession are found in these churches receiving treatment in the form of deliverance or exorcism. The exorcists in these churches are usually a team of men and women believed to have been bestowed with the power and grace to administer deliverance and cast out demons. Of course, there is the chief priest who leads and guides the others through the deliverance and exorcism operation (P. Johnson-Bashua, Personal Communication, July 17, 2012).

In all the above mentioned churches in South-West Nigeria, our findings reveal that the priests, apart from the grace given to them to cast out demons, also receive further training on deliverance and exorcism procedure.

It should be noted that there are also, in South-West Nigeria, Christian exorcists who operate on their own. Exorcists in this category, having discovered that they are endowed with the power and grace to cast out demons, do not receive any form of training in exorcism. All that is required is that the exorcist should be devout, prudent and possess integrity of life while he/she should also be knowledgeable in the performance of exorcism.

4. Diagnosis

Deliverance or exorcism of the possessed by Muslim, Christian and Traditionalist exorcists in South-West Nigeria follows some steps, the first of which is diagnosis. Before treating their patients, exorcists will *ab initio* try to determine the likely cause(s) of the ailment.

4.1 Diagnosis among the Yoruba Traditionalist Exorcists

The Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists usually carry out full and comprehensive diagnosis to determine the cause of the illness, its nature, whether or not the demon is sent by a sorcerer and what form of antidote should be administered. Among the Yoruba traditional exorcists, diagnosis is mostly done through the means of what they call *ayewo* (i.e cause finding). Different ways and items are used in carrying out *ayewo*. Most popular of such is divination by the means of *ifa* (oracle). The items used in this are *opele* (divination chain) and *ikin* (divination nuts). When the exorcist throws down his *opele*, he is able to know which ode to interpret based on the positions of the *opele*. There is also palmistry in which case, the palmist (diviner) reads the palms of the patient to determine the cause of the illness. Another form of divination is what the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists call *Eerindinlogun* (sixteen). The item used in this is *owo eyo* (cowries). Divinations through gazing at water or sand are other forms common among the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists. Another one is what they refer to as *gbalamo* (sourcing for information through dreams). The exorcist, having performed some rituals, which may involve animal sacrifice and chanting of incantations, gets information in his dream concerning the cause of the illness. Some Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists also source information through the means of what they call *osanyin*. The information which is supplied by spirits comes in the form of sounds. Only the exorcist can interpret such sounds since they are understandable to him alone (B. Alimi, Personal Communication, May 12, 2012).

4.2 Diagnosis among the Yoruba Muslim Exorcists

The Yoruba Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria carry out diagnosis on victims of demonic possession to know the actual source of the ailment, its form and what to be done to cure the victims. If the patient himself is unconscious, certain questions, which ordinarily would have been directed to him, are, instead, directed to his relatives who bring him for treatment. From the answers given, certain conclusions are drawn by the Muslim exorcist who, given his vast experience is able to know with some degree of certainty, the nature of the problem. Another factor that also assists Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria in diagnosing properly the nature of the illness of their patients is the vast experience they have been able to gather over the years, first as apprentices and later as practitioners. Since their major pre-occupation is exorcising victims of demonic possession, this affords them the opportunity of studying the behavioral patterns of such problems. As such, from the traits featured by the sick, an experienced Muslim exorcist is able to determine, with some level of accuracy, the nature of the illness.

There are, however, some few Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria who, in diagnosing their patients, tends towards orthodoxy; they claim to have insight into the nature of their patients' ailments through the performance of *Tahajjud* (night vigil), fasting and rigorous *du'a'* (supplication) sessions. This crop of *Aafas* are mostly found among the *Shamsudeen* ¹Group also fondly called *ko sebo ko sogun*, the *Ogunse* group², *Tabligh* Movement³ and a host of youth groups such as the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria who, in their own case, derive their inspiration from writings of orthodox Muslim theologians.

Another very prominent diagnostic method employed by this set of Muslim exorcists specifically during demonic possession cases is by reciting some Qur'an verses and chapters which they refer to as '*Ayatu 'r-Ruqyah* (verses of exorcism). These verses are read into the right ear of the patient while the exorcist looks out for some signs, the presence of which is testimony that the ailment is demonic. Some of the signs given by Al-Qarni (1990:63) are crying, shouting, closure of the two eyes, or staring them fixedly like the eyes of a dying person or squinting them (eyes) or even covering them outright with the hands. On the same note, the demon may yield up to some unsettlement as it features in minor cases that involve trembling of some parts of the body or real shaking as instanced in the trembling of the whole body.

Of course, the demon features the signs but they are transmissible through the possessed, since the demon itself is invisible. With the manifestation of one or more of the signs, the exorcist confirms that the patient is a victim of demonic possession.

Another means of diagnosis employed by some other Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria is the use of the Arabic alphabetic letters, according to their numerical value. This is popularly referred to as *'Ilmu 'l-Hisab*. They also diagnose their patients by reading their horoscope based on the position of stars and movement of the planets. They refer to this as *'Ilmu 'l-Falak* (Astrology). There is also the *'Istikharah* (consultation) method of diagnosis (S. Mahmud, Personal Communication, May 15, 2012). There are also some of the Muslim exorcists whose diagnostic method is based solely on promptings from demons. Ash-Shibli (1982: 289-290) citing Al-Jamal submits that the demons are appointed, on request, by the devil to render assistance and services to the exorcists. Part of the duties the demon is assigned is to teach the exorcist magical language and put him through in his endeavors.

4.3 Diagnosis among the Yoruba Christian Exorcists

In the case of Christian exorcists in South-West Nigeria, diagnosis takes two different forms. Some Churches employ orthodox medical diagnosis. The supposedly possessed is asked to bring medical report and result from diagnostic centers to be sure that the ailment is not physical or mental one. This practice is prominent among the Catholic and the Anglican churches. Synagogue, Church of all Nations in Lagos, South-West Nigeria is another very prominent church that encourages presentation of medical report before and after the exorcism operation (P. Johnson-Bashua, Personal Communication, July 17, 2012).

Yet, in some other Christian churches, diagnosis is based on discernment. The method is traditional and considered a gift of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12). Those who are bestowed with this gift are able to determine the presence of evil spirit in a body. Therefore, when the supposedly possessed is brought before members of the church who are given the power of discernment, they would be able to tell if truly he is possessed. This method of diagnosis is common to both the spiritualists as well as the charismatic *Aladura* churches in South-West Nigeria (P. Johnson-Bashua, Personal Communication, July 17, 2012).

5. Exorcism of the Possessed

Having established the cause of the illness, the next step is the treatment which in spiritual parlance is called deliverance or exorcism. Exorcism is a common thing among the Yoruba exorcists, the methods employed however vary as the religions vary.

5.1 Exorcism among the Yoruba Traditionalist Exorcists

We earlier remarked that the findings done by the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists, in most cases, are not only to determine the cause of the illness but to also determine its nature, whether the demon is sent by a sorcerer and what form of antidote should be administered. Thus the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists are guided through consultation on what exorcism operation is required. Treatment and deliverance among the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists therefore come in different ways. It may involve the use of herbs and leaves. In this case, different concoctions which are mixture of different herbs and leaves believed to be efficacious in treating demonic possession are prepared for the possessed to drink. It may also require chanting of incantations called *Ofo*. These are magical words containing adjuration and sometimes threat addressed to the invading demon, who in a swift response might decide to leave the possessed. Exorcism may also come in the form of appeasement (*Etutu*) or sacrifice (*Itore*) which may involve animal sacrifice.

This is performed on behalf of the victim in order to propitiate and appease the spirit to bring relief. The victim may also have to carry what is known as *ebo* (sacrifice) to a junction of three roads; or cast some other things by the roadsides or at the foot of a tree etc. The *ebo* consists of different concocted items believed to be appealing to the demon. In some other instances, the patient may also be taken to a stream and bathed ritually with treated black soap. It is believed that the spirit in the stream will intervene to bring relief to the sick. Incisions called *gbere* in Yoruba Language may also be marked on the patient. *Aseje* (cook-to-eat-concoction) may also be prepared for the patient to eat for a period of between ten to twenty days or more depending on the quantity of the *Aseje* and the nature of the ailment. Exorcism among Yoruba traditionalist exorcists may also be a combination of all the above mentioned methods (A.O. Odumosu, Personal Communication, February 5, 2013).

Beating is another common feature of exorcism among some Yoruba traditionalist exorcists who consider the possessed a mad fellow; and in line with a popular Yoruba saying: "*Egba l'oko were*" (lit: cane is the husband of the mad), they consider beating an integral part of the treatment a possessed man should receive. It should however be noted that on the contrary, some Yoruba traditionalist exorcists, do not subscribe to this assertion. To them, beating is considered necessary only where the possessed fellow exhibits some stubborn traits such as refusal to submit for the exorcism operation.

The time it takes the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcist to rid a victim of the possessing demon varies depending on the efficacy of his exorcism method; and on the acceptability of the appeasement if the demon is an agent of a sorcerer in which case the demon stationed on the victim's body must take its leave once the appeasement is carried out and accepted by the higher powers.

When the exorcism is successfully carried out and the demon is driven out, certain sacrileges called *eewo* and warnings called *ikilo* are imposed on the victim to forestall a reoccurrence. In some Yoruba traditions, a small shrine may be set up for the spirit while daily offering is given to it in order to keep it at peace.

5.2 Exorcism among the Yoruba Muslim Exorcists

The Yoruba Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria vary with respect to the exorcism methods they employ in treating their patients. There are those that mix between the Islamic and the Yoruba traditionalist methods. While some are more inclined towards the Yoruba traditionalist methods, some others are more Islamically inclined. There are also some others who may be described as spiritual healers. They do not, at all, use herbs or the traditional method. They rely solely on fasting, night vigil and prayer. They also use treated water, oil, soap and sponge (i.e. bathing exorcism). Yet there are those that are strictly Islamic. This crop of exorcists is mostly found among the youths especially the members of the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria and the *Tabligh* Movement. They derive their inspiration and exorcism method from writings and lectures of orthodox Muslim theologians in which some Qur'anic verses of exorcism are recited to the right ear of the possessed while the exorcist places his right palm on the possessed head. The recitation of these Qur'anic verses, Ash Shahawi (1993:92-94) submits, is believed to have effect on the demon which will consequently present itself for interrogation and subsequently leave the possessed.

In addition, ingredients such as the black seed (*Habbatu 's-Sawda'*) and *Al-titi* may be ground together in powdered form and burnt as incense in the presence of the possessed who is covered with a thick cloth so that he really inhales the fragrance of the incense. With this, the demon may be chased away. The sick may also be given to drink undiluted fresh cow milk for upward of twenty-one days while the verses of exorcism are read inside water. Twenty-one fresh lotus leaves (*Sidr*) are ground together and poured in the water before the recitation. The sick takes three sips of the water and bath with the remaining. This process continues for a period of twenty-one days. Other ingredients that this category of Muslim exorcists uses include; *Zaytun*, *Turabi 'l-Misk*, *'Anbar*, *Siwak Madinah*, *Tamar Ajwat*, *Safran*, *Zamzam Water*, *Khali Tufa'*, *Sha' 'Sh-Shayatin*, *Dukhan 'sh-Shayatin*, honey, *Bukharu 'l-Jinn*, etc.

Muslim exorcists in South-West Nigeria also employ beating where the demon persists in its injustice obstinately and refuses to leave its victim. Such beating is however done on the finger and toe tips, back, shoulders and neck. According to them, they do not beat on the face because that is prohibited by Prophet Muhammad (Jimoh, 2012:135).

When the Muslim exorcist completes his exorcism operation and the demon is driven out of the victim's body, some guiding principles are laid down for the patient in order to forestall a re- occurrence. Such guiding principles include regular observance of the canonical prayers; performance of ablution and recitation or listening to certain portions of the Qur'an before going to bed; repetition of certain recommended formulas, especially those meant for protection. In case the fellow is a female, she is advised to desist from applying perfume, specifically when going out.

5.3 Exorcism among the Yoruba Christian Exorcists

The Christian exorcists in South-West Nigeria vary in terms of methods and items used in carrying out the exorcism operation. However, casting out the possessing demon with prayers using the name of Jesus Christ is a common feature to all of them. While Holy Water, Olive oil etc are regular items used during Christian exorcism, symbols such as the Holy Cross is another prominent feature. The Holy Cross is worn on the neck of the possessed while the exorcist also brandishes another one before him, issuing words of command to the demon to get out in the name of Jesus.

In the process, Holy water as well as Olive oil may be sprinkled on the possessed. It is believed that the image of Jesus Christ on the cross being shown to the demon as well as his name being called in the presence of the demon would mow down the demon, which must surrender and leave. Apart from the name of Jesus, the name of God, the Holy Spirit, the arch-angel and different angels and Saints are also invoked to accelerate the deliverance. In addition to all these, the Pentecostal churches more often than not also use incantation which they call 'speaking in tongue' while they also invoke the Holy Ghost Fire. Thus, in these churches, the demon is not cast out; rather it is tortured with Holy Ghost Fire which, in their belief, will consume and burn the demon. Some Christian exorcists also resort to beating with the intention of torturing the demon and forcing it to leave. Though the blows are landed on the possessed, the possessing demon is believed to be the recipient. There are however occasions when such beating would take another dimension and the possessed is seriously injured or even killed in the process (Personal Communication, June 5, 2012).

Taking a step further, the *Aladura* (white garment) churches especially the Celestial, burn incense, make offerings, use herbs and also employ bathing exorcism by taking the possessed to river-sides for the spiritual operation (exorcism). This is done with the belief that as rivers flow 'without looking back', so shall the predicaments of the patient be cured without a re-occurrence. Coconut is another very prominent item used by exorcists in Celestial Churches during exorcism operation with the belief that as coconut water finds its way mysteriously inside the coconut, so shall the deliverance be actualized mysteriously (P. Johnson-Bashua, Personal Communication, July 17, 2012).

6. Comparative Analysis

From the foregoing analyses, it would be realized that each of the three religions under study has its elaborate concept of exorcism. While they defer considerably in some areas, it can be safely concluded that they share some semblance feature which of course may be due to the fact that they operate in the same environment.

The expositions given above on personality profile reveal that the same qualities expected of a Yoruba traditionalist exorcist in South-West Nigeria is expected of his Muslim and Christian counterparts.

All the three religions teach that an exorcist must be upright, truthful, trustworthy devout, compassionate, prudent and possess integrity of life while he should also be knowledgeable in the performance of exorcism. Most important is that he should be an epitome of righteousness and piety as that is a weapon he needs to be successful in all his endeavors.

Training in exorcism practice is another feature common to the three religions. Except for some few notable cases of Christian and Muslim exorcists who practice exorcism without receiving any formal training, we are not aware of such situation among the Yoruba traditionalist exorcists where it seems it is a rule that one must undergo apprenticeship training in exorcism practices before becoming a practicing exorcist.

Diagnosing patients before carrying out exorcism operation is equally common to all exorcists in South-West Nigeria, no matter the religious affiliation. While most churches would rather prefer orthodox medical examination to be sure the ailment does not have physical, biological or emotional fount, the Muslim and the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists have devised their own diagnostic methods. It should, however, be mentioned that the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists usually carry out full and comprehensive findings. The diagnosis they carry out is to determine the cause of the illness, its nature, whether or not the demon is sent by a sorcerer and what form of antidote should be administered. A section among Muslim exorcists also extends their findings to cover the way-out while the orthodox among them only carry out their diagnosis to determine the nature of the ailment and ascertain the involvement of demons.

Methods of exorcism employed by exorcists in each of the three faiths however vary. While most Muslim exorcists use Chapters and verses of the Glorious Qur'an to exorcise their patients, most Christian exorcists cast out demons from the bodies of victims in the name of Jesus. And, where the demon proves stubborn, exorcists in the two religions, in such instance, resort to beating and tormenting. Some Yoruba traditionalist exorcists also employ beating. Some Christian exorcists even go to the extent of asking the Holy Ghost Fire to consume the demon. Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists, on the contrary, seldom apply harsh method. In most cases, they try to appease the invading demon to leave; while after its exit, they also dedicate a shrine to it in order to keep it at peace.

It is, however, interesting to note, based on the above analysis, that exorcism in the white garment churches especially the Celestial church and among a section of Muslims contains some features similar to those found among the Yoruba Traditionalist exorcists.

7. Conclusion

Exorcism practices among the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria have not received much attention of scholars. This article, in the foregoing discussions, has not only examined exorcism as a prominent practice among the people of South-West Nigeria in treating victims of demonic possession, it has equally analyzed the practice as it is obtainable among exorcists in the three prominent religions in the area. The analysis covers three major areas vis-à-vis personality profile of the exorcists; diagnostic methods; and exorcism practice.

Each of the three religions has its distinctive and elaborate diagnostic and exorcism features, yet there are areas of semblance which may be as a result of interacting in the same environment.

Whereas Yoruba traditionalist exorcists do not have problem of categorization since their method is wholly traditional and does not borrow from Islam or Christianity; exorcists, in the case of Islam and Christianity fall into two distinct categories. There are among the Muslim and Christian exorcists those that are strictly orthodox and do not, at all, imitate the traditionalists, while there are also some others whose methods feature some traits the Yoruba traditionalist exorcists consider original to them. The Christian exorcists who fall in this category mainly belong to the White Garment churches. These churches are indigenous African churches which of course profess Christianity but strongly believe that they are first Africans before being Christians. As such, Christianity should not be a barrier to borrowing features from traditionalist exorcism considered useful and beneficial. Their Muslim counterparts are those whose predicament could also be viewed against the backdrop of their inability to break completely away from their traditional background on the one hand, and their argument of similarities between Islam and the Traditional Religion on the other, which is the very reason why they readily embraced Islam in the first place. To the orthodox Muslims theologians however, they are not regarded as pure Muslims but mixers or syncretists (*Mukhlitun*).

Notes

1. The Shamsu deen Group also known as *Kosebo ko sogun* (lit. no making of offerings and no use of medicine) was founded by Abdul Hamid Olohungbemi. This group believes in the use of only prayer. For detailed study of the group, see Mustapha Adebayo Bello's Unpublished M.A Dissertation on the founder entitled "Shaykh Abdul Hamid Olohungbemi and his *Da'wah* Activities in Ado Odo (Ogun State) and its Environs: 1982-2002", submitted to the Dept. of Religions, Lagos State University, November 2004.
2. The *Ogunse* group was founded by one Abdul Lateef Oyegbade Ogunse of *Olodo* in *Ibadan*. Members of this group upholding and preaching the tenets of the group are spread across the various States of South-West Nigeria.
3. This group was founded by Ilyas Muhammad in India. It had its first contact with Muslims in Nigeria in 1956. The group also detests the use of anything that has its source in the Yoruba Traditional Religion. For detailed study of this group, see Oladimeji L.F: '*Da'wah* Trends in Islam: A Study of the *Jama'atut Tabligh* in Nigeria', (Ph.D Thesis submitted to the Dept. of Religions, University of Ilorin), 2005.

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