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## A Selected Yoruba Christological Titles among the Aladura Churches: An Insight into African Perception of Christ

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### Abstract

Christology is about Jesus Christ as God's ultimate revelation to the world. It is an attempt aimed at arriving at the significance of Christ for faith and practice. A proper understanding of this ultimate revelation is the heart of Christian theology. The way one conceptualizes God and expresses his Christianity indicates whether such person has a right knowledge of the person of Christ or not. In the attempt to contextualize Christology, African Indigenous Churches have employed various local concepts to explain the meaning and significance of the advent and works of Christ. This study looks into some selected Yoruba Christological titles mostly used for Christ among the Aladura Churches. The study is limited to the Aladura Churches, one of the African Indigenous Churches that use the Yoruba language as a means of communication in her worship. The movement titling approach is an example of one of the ways that Africans contextualize Christology. The significance of Aladura Christological titles includes the fact that it helps to mirror the perception of Christ among the Yoruba Christian communities and how Aladura Christology is substantially adding its Yoruba values to the beauty of Christianity. These Christ's titles also show that the African Indigenous Churches give the Bible a place of priority in their spontaneous theology as those titles that can undermine the uniqueness of Christ are not used for Him. Although there is an abundance of titles and names that the Christians in Yoruba land have for Jesus, yet, all these titles could not say all that needs to be known of and about Jesus Christ about His character, mission and office in the African context. Therefore whatever the titles the Yoruba give to Christ is totally the creation of the Yoruba Christian community, based on their appraisal and perception of Jesus. Nevertheless, the Yoruba Christian Community Christology offers a viable opportunity for the development and enrichment of theological studies in Africa.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Yoruba of the southwestern part of Nigeria is occupying large portions of Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, Edo and most of Kwara States. Before the scrambling for and partitioning of Africa, the Yoruba race extended to Benin and Togo in West Africa south of the Sahara while a lot of them are still visible today in countries such as Cuba and Brazil. Idowu (2010) refers to the Yoruba as one of the most advanced people groups in Africa in civilization, culture, educational attainment, religious beliefs and practices, governance, art and warfare among others. The Yoruba traced their ancestry to Oduduwa, who is said to have heroically migrated from a great dynasty in Egypt to Ile-Ife, Yoruba mythical centre of creation (Hetfield, 1996). If this claim is worthwhile, then the Yoruba would, no doubt, share some cultural and religious affinities with the Jews, Samaritans, Persians, Syrians, Babylonians, and other parts of the Mesopotamian world where ancient Egypt was no less a chief empire. Christianity was introduced to Yoruba land through the efforts of ex-slaves who returned home from Sierra-Leone before the Methodist and the Church Missionary Society came in 1841 (Dada, 2003). The Aladura which is the other name often used for African Indigenous Churches (Churches planted by the Africans for the Africans and in Africa) later became the

most popular group in the early eighteen century. This group interprets the gospel from the African perspective (Omoyajowo, 1982). The Aladura have different titles by which Jesus is named among them. Ayegboyin (2005) points out the reason behind the numerous titles ascribed to Christ. He asserts:

Africa from which the Aladura Churches spring up are familiar with the thought that a name or a title is the synthesis of a variety of representations and experiences, and that a title says a lot about the one who bears it. In other words, names and titles are bestowed on people, formally or informally, according to their achievement (p.12).

This means that the numerous Christological titles given to Christ are due to His achievement in the redemption of man and the universe at large. No single title is sufficient to express what Christ means to the Africans, but a collection of the numerous titles reveals what He means to them to an extent, though not sufficient enough to describe the person of Christ as depicted in the Scriptures. Emmanuel (2003) corroborates Ayegboyin with the assertion that in most African countries, the titled person must merit the conferment of the title. The titled person becomes a source of inspiration to others, thus influencing their lives positively. Against this background, this paper looks into the Christological titles given to Christ by the African Indigenous

Churches in Yoruba land and uses it as the key to evaluating the Yoruba perception of Christ about the person of Christ as attested to by the Scripture. This will make one to appreciate the abundance of titles and names that the Christians that are from Yoruba land. These titles express the perceived identity and significance of Jesus as expressed in the Aladura's worship.

### Sources of Yoruba Christological Titles

In the bid to appropriate Christ, the Aladura use titles which speak eloquently about the nature, mission and office of Jesus in Yoruba context. Virtually, all the Christological titles given to Christ were born out of the experiences and personal contact that the Aladura leaders and individual member claim to have had with Jesus. The sources of these titles are deduced from their *iriri*, 'personal experience' *orinemi* (spiritual songs), '*adura* (prayers) *oriki*' (epithets or praise names). These *oriki* according to Adogame (1999) are uttered in a deliberate attempt to attract *ibukun* (blessings), *aanu* (mercy), *agbaraemi* (spiritual power) and all other good things of life.

### A Selected Yoruba Christological Titles among the Aladura Churches

The importance of the Aladura titling of Christ undoubtedly offers a viable opportunity for the development and enrichment of African Christology. It is in the light of this that Bediako (2000) writes:

We ought to speak positively of oral, spontaneous positively, implicit or grassroots theology, as theology which comes from where the faith lives, in the life situation of the community of faith. Accordingly, this 'grassroots' theology is an abiding element of all theology, and therefore, one that it is essential for academic theology to be in touch with, to listen to, to share in, and to learn from, but never to replace this spontaneous or grassroots theology because the two are complementary aspect of the reality (p.17).

From Bediako observation, academic theology and grassroots theology must work hand in hand with a better understanding of African theology.

Giving titles to Christ is an approach to African Christology that is Biblical. Corroborating this, Nwaoru opines:

Titling approach is founded on God's giving Jesus Christ a name or title (Philippians 2: 9-11). Title giving is one of the oldest approaches to Christology in the New Testament. The early Christian expressed in such titles as the Christ, Lord, Master and many others. What Jesus meant for them in their life condition is shown in the titles they give to Him (p.55).

This biblical approach of titling is not strange to the Africans. Africans encourage the use of titles in not only addressing persons of rank and honour in the society but also in evoking the deity. Since no one can identify the nature of the divinities, calling titles or evoking epithets of the divinities or the gods remains the best way to relate with the deity in worship. Most Africans are also familiar with the thought that title is the synthesis of various motifs and experiences, and that a title says much about the one who bears it. As is customary in most African societies, the titled person must merit the conferment of the title. For the Aladura, Jesus is perceived as one who deserves the following titles:

### *Olusegun* 'The Conqueror.'

In Yoruba belief, the evil spirits are seen as sources of calamity, bad luck, sicknesses and untimely death. They can and willing to harm. Therefore, people need protection

against them. Yoruba see this protection in Jesus as *Olusegun* 'Jesus, the Conqueror'. Jesus is victorious over the spiritual realm and particularly of evil forces. He is the answer to the need for a powerful protector against these forces and powers. According to Fotland (2005), the perception of Christ as the powerful and victorious Christ is a most prominent one in the Christian communities in Africa. Through the Yoruba articulation of theological concepts in hymns and prayers, one gains the insight into how Jesus is perceived as the protector from the power of Satan and other evil spirits. He can protect because He is the most powerful.

In Yoruba Christology, Jesus as the *Olusegun* 'The Conqueror' must be understood against the background of the Yoruba implicit believe in the existence of superstitious powers, the wicked spirits that saturate the universe popularly known as '*awonaye*.' These spirits are powerful and inflict pains, poverty, diseases misfortune and diverse disaster upon the human beings and nature. In response to these, the Aladura invoke the name of Jesus to counter and conquer these wicked spirits because He is the only one that has the power that supersedes the power of these evilpowers. As rightly observed by Osun (2000), most of the Aladura churches founders had confrontations with these evil spirits that impeded their ministries. Some of them had to contend with the opposition and persecutions from political leaders of the post-colonial African state, traditional chiefs who boasted of the powers of the '*awonaye*,' 'the wicked spirit' to harm these men of God.

Jesus is often conceived as the source of authentic power '*agbaratooto*' which the Aladura used to overcome the forces of darkness. Orimolade also pulled down the image of *Osijara* (a powerful divinity which was feared but worshiped in his village) and fought with the evil spirits in the surrounding areas (Omoyajowo, 1995). Primate Oshitelu is also known to have affirmed, using a mixture of holy words and Yoruba that the Lord is not only powerful, but he also fights for His children against all hostile enemies and forces. He is:

*Oluwa saggohhujah*

*Ajjaggorraabullah, Ajjaggorrajah, Oluwa Olusegun*

*Oteworagoomu, Ossaggojjah Lahholla* (Oshitelu, 2003).

This means:

The Lord who pleads our cause

The Lord of might and victory

The Lord of hosts who scatters the evil plots of the enemies

This song also depicts Christ as the custodian of the supreme power:

F'agbararewo mi

Jesu f'agbararegbemi ro

Aye agbaralawayi o

Agbara ti aye o le dojuko

*Jesu figbemi ro*

Clothe me with your power

Jesus uphold me by your power

We live in a world of powers

Power which the enemy cannot confront

Jesus uphold me by your power

African Indigenous Churches as shown above view Christ as the conqueror that fights against, and triumphs over, the powers of the devil, disease, hatred and calamities. He is defined

as the powerful defender of the defenseless as also shown in this song:

Ogbeninija keru o baonija

Ogbeja ti ngba ni ti kiweyinwo

Ogbeja ayanfe lai-kapa agbada

A dreadful defender

A defender who makes no retreat

He defends the beloved with ease.

From this song, one can observe that there is an ethical dimension to the defense of the people of God 'the beloved'. Jesus defends only the righteous, those who are victimized for no just cause and the helpless.

### ***Olugbala' Saviour'***

This is the commonest title among the titles given to Christ among the Yoruba Christians. Jesus as saviour seems to have a broader meaning than '*Jesu Olusegun*.' Jesus as savior is an expression of the ability of Jesus to help and deliver in any situation, by what He has accomplished through His atoning death on the cross. His atonement is understood as the actual removal of sin that hinders people from living in harmony with God and enjoying the fruits of the kingdom of God. The Christological title of Christ as the savior as rightly observes by Bediako (1993) develops from the activities of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels as he went everywhere healing the sick, raising the dead and delivering the oppressed. Paul in his letter to the Church in Colossae clearly shows that Christ is who he is (the saviour) because of what he has done and can do (save), and also that he was able to do what he did on the Cross because of who he is (God the Son).

To the Aladura, Saviour applies to all three persons of the Trinity as evidenced in this song

*Olugbala Olugbala ni Baba*

*Olugbala Olugbala ni Omo*

*Olugbala ni Emi Mimo*

*Olugbala ni Metalokan*

The translation of this song is:

God the Father is the Saviour

God the Son is the Saviour

God, the Holy Spirit, is the Saviour

The Triune God is the Saviour

Apart from this song revealing the Yoruba Christian belief in Trinity, it shows Christ as powerfully and essentially belonging to the more powerful realm of Divinity. In other similar and various songs, one meets Jesus as Saviour from poverty, sickness, enemies including all the evil forces, and also as the one who saves by transforming situations. He is the savior from the selfish politicians who do not work for the masses but their pocket.

The Aladura not only believe in Christ as savior from physical problems alone. Christ salvation to them is holistic in nature. Bediako (1993) asserts that the salvation brought by Christ includes spiritual, physical, emotional, social, economical and psychological dimensions. Since man cannot save man, it is only the God-Man, who is Jesus that saves humanity through his death, resurrection, and ascension. Therefore, no man should acclaim the title *olugbala* to himself. Bediako with this assertion points here to a biblical method for Christology, namely, starting with the achievement of Jesus. He had saved all people by his death on the cross and is still able to save people today irrespective of their social status because of the same achievement.

Closely related to Jesus as *Olugbala* 'The Saviour' is *Oludande* 'The Deliverer.' This image is used in close association with other images such as *Olugbala*, 'Saviour and *Olurapada*' Redeemer.' One of the concerns of the Yoruba people is to be delivered from all physical pains and oppressions from all evil forces. The idea of the deliverer who rescues believers from all sorts of evils is a feature of most songs, prayers, and titles ascribed to Jesus by the Aladura. In most of these, Jesus is portrayed as one who breaks bondage and delivers because He has the absolute power to fight, conquer and lead his people to triumph. In the battle of life, he is known as *Balogun* 'the Lord who leads the battle'. He is the all-conquering Lord who reigns and supreme over every rule and authority that conspires to put people in bondage. In the spiritual realm, He is the '*okooso, emereatiaje*,' 'the Lord over the wizards, wandering spirits, and witches.'

As *Oludande*, Jesus reverses the terrors that threaten man's life. He is capable of delivering his people from every attack of evil, especially those evils that have been externally objectified as being responsible for personal, family, community and national misery. In the African universe of reality, only such One that has demonstrated power over the perplexing forces of nature and evil deserves ultimate allegiance and worthy to be called the ultimate deliverer.

### ***Alufa Giga 'The High Priest.'***

Most living religions had their method and laid down procedures for sin removal, society cleansing, averting ills, or punishing crimes. The person who is mostly vested with the power to undertake the procedure is the priest. Attesting to the position of the priests in African Religion, Akao (2003) writes:

African Religion has its way of averting evils in the society. The process of removing sin or purifying the community is usually dictated by the Priest who invariably is the only privilege person who can know the mind of the gods or foresee an oncoming consequence of sin either on the individual or the community. The Priest is the one whom people go to when spiritually embarrassed or physically traumatized (p.37).

Giving the title '*Alufa Giga*' to Jesus shows the reason why there is no more need of sacrifice in any form in Aladura Christology. In Yoruba context, it is not possible for someone who is not from the tribe to operate as a High Priest. This is in line with the Jews who did not accept Jesus as their High Priest simply because he was from the tribe of Levites, the only tribe that has the legitimate right to produce the High Priest. The Priest was the supreme mediator between the people and God. He frequently performs rituals on behalf of the worshippers to appease the gods. However, in the case of Christ, He is a universal priest who functions beyond tribal lineage of the Yoruba priests. If the priests of the gods serve as a mediator between man and gods, then Jesus as the universal High Priest perform the sacrifices and function as a mediator for the Aladura members. Against the priests that used to sacrifice from time to time, Jesus Christ out of free will, sacrificed himself as a once-for-all sacrifice that achieved entirely what all sacrifices seek to do, so doing away with all other sacrifices. Therefore, faith in this ultimate sacrifice makes any future sacrifices unnecessary. By implication, through this once and for all sacrifice, Jesus has been able to replace all other priestly mediation for people who believe in him.

The ability of Jesus to function as the High Priest that mediates between man and God is not farfetched from his person. He is God-Man. Because Jesus is truly human, he is one



of us; because he is God, he can mediate with the divine realm and bridge the gulf between the holy God and sinful human beings, and so achieve for humanity that harmonious fellowship with God which all human priestly mediations seek to affect but can only approximate (Bediako, 1990).

Jesus Christ as the High Priest shows that He is the universal Lord and Saviour. As shown in the book of Hebrew, Jesus is the High Priest in the order of Melchizedek who was not a Levite, yet recognized as high Priest by the Jews. That Jesus is not a Levite does not mean that He is not worthy of the title 'The High Priest.' Therefore, Jesus is worthy to be titled the High Priest for all believers irrespective of their races, tribes, and nationality.

#### **Oluwosan ode Orun 'The Healer from Heaven'**

This way of presenting Christ in an African context seems to have been proposed first by a Congolese writer, Buana Kibongi (1969). The central image here is of Christ as the healer, a perception derived from the itinerant ministry of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament and given contemporary relevance among the Yoruba worshippers (Stinton, 2004). The origin of this perception is traced to the healing power of Christ demonstrated among the Yoruba after the life-consuming influenza epidemic that followed World War 1. It was in the charismatic exercise of the new faith that healing was recovered as a religious practice in post-missionary Christianity. Moreover, in a world in which the cost of medical care continues to prove prohibitive to the masses of the people, the African Indigenous Churches, in particular, continue to apply themselves to spiritual healing.

However, beyond pragmatic considerations, health and wholeness are cornerstones of human existence for many African people, including the Yoruba people. They believe that illness can bring untold sufferings to a home hitherto happy. Among the Yoruba that is Christian, *ojulowoigbala* (holistic salvation experience) implies not only salvation from sin, but also deliverance from the power of darkness and elimination of illness and suffering in all forms through the power of Christ. To the Aladura, these human problems have no place in the kingdom of God, since the believers are the children of God and their body also the temple of God, sickness then is an unwanted stranger that must be sent away.

The *Isoji Agbayanu* (the Great Revival) of 1930, which started in Ilesha and was led by Joseph Ayo Babalola, affirmed the concept of divine healing (Ayegboyin, 2005). In obedience to the divine directive to depend absolutely on *Jesu Oluwosan* 'Jesus the Healer,' thousands of people abandoned their reliance on medicine, charms, amulets and idols as means of having their healing. One of the songs of Cherubim and Seraphim Church comes to mind:

*Onisegun nlawanihin*

*Jesu Abanidaro*

*Oro re munilarada*

*A gboohun ti Jesu*

*Iro didunl'orinSeraf*

*Oruko didun ni ahon*

*Orin to dunJuly ni*

*Jesu, Jesu, Jesu*

The greatest healer is here

Jesus, the Sympathizer

His words heal

We hear the words of Jesus

Sweet are the voices of the Seraphim

Sweet is the name of Jesus on one's tongue

The sweetest song is:

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

Another song that reveals Jesus and other persons of the Trinity as healers go thus:

*Oluwosan, Oluwosan ni Baba*

*Oluwosan, Oluwosan ni Omo*

*Oluwosan ni Emi Mimo*

*Oluwosan ni Metalokan*

Healer, Healer is the Father

Healer, Healer is the Son

Healer, Healer is the Holy Spirit

The healer is the Trinity.

Another song which Osun (2000) says was the favourite song of Babalola, the one whom God used to found Christ Apostolic Church calls to mind:

*Jesu Olomi iye re o*

*Omi iye*

*Agan mu nibe o d'olomo*

*Aje mu nibe o ka sororo*

*Oloriburuku d'olorire*

*Omi iye re o*

*Omi iye.*

Jesus, the owner of water of life, is here

Living water

The barren drinks from it and becomes mother

The witch drinks from it and confesses her sin

The misfortune becomes fortunate

Life, real life is here

Living water

The passionate adherence of the leaders of Christ Apostolic Church to divine healing without the use of drugs among the members later led to the separation between the missionaries from Bradford and the pro-Babalola group. The pro-Babalola group insisted that the use of drugs among the members amount to the desertion of their cherished faith (Alokan, 1991). Members are therefore encouraged to engage in fervent prayer for healing. If the sickness is beyond the individual efforts, petitioners are referred to the group named '*Afadura-Jagun*' (prayer warriors) or faith-home, *Ile agbaraadura* 'prayer-power-house' or *Ori-oke* 'the mount.' Moreover, Babalola recognized that there were organic causes of sickness, yet he believed that spiritually induced ones were the primary causes of illness. That is the reason for his counsel to depend absolutely on Jesus who is '*Oluwosan ododo*' (the real healer) who heals not only the physical illness but the spiritual ones as well.

The Aladura cannot conceive Jesus as '*adahunse*' (the traditional herbalist) because these men are mortal beings with their limitations. The healing power of Jesus is supernatural, He is all time healer unlike the herbalist that their healing power is for a while and that they are a specialist in one or two areas. However, Jesus alone can heal all manner of sickness and diseases.

In recent times, some ministers of God are criticized not only for commercializing the gospel but also because Jesus is made to take second place in their healing ventures. The

early founders of the Aladura churches maintained that praxis was essential to Christianity. Omoyajowo (1995) asserts that Orimolade, the founder of Cherubim and Seraphim Church was not only frugal, but he was also actually poor. He refused to accept free gifts for any act of healing. Babalola is also known to have emphasized the need for ethics in the practice of faith healing. For him, Jesus was *awonisanmagbeje* 'He who heals without taking the vow.' Ayegboyin (2005) points out to one of Babalola's favourite songs to support his reluctances in taking gifts from the healed:

*Gb'owo re ma lo*

*Gb'obi re ma lo*

*Jesu ko gb'owo, ko gb'obi*

*Gb'owo re ma logb'obi re malo*

*Ma t'ese si mi l'orun o.*

*Gb'owo re malogb'obi re ma lo*

Take away your money

Away with your kola nuts

Jesus requires neither money nor kola nuts

Away with your money and kola nuts

Don't corrupt me

Take away your money and kolanuts.

#### ***Oba Awon Oba 'King of Kings'***

The Aladura do give to Christ the same titles that are used for God. In the attempt to win key converts in the African community, the missionaries presented Christ as King. The Bible also refers to Christ as King. It was, therefore, natural that the missionaries and some African scholars would propose the title King for Jesus (Abogunrin, 2003). This practice has the most profound Christological implications because in ascribing this title to Christ, they do not merely attribute the powers and the authorities of kings and traditional divinities to Christ but in comparative and superlative terms. With the title, *Oba awon Oba*, Jesus Kingship, and Divinity are being affirmed as superior. The famous phrase '*Oba awon Oba, Oluwa awon Oluwa*' is often used in prayer by the Aladura members.

Jesus is never referring to as *Ijoye* (chief). The reason for this among the Yoruba is that *Ijoye* is a title holds by the favour of a king. *Ijoye* is subordinate and answerable to the king. Jesus cannot be called *Ijoye* because of the chief rules under the king. He is not *Ijoye* as he does not hold his several titles at the behest of a superior kingship, for there is none superior. He is the *Oba to gajuawon Oba lo* 'the king that is greater than all kings.' This song among the Aladura reveals the perception of Christ as the greatest king:

*Ko s'obabire*

*Kosi, kosi*

*Ko s'obabi're*

*Kosi, kosi*

*Laye yiatilorun*

*Ko s'obabi're*

There is no king like you

There is no one; there is no one

There is no king like you

There is no one; there is no one

In heaven and on earth

There is no king like you

In most cases especially in songs, there is no clear distinction between the kingship of Jesus and that of *Olodumare* 'God Almighty.' This seems to be because in Yoruba thought, reality is always conceived in its wholeness, and the dichotomy that plagues the Western intellectual tradition does not arise in the Yoruba context. Titles and names are integral to the character. To the Aladura, the Father and the Sons are one in the will (John 4:34, 7:28) and activity (John 14:10). Thus the titles and the praise epithets exhibit the unity of being and nature, which Christ shares with the Father. This lyric conveys the idea:

*Oba ni Jesu*

*Oba ni, Oba ni*

*Onis'e ara l'olorun Olodumare*

*T'ounseohungbogboninuohungbogbo*

*Oba ni Jesu, oba ni, oba ni.*

Jesus is King

He is the King, yes, the King

God Almighty is a wonder-worker

He does all things perfectly

Jesus is King; He is King, yes the King.

Some Aladura's songs affirm not only that the 'rulership' of Jesus extends over the course of history; but more important, as some of the songs ascribed to him the attributes of God as the creator.

*Sara re, osuba re*

*Sara re, osuba re*

*Atobajaye asedaorun*

*Iwo lope ye*

Your majesty, we worship you

Your majesty, we worship you

The maker of heaven and heart

You are worthy of our praise.

*Jesu, obalori aye*

*Lori aye*

*Lori aye at'orun*

*Mo jubareo, akoda aye*

*Asedaorun*

*Okelehinonigbagbo*

*Wa ba wase.*

Jesus, the king over the whole earth

Over the whole earth,

Over the earth and the heavens

I worship you, the first in creation

Maker of the heavens

The mountain behind the believers

Christ is seen as the *Obat'o n fi oba je* 'King who enthrones kings,' the ultimate king. What shines out from the Yoruba perception of Christ is that the institution of *Oba*, which is represented the Yoruba political structure, the ultimate symbol of both as a temporal authority and as vice-regent of the divinities, is now subsumed under the kingship of Christ. With the advent of Christianity among the Yoruba, the institution is now recognized for what it is, as a temporal institution shorn of its claim to transcendent authority in deputizing for the divinities. Jesus is now the king for all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him.

**Oluwa 'The Lord'**

The title Lord establishes the divinity and uniqueness of Christ among the divinities. That Jesus is Lord is not peculiarly Yoruba. It is a biblical term originally used for God. Early in its history, the Church chose to use the word 'Lord' for Jesus as a common statement about the divinity of Jesus. This affirmation challenged the Jewish religious concept of one invisible God, and it caused a confrontation with the Roman authorities (Bediako, 1996). The Romans declared that Caesar was Lord, while the Christians countered with the confession that Christ was Lord. In this way, 'Lord' as Christological title, has been significant, has been a challenged to other faiths including Islam that came after. The Church used the title 'Lord' as a confession of the highest authority.

Among the believing Yoruba, the Lordship of Christ does not have any limit: He is the Lord of the universe, the nations, the spiritual world, the world of the divinities and the Church.

The Lordship of Christ also means that he is a universal ruler, ruler of all nations, land, and ruler of all the various created orders of human existence even if He is not recognized by all. The need for the recognition of Christ as the Lord over the world should challenge the church to play a constructive role in proclaiming the Lordship of Christ through effective evangelism and demonstration of love to all the people irrespective of their tribes or nationality. By demonstrating love to all and maintaining peace in the society, the Church is proclaiming the Lordship of Christ constructively. Jesus is not Lord after the pattern of the world, seeking power in other to rule as an untouchable ruler or depot as some of the African leaders. Jesus is a servant Lord who always seeks for the well being of the people even when it cost him his life. Jesus rulership should serve as an inspiration and model to political rulers in African and also the Church leaders. Real leadership is demonstrated by serving and not by oppressing the people. As Lord, Jesus alone should be praised and worship. Directing one's service or worship to other gods amounts to denying the Lordship of Christ

**Alatunse 'The Reformer'**

In Yoruba community, *Alatunse* is the one who reforms the society. By being the Lord of the world, Jesus is also concerned about how the world is to be shaped. Jesus work of transformation extends to the transformation of everything individuals, societies and the whole concept of living through his resurrection. With His resurrection, the world and human life become different. The kingdom of Christ is to transform the world even though His kingdom does not belong to the world. The abolition of slave trade, putting an end to human sacrifice, providing good welfare to the people by the missionaries in Africa is as a result of the work of Christ in the life of these men and women of God. The African leaders who fought for the independence of Africa from the colonial masters got their inspiration from the life of Christ. He identifies with the poor, the sick and the less privilege in the society. Equality in the society, taking care of the needy, demonstrating love to all and sundry are some of the teachings of Christ that are applicable not to the Christian alone but other religions as well. Oyinloye (2003) points out to this song among the Aladura as one of the songs that look to Christ as the reformer:

*Ata ayerowa*

*Wa o a ma mi bebe*

*Gbogbowama logbojusoke*

*Oro aye ma mi feadura*

*Ata' yero bo agogo*

*Awa o ni ye pe o*

*Titi o fi gbo*

*Wa ba wa tan awonisorowa*

*Wa gbaonaiyanu mu isorrayewakuro*

The reformer of the earth

Come and intervene

The whole earth looks up to you

The situation of the earth calls for prayer

The one who refurbishes the earth like a refurbished ball

We will not cease calling on you

Until you hear us

Come and put end to all our trials

Come and through your miraculous power

Put an end to the world's problem (p.271-272)

**An Assessment of Aladura Christological Titles**

The Christological titles of Christ among the Yoruba Christian Community have shown that Jesus Christ is not just a spiritual, philosophical entity, but a dynamic personal reality in all life situations. The Yoruba Christological titles also offer a viable source for Christology in Africa. The thoughts of the people who do not have access to the advanced level of theological education are another good source of Christology and theological formulations and discourses. Another implication of Yoruba Christology titles is that it clearly brings to fore the need for inculturation. This makes the gospel to challenge and animate human culture and utilizes the resources of the culture in expressing the Christian faith (Ukpong, 1990).

It is interesting that there is a unified blending of the meaning of one Christological title with all the others. This shows an advance in Christological understanding that signifies enrichment without nullifying the significance of any title.

The importance of the use of mother tongue in African Christian Theology is also evidenced. Some of the Yoruba churches titles for Jesus bring out the genius of the people and the contribution they are capable of making to Christianity world-wide. Since the Bible is the measuring rod by which most AICs any other Churches theology is conceived and continuously modified, it would not be an exaggeration to say that an examination of Yoruba Christological titles reveals that Yoruba Christian Community gives the Bible a paramount place in their spontaneous theology.

Examining closely the Aladura Christology from the uses of different titles for Christ, one can assert that the uses are born out of the effort to interpret Christology in the context of Africa. It is an attempt to put Christology in the local soil and local context in order that the content may remain relevant and meaningful to the Africans. On Christology in the African context, Abogunrin (2003) writes:

Christology in the African context is, therefore, an attempt to interpret and see Jesus Christ with African eyes and listen with African ears. Instead of using foreign concepts, idioms, titles, and language, the teaching becomes locally indigenized and contextualized. The elements that are local are used to communicate Christ (p.21).

It is also apparent that Yoruba Christological titles for Christ are substantially a cultural domestication of Christianity. However, this cultural domestication is not uncritical as they impose limits in their creative appropriation of Christianity. For example, the Aladura will never refer to Jesus as *Ijoye*, the one who rules under the jurisdiction of a king.



It is good that Aladura Churches are making the message of Christ understandable to the Africans by employing indigenous concepts, ideas and world view of the worshippers. The Aladura expression of the person and works of Christ through the use of African titles has helped the Africans to understand the greatness of Christ to an extent. However, these titles must not be used indiscriminately because of the negative implications of doing so in the person of Christ as taught by the Scripture and the Church. Not all of the African titles are Scriptural. The unscriptural ones distort the biblical message and hinder a proper understanding of the person of Christ.

This caution is necessary because some of the titles are so closely connected to the titles often used for different divinities in African Religions. This will obviously decimate the supremacy of Christ as depicted in the Scriptures. Some African Theologians have gone to the extreme in their attempt to Africanise Jesus by giving him names and titles known to African divinities like ancestor, Ela and so on. This extremity poses more problems for African understanding of the person and work of Christ. Besides the fact that these titles could also be applied to non-Christian individuals who are perceived to be holy in the society, they will also presumably make the people view Christ as they view these people. With this, the supremacy of Christ will be under significant threat.

The attitude of the Aladura to the concept of divine healing is an interesting one. That Jesus is the *Oluwosan* 'The Healer' is scriptural, yet, there should be room for flexibility in the application of divine healing both in practice and in the constitution. Many lives had been lost through a strict emphasis on divine healing in churches like the Apostolic Faith and Christ Apostolic Church. It is no longer a secret that Pastor Oschoffa the founder of Celestial Church of Christ and Primate Oshitelu the founder of the Church of the Lord died in the hospital while receiving medical attention. This shows that the churches that are insisting on the strict divine healing need to renewed vision of what cooperate health networks (scientific and mystical) can contribute to the deliverance of the oppressed humanity from satanic and demonic bondage (Ayegboyin, 2005).

The title *Oluwa* 'The Lord' raises a big challenge to the Church in Africa and the political leaders on the continent. The need for the recognition of Christ as the Lord over the world should challenge the church to play a constructive role in proclaiming the Lordship of Christ through persuasive evangelism and demonstration of love to all the people irrespective of their tribes or nationality. By demonstrating love to all and maintaining peace in the society, the Church is proclaiming the Lordship of Christ constructively. Jesus is not Lord after the pattern of the world, seeking power in order to rule as an untouchable ruler or depot as some of the African rulers. Jesus is a servant Lord who always seeks for the well being of the people even when it cost him his life. Jesus rulership should serve as an inspiration and model to political rulers in African and also the Church leaders. Good leadership is demonstrated by serving and not by oppressing the people. Moreover, to the ones that are syncretistic, as Lord, Jesus alone should be praised and worshiped. Directing one's service or worship to other gods amounts to denying the Lordship of Christ.

The title of Christ as *Olugbala* 'The Saviour' as rightly conceived by the Aladura shows that the salvation brought by Christ is universal in nature. However, that this salvation brought by Christ is universal in nature does not mean that it is not just for anybody. There is a condition attached to it. It is only through a personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord and one's

relationship with Him that one can be saved. Jesus has been given as eternal redemption only for all who acknowledge who He is for them and what he has done for them. This position of the African Indigenous Churches is also the position of the entire body of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

From this paper, it is obvious that the Aladura has demonstrated a new way of doing theology. In their Christology, they have shown an alternative to a systematizing theology and doctrines imposed from 'above' and new means of doing theology in '*orinemi*' 'spiritual songs' and '*oriki*' 'praise name. 'The Aladura Christological titles exhibit a confidence in African invention and initiative that fosters creativity in living and proclaiming the gospel. It is a communication enterprise. It lays bared what ordinary adherents think and do, rather than what theologians in the University write.

Observed also is the awareness of the Aladura Churches of the danger of using unscriptural titles for Christ. The titles that put Christ at the same level with the African divinities are threats to the supremacy and the uniqueness of Christ as taught in the Scriptures. Hence, the use of titles in this category should be discouraged in the Church. The effect of the unscriptural titles is not only that they will hinder the proper understanding of the person of Christ but also distort the spread of the gospel of salvation, the essence of the Church.

Infer from this study also is the Aladura's emphasis on 'high Christology,' the description of Christ in terms that stress the aspect of His Divinity than on 'low Christology' which is the the description of Christ in terms that do not necessarily confirm His Divinity. This is probably due to the movement experience of the all-powerful Son of God, who is in touch with the mundane infirmities of the Africans like fears of the evil spirits, diseases, poverty deaths and other problems that threaten the well-being of humanity in general.

However one can infer that African expression of the faith has its weaknesses. The term Christology is globally universal in context and cannot be compartmentalized to any region of the world. If the Aladura is to be faithful to the great commission, then there is a need to globalized Christ: that the universal dimension of Christ is maintained, even, while articulating Christological models in African thought categories is highly essential. Here the Aladura should aim at having not only the figure of Jesus indigenous to them but also something they would bequeath and share with the Christian world and go beyond compartmentalized of Christ to only the Yoruba region. Translating the Yoruba Christological titles to other global languages in their different places of worship and liturgy is one of the viable means of globalizing African Christology.

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