

Editor's Note

I am once again pleased to introduce and welcome readers to the second issue of the *AASR E-Journal for the academic study of the religions of Africa and the African Diaspora*, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR). While the maiden issue centred on the specific theme 'Health, Healing, and the Study of the Religions of Africa,' articles in this issue have been structured rather differently, focusing on varied themes with their rich complementarity. One of the top priorities of the *AASR E-Journal* is to serve primarily as an interdisciplinary journal in which members and non-AASR members, *particularly early career scholars and graduate researchers*, are encouraged, supported and mentored to publish the outcomes of their original research on the religions of Africa and the African Diaspora. It is against this backdrop that I am exceedingly delighted to introduce these essays from four young, promising, erudite researchers/students who make robust contribution to knowledge in the field through sharing aspects of their current research projects.

Charles Prempeh contributes to popular discourse on the appropriation of marijuana in Accra's urban slums, focusing on the sacralisation of marijuana by Muslim youth in Maamobi community. He situates the criminalization of marijuana consumption in Ghana as a relatively recent phenomenon, largely influenced by the colonialists' conceptualization of marijuana as a substance that is only smoked for recreational purposes. While researchers have mostly depended on the etic view in understanding the utility of marijuana, a perspective which partly confuses the discourse, the author employs a qualitative research design and ethnographic technique to unpack the meaning, appropriation and sacralisation of marijuana, and to better grasp the lived social realities of users in Maamobi. The use of marijuana in Maamobi is shown to constitute a unique sub-culture within the larger community, just as the structural organization of marijuana culture helps members to cope with the harsh economic conditions in Accra. The essay vividly demonstrates how users, in this case Maamobi Muslim youths, consume marijuana for its recreational and therapeutic value, and more importantly, for its ability to ward off evil spirits, including witchcraft, and to help them focus on the worship of Allah.

Theories are widely understood as a set of assumptions or propositions that attempt to provide rational explanations of causal relationships among observed phenomenon. As mental models of perceived realities, theories are nevertheless fluid and protean. They are open to constant revisiting, debunking and revalidation. Thomas Seat revisits old theorizing about Christianity's encounter with Indigenous beliefs in the Niger Delta. In light of extensive exploration of Church Mission Society archival materials, the author critiques Robin Horton's Intellectualist Theory, highlighting its emphasis on macrocosmic social structures and tiers of Brass' and Bonny's cosmologies, as rather limiting. He examines cosmological confrontations between Christian and indigenous beliefs, under Bishop Samuel Crowther in Bonny and Rev. Thomas Johnson in Brass, arguing that when individuals abandoned the microcosmic-tiered beliefs that these

encounters called into question, their microcosmic tier condensed with each belief that was disowned. While contested microcosmic-tiered beliefs were surely not rejected by everyone, for those that discarded them, a cosmological lacuna was created that could be filled in numerous ways based on an individual's personal inclinations, with conversion to Christianity being one option. Seat concludes that centuries of long-distance trading did not cause the macrocosmic tiers of Brass' and Bonny's religions to "overshadow" their microcosmic tiers, as Horton supposes. The inverse of Horton's theory appears manifest: rather than macrocosmic-tiered expansion, microcosmic-tiered condensation precipitated conversion. Thus, he posits a process of microcosmic-tiered condensation as a contributing factor in the conversion to Christianity in Brass and Bonny in the Niger Delta.

Some literary scholars have been mainly preoccupied with the representation of domestic violence in written texts, while others focus on medical and social aspects to the neglect of its electronic media representation, such as home video films, an important repertoire of sociology of the African society. Mobolaji Ajibade expounds the prevalence, causes and effects of domestic violence by exploring the representation of domestic violence in *Ìdààmú Ilémoşú*, a popular Nigerian Christian home video film produced by the Christoline Evangelical Drama Outreach Ministry. Pentecostal Christianity is portrayed in this film as a counter power and panacea to societal problems, demonstrating how the spiritual dimension of domestic violence, the role of culture in religion and the knowledge of history are germane in addressing the scourge. The author underscores the potential import of home video films in mitigating domestic violence, especially against women, since changing people's perception is a major step towards behavioural change.

Lastly, Briana Wong provides a critical review essay of four recent books: Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (2016); Jacob Olupona and Rowland Abiodun, *Ifá Divination, Knowledge, Power, and Performance* (2016); John Peel, *Christianity, Islam, and Orisha-Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction* (2015) and Laurenti Magesa, *What is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (2013). In spite of the disparate and, sometimes contradictory approaches that characterize them, Wong vividly demonstrates how the books provide an invaluable glimpse into the complex fluidity and richness of African spirituality, through the practice of African forms of Christianity, Islam and indigenous religion. While rejecting the common misconception of African indigenous spirituality as static and unchanging, the authors highlight various types of religious change. Peel's (2015) historical anthropology, published posthumously, champions and models the comparative method in reflecting on Yoruba history, revealing the diversity that has characterized the religious lives of Yoruba peoples in space-time. Olupona and Abiodun (2016) is dedicated to the preservation of Yoruba religion in its many iterations throughout the world and encourages the partnership between ancient traditions and twenty-first century technology. Gifford (2016) prescribes, though controversially, African Christianity's abandonment of its "enchanted dimension," to pursue what he perceives as development; while Magesa (2013) argues contrarily, pressing for an increased incorporation of African traditional worldviews, including an acute spiritual awareness, into African Christianity.

It is hoped that all these robust discourses, controversies and findings will provide impetus for fruitful conversation but also suggest trajectories for further rewarding research. I therefore invite you to enjoy these fresh, sterling contributions.

Afe Adogame

Editor-In-Chief

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