

THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF DREAMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND SOME SELECTED NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS, ILE-IFE

Abiola Ayodeji Olaniyi

Old Testament Studies Department of Religious Studies,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Prof. David O. Olayiwola, PhD

Church History Department of Religious Studies,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

Abstract

This paper addressed the contextualization of dream interpretation in the transformation of traditional African theories of origin of the universe and how the universe operated in Ile-Ife. It highlighted prominent demonstration of spiritual ability that abounded among members of the New Religious Movements (NRMs) at Ile-Ife. The NRMs were the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria (C&SUCN), the Church of the Lord *Aladura* (CLA) and Eckankar (Eck) at Ile-Ife. It employed biblical contextualization of ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament interpretation of dreams in exposing the theology of the NRMs that influenced moral change among the youths at Ile-Ife. It concluded with the recommendation that every idea of fatalism and predestination needed to be confronted with an ideology of a redeemable world by emphasizing virtues of discipline and submission to authority for maturity in interpersonal relations.

Keywords: Biblical Contextualization, Dreams, New Religious Movements, Ile-Ife

Introduction

New Religious Movements (NRMs) were aboriginal religious organizations “stemming from social and religious encounter, and selecting and combining local and exogenous religious elements in diverse and dynamic ways.”¹⁵ The characteristic dependence of NRMs on “favourable political climate,” “religious freedom and tolerance” and “public criticism”

¹⁵ R.I.J. Hackett (Ed.), 1987. *New Religious Movements in Nigeria* Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, p. 3.

of failure of the nation in safeguarding the welfare of its citizens generated “religious pluralization and diversification” engendering “images of deviance and alienation, channeling religious self-determination into less formal and institutionalized means of expression” like personal administration of life by dream interpretation.¹⁶ The selected NRMs for this study consisted of the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria (C&SUCN), the Church of the Lord *Aladura* (CLA) and Eckankar (Eck) at Ile-Ife.

The point of convergence for the Cherubim and Seraphim Churches (C&S), the Church of the Lord *Aladura* (CLA), and the Eckankar among the New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Nigeria was the emphasis they laid on the significance of interpretation of dreams in their cosmologies and praxes. The CLA and C&S employed “Africanized worship styles, rituals and literalistic interpretations of the Bible” as vehicles of inculturation. These indigenous Christian movements “founded by local preachers who rely mainly on the Bible and integrate African cultural elements”¹⁷ formulate “symbols from the Bible found accommodative to African contexts” and “symbols to control and eliminate evils in order to guarantee both the spiritual and material wellbeing of adherents.”¹⁸ The CLA drew “from biblical examples its teaching on the efficacy of dreams, visions, spirit messages and revelations.”¹⁹ The C&S in their case had “offices of the visionaries, dreamers, prophets and apostles in their hierarchy.”²⁰ The Eck considered every intervention of a deity in the affairs of its adherents through dreams or visions at night as a means of discovering divine guidance on present and future events of life. Dreams were believed as means of resolving problems and discovering previous life that every human had experienced prior to present life experiences (reincarnation). Dreams or visions at night when people were passive were then considered as a demonstration of the love and mercy of the deity over adherents that were

¹⁶ R.I.J. Hackett (Ed.), 1987. *New Religious Movements in Nigeria* Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, pp. 6-11.

¹⁷ Chris Ukachukwu Manus, 1998. “The Use and Role of the Bible in Three New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Lessons for Slovenian Christian Culture” in *Interpretation of the Bible*, Ljubljana: Sheffield Academic Press, p. 1806.

¹⁸ Chris Ukachukwu Manus, 1998. “The Use and Role of the Bible in Three New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Lessons for Slovenian Christian Culture” in *Interpretation of the Bible*, Ljubljana: Sheffield Academic Press, p. 1823.

¹⁹ Chris Ukachukwu Manus, 1998. “The Use and Role of the Bible in Three New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Lessons for Slovenian Christian Culture” in *Interpretation of the Bible*, Ljubljana: Sheffield Academic Press, p. 1807.

²⁰ Chris Ukachukwu Manus, 1998. “The Use and Role of the Bible in Three New Religious Movements in Nigeria: Lessons for Slovenian Christian Culture” in *Interpretation of the Bible*, Ljubljana: Sheffield Academic Press, p. 1815.

being distracted by daily challenges of life from tolling a particular course.²¹

However, a strange interpretation of dreams or visions as a prediction of (i) a destiny that could not be influenced or changed and (ii) as a divine assurance of divine support of illegal and immoral acts had become prevalent among youths at Ile-Ife. There was a need to expose the contextualization of interpretation of dreams among the CLA, C&S and the Eckankar that organized empowerment programmes periodically for youths at Ile-Ife.

Dream and Its Interpretation in Ancient Near East

According to A. Leo Oppenheim, “the subject of dreams and their interpretation” was concisely presented in “the study of the dream-reports preserved in Sumerian and Akkadian texts.” The reports exposed “the use of dream-incidents as a literary device” and “the various types of native etiologies of dream as an experience” within “other civilizations of the ancient Near East” by comparison of their reports.²² So, in Ancient Near East

dream-experiences were recorded on three clearly differentiated planes: dreams as revelations of the deity which may or may not require interpretation; dreams which reflect, symptomatically, the state of mind, the spiritual and bodily health of the dreamer, which are only mentioned but never recorded, and, thirdly, mantic dreams in which forthcoming events are prognosticated.²³

Although, “in the written records of the civilizations of the ancient Near East, references to dreams occur on several clearly distinct literary levels,” yet, notable was that “each subject was to its own rigid and consistent stylistic conventions.” The peculiarity of “these restrictions also bear heavily upon the content, form, and etiology of the recorded dreams.” Consequently, investigation or “references to dreams can only be evaluated adequately after one has recognized and established the extent and the basic trends of the conventions valid for the text type in which they occur.”²⁴ This is because;

Dreams recorded in ancient Near Eastern literatures cannot be expected to reflect the psychological status of the dreamer, his aspirations and individual conflicts; even in the few cases

²¹ Ifeanyi Arua was a unit leader of the Eckankar religion at Ile-Ife and was a lecturer at the Department of English Language, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria at the time of the interview on 06/06/2014.

²²A.L. Oppenheim, 1956. The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with A Translation of An Assyrian Dream-Book. (Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc.), Vol. 46, Part 3, p. 179.

²³A.L. Oppenheim, 1956. The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with A Translation of An Assyrian Dream-Book. (Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc.), Vol. 46, Part 3, p. 184.

²⁴A.L. Oppenheim, 1956. The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with A Translation of An Assyrian Dream-Book. (Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc.), Vol. 46, Part 3, p. 184.

which offer exceptions to this statement... the personality of the dreaming person remains wholly beyond the reach of the investigation, and this deprives us of that essential information which the background of the individual or, better still, his utterances in other contexts impart to the psychoanalyst.²⁵

In addition, irrespective of the experiences and challenges of “the two levels of consciousness which are alternately experienced by man-----the waking world and the realm of dreams,” the religious and social status of a dreamer and the viewpoint of his/her social setting and civilization determine the typology or classification of appropriateness and acceptability of a dream interpretation. This means that there is

an ubiquitous *fundus* in that world of dreams upon which is superimposed a rigid pattern of selections and restrictions adopted by the individual civilization and adjusted to the cultic and social standing of the dreamer. This pattern derives its ultimate authority and unshakable consistency from that setting of the waking world which, by some unknown process, each civilization creates as the only admissible vehicle of its self-expression.²⁶

Dream and Its Interpretation in the Old Testament

The Old Testament text is full of references to dreams and interpretation of dreams. The experiences of dreamers and interpretation of dreams were employed in the Old Testament as vehicles of expressing overriding theologies of particular religious and social settings of the ancient Near Eastern peoples, Israelites and Jews. This dominant sense of spirituality in the perspective of biblical writers was also employed as the theoretical framework of collecting, analyzing and interpreting the facts of an encounter under examination, in spite of other motives that could have informed the style, form and content of different subject-matters that were narrated by the biblical writers/redactors. So, the encounter of a dreamer with a deity in anesthetic form like dreams was assumed to emanate from the exercise of sovereignty by a deity over its adherents.²⁷

In the Pentateuchal and Historical Literature, interpretation of dream was used as an instrument of a Elohim or Yahweh to convey an institution of

²⁵A.L. Oppenheim, 1956. The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with A Translation of An Assyrian Dream-Book. (Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc.), Vol. 46, Part 3, p. 185.

²⁶A.L. Oppenheim, 1956. The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East with A Translation of An Assyrian Dream-Book. (Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc.), Vol. 46, Part 3, p. 184.

²⁷Nathaniel Schmidt, 1926. “The Numen of Penuel” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 45, No. 3/4, pp. 262-263. See Theodor H. Gaster, 1954. “Psalm 42:8” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 73, No. 4, pp. 237-238.

a new paradigm or incorporation of a different identity of responsibility to its adherents. In the book of Genesis among the Pentateuchal Literature, Hiebert observed that Diana Lipton exposed the description of roles of God in illustrating the motivating rationale behind the moral fiber of the Hebrew patriarchs. In other words, the experience of the deity by Hebrew patriarchs transformed their moral response to life. Lipton, in that light compared

five patriarchal texts in Genesis that refer explicitly to dreams (i.e., the dreams of Abimelech, following his taking of Sarah [20:1-18]; Jacob, at Bethel [28:10-22]; Jacob, regarding the flocks [31:10-13]; and Laban, during his pursuit of Jacob [31:24]) and on Abram's vision (h_zxm) in conjunction with the covenant of the pieces (ch. 15)... with other ancient Near Eastern dream reports in order to determine the textual function and to identify significant motifs of biblical dreams.²⁸

In other words, Lipton “examined the Genesis dream texts in conjunction with their Ancient Near Eastern counterparts” in order to “explore the significance of their comparable features.” Hiebert noted that though Lipton was “concerned not so much with the matter of the historicity of the dreams as with the way that they might be of use to a redactor in filling narrative gaps,” yet, interpretation of dreams was used in accounting for or “revealing something of a character's inner life.” He added that “dream passages reinforce the role of the deity in human affairs, especially in terms of their “revisoning” of events that have originally been narrated from the human perspective.”²⁹

In the book of Numbers among the Pentateuchal Literature, Moore assumed that the encounter of the Israelites with Balaam, son of Beor, was a description of an existing practice and an overlapping of the roles of the priests/prophets of deities in Ancient Near East. The roles of the priests/prophets included serving as “diviner,” “dream-interpreter,” and “oracle/prayer-reciter.”³⁰ Yet, he added that Balaam should be explicitly identified as a seer, since Balaam was said to have seen a vision at night and which he subsequently reported to his people. Consequently, the characterization of Balaam, the son of Beor as a dream interpreter seemed

²⁸ Robert J. V. Hiebert, 2000. “Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis by DianaLipton” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 119, No. 4, p. 753.

²⁹ Robert J. V. Hiebert, 2000. “Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis by DianaLipton” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 119, No. 4, p. 754.

³⁰ Gordon J. Hamilton, 1991. “The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development by Michael S. Moore” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 110, No. 4, p. 703.

possible even though the night vision was never explicitly called a dream.³¹ As a result of the foregoing, he asserted that “Numbers 22-24 is unambiguous both in narrative (e.g., Num 22:18) and poetry (e.g., Num 23:8) that Balaam was a Yahwist” in view of his encounter with God in a vision at night and that encounter transformed his moral life by refusing to curse the righteous Israel.³²

In the book of the Kings among the Historical Literature, Nelson opined that the encounter of Solomon with God in a dream was to introduce the monarchical pattern of governance that the deity preferred against Ancient Near Eastern common practice. So,

the narrative of Solomon's dream (1 Kgs 3:4-15) is a pivotal composition of the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr). This text expresses God's design for kingship as kingship under the Torah-royal theology set into the frame of Mosaic covenant. It marks the transition from the pre-monarchical situation to the monarchical and from sacrifice at high places to central sacrifice at the Jerusalem temple.³³

In other words, the story of Solomon's dream about Yahweh's manifest presence was an “indication that Dtr was a master of the theological use of language and literary structure” of ancient Near Eastern perspective. This was because; the Deuteronomistic Historian was connecting Elohim-idea with Yahweh-idea within an Adonai experience of the royal ideology that was still viewed with suspicion by the traditional Torah theology of his day. The historian was

building a completely new piece out of traditional language. Dtr borrowed structure from wisdom and royal genres and employed language from both these worlds, as well as from worship, politics, and Tetrateuchal tradition, to create a carefully constructed whole with a pointed theological intent. In so doing, Dtr creatively combined traditions in untraditional ways. By the technique of "opposition of traditions," Dtr set contradictory ideologies side by side in the composition, thus creating a new design for kingship.³⁴

³¹ Gordon J. Hamilton, 1991. “The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development by Michael S. Moore” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 110, No. 4, p. 704.

³² Gordon J. Hamilton, 1991. “The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development by Michael S. Moore” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 110, No. 4, p. 705.

³³ Richard D. Nelson, 1985. “Design for Kingship: The Deuteronomistic Narrative Technique in 1 Kings 3:4-15 by Helen A.Kenik” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 104, No. 3, p. 519.

³⁴ Richard D. Nelson, 1985. “Design for Kingship: The Deuteronomistic Narrative Technique in 1 Kings 3:4-15 by Helen A.Kenik” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 104, No. 3, p. 520.

In view of interpretation of dreams as a vehicle of demonstrating the sovereignty of a deity as stated above, McKenzie added that “the original *Vorlage* behind 1 Kgs 3:2-15 was a dream epiphany which advocated Solomon's right, as David's successor, to be equipped with a "hearing heart" in order to rule and in which Solomon was rewarded with riches and honor because of his cultic piety at the Gibeon sanctuary.”³⁵

Pericope of Contextualization

The C&S and CLA emphasized more on the use of the Old Testament in transforming traditional African worldviews. They appealed more to the story of biblical Joseph that employed his ability to interpret dreams in negotiating his way through the challenges of his time. Carmichael indicated that Joseph, son of Jacob-Israel dreamt of a future prosperity and business success that attracted opposition from his brothers. The dream of Joseph was sandwiched between rivalry and jealousy of polygamy and exploits of Judah in addressing the challenge of childlessness and succession. It was a typology of how staff/mace of authority passed from the line of Joseph to Judah who plotted the sale of Joseph as a slave.³⁶ So,

In Gen 37 Joseph has his dreams. It is he to whom his brothers bow down (in a dream), and it is he again (in another dream) to whom his father, mother, and brothers bow down. In the latter case Jacob rebuked his son, but kept the matter in mind (vs. 11). Now in 49: 8 Jacob says to Judah: "Judah, thee, thy brethren praise; thy hand on the neck of thy enemies, bowing down to thee thy father's sons." The point is that here Judah and not Joseph is the one to whom such obedience is paid. The emphatic "thee" also suggests this. How has this come about? The reason is that Judah's strength has usurped the position Joseph had dreamt for himself.³⁷

In another view, J. Robin King averred that “the Joseph story follows a narrative sequence characteristic of a special kind of hero tale, one that recounts the life of a young man who is exiled from his home because of a dynastic struggle and later is reconciled with his people, through divine guidance, for the good of all.”³⁸ The life of the Israelites in the land of

³⁵ Steven L. McKenzie, 1992. “From D to Q: A Study of Early Jewish Interpretations of Solomon's Dream at Gibeon by David McLain Carr” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 111, No. 4, p. 704.

³⁶ Calum M. Carmichael, 1969. “Some Sayings in Genesis 49” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 88, No. 4, p. 438.

³⁷ Calum M. Carmichael, 1969. “Some Sayings in Genesis 49” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 88, No. 4, p. 438.

³⁸ J. Robin King, 1987. “The Joseph Story and Divine Politics: A Comparative Study of a Biographic Formula from the Ancient near East” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 106, No. 4, pp. 577-578.

Canaan and the experience of Joseph, son of Jacob-Israel were a bunch of paradox in this context. The land was regarded as the Promised Land of flowing milk and honey but, seasonally confronted with famine and racial invasion from neighbours of the Hebrew patriarchs. Coupled with was rivalry that existed among the sons of Jacob as products of polygamy amidst Ancient Near Eastern traditional cosmogony and cosmology that gave special position of respect to child-bearing wives above childless wives. In addition, there was a customary celebration of the firstborn of a patriarch as the heir apparent to the inheritance of the household leader which complicated the story.

The Context of Dream Interpretation at Ile-Ife

There is need to discuss oral tradition about Ile-Ife which informed dream interpretation in Ile-Ife. Ile-Ife belonged to Ife Central Local Government in Osun State. Although, “the origins of the Ife natives are lost in antiquity,” still, there was a suggestion that “the site of Ile-Ife was occupied as early as 350 B.C.” with a cluster of hamlets of which their remains were “a city wall at Enuwa and later the construction of another outer city wall.” According to custom, “Ile-Ife was divided into five quarters namely Irewo, Okerewe, Moore, Ilode and Ilare and within each quarter were compounds with family lineages. However, Ile-Ife was believed to be the source of the world, origin of humans, and the land “whence all the major rulers of the then southern Nigeria derive the sanctions of their kingship where gods, shrines and festivals form the center of religion.”³⁹

Oral tradition reported that the meaning of Ile-Ife was traced from “Yoruba myth of origin” as “Ile-Ife, the place where the earth spreads.”⁴⁰ According to Yoruba mythology, “Ife is the origin of mankind.”⁴¹ However, legends had that during wars of survival in Yorubaland; military princes called Obatala and Oduduwa, the descendants of King Lamurudu from Mecca arrived with their siblings at Ile-Ife. They assisted people of Ile-Ife in overcoming external invasion and aggression of some invaders and impostors through their military and ritual prowess, and Oduduwa was made the king of Ile-Ife. In some quarters, “oral tradition stated that Ile-Ife was where life first originated.” It averred that Obatala was sent by Olodumare with a chain as stair steps to climb down to the earth to found Ile-Ife. Under this perspective, “Ile-Ife was founded by Obatala” since “Obatala moulded

³⁹ The Kingdom of Ile-Ife accessed on 14-04-2014 at http://www.newdigitalculture.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=29

⁴⁰ J.K. Olupona. 2011. *City of 201 Gods: Ile-Ife in Time, Space, and the Imagination*. California: University of California Press, p 29.

⁴¹ A. Aderemi, Ooni of Ife. 1937. “Notes on the City of Ife” *Nigerian Magazine*, Vol. 12, pp 3-7.

human beings who became the first inhabitants of the land.” So, “Oduduwa came as the head of a powerful group of people and imposed his will on the original inhabitants of Ile-Ife.”⁴²

In another tradition, there was an assertion that the “Yoruba are believed to have originated and migrated from Ile-Ife...for other Yorubalands.”⁴³ According to history, the expansion of Yorubaland and establishment of other Yoruba kingdoms beyond Ile-Ife involved the royal military exploit of the sixteen sons of Olofin Oduduwa of Ile-Ife. Oranmiyan, one of the princes of Oduduwa went to establish Oyo kingdom. In that regard, “during the coronation of an Alaafin of Oyo, the shrine of Oranyan is visited where the sword of state brought from Ile-Ife is presented to the Alaafin.” Record had it that “the Igba Iwa, or calabashes of divination, are brought from Ile-Ife.” Nevertheless, beyond the feat performed by Oduduwa at Ile-Ife, Oyo town under Alaafin, the military king became the political headquarters of Yorubaland. But, still, “standards of war, dedicated to Oranmiyan, must also be procured from Ile-Ife before commencing any military campaign” in any Yorubaland. So, “Ife retained its spiritual status among Yoruba cities, even after the political centre had been shifted.” Consequently, the Ooni, as the beneficiary of Oduduwa was indisputably regarded as the father of all crowned kings (*obas*) in Yorubaland.⁴⁴

Ile-Ife was also a renowned town for multi-religious activities in the Yoruba southwestern part of Nigeria. Ife-Ooye: the Voice of Ife reported that the three main religions in the city are Christianity, Islam and traditional. Traditional religion appears flourishing than the other two as most people who belong to either of the former two also have soft spot for the age-long religion. So, being a Christian or a Moslem does not preclude you from the traditional religion, which the elders hold in high esteem. It is not uncommon to be a leader in a denomination and still hold chieftaincy title that has to do with shrine ... with 201 traditional religious festivals; it is only one day that is free that the people do not offer sacrifice at the various shrines that

⁴² M.A. Makinde. 2004. *Ile-Ife: An Introduction*. Felele, Ibadan: Mosmak Enterprises, pp 7-

⁴³ “Origins of the Feri Folk: The Ife of Yoruba”, in C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\Origins of Feri___ Africa.mht. Retrieved on 17/11/2011.

⁴⁴ J. Stanley, R. Olaniyan and D. Adenle. 1982. *IFE, the Holy City of the Yoruba: An Annotated Bibliography*. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, pp 51-57.

dot the town. This particular day remains a secret that the chief and priests of the kingdom keep so dear to the heart.⁴⁵

In view of the above, Ile-Ife was regarded as the base of the entire Yoruba culture and consequently taken as “the Yoruba city of Ile-Ife” as known as “the City of 201 (or 401) Gods.”⁴⁶ So, Ile-Ife was also considered as the cradle of Yoruba civilization⁴⁷ and the domain of 201 deities.⁴⁸

Evidence of urbanization at Ile-Ife was discovered to date back to roughly 500 AD. Yet, Ile-Ife celebrated “the creation of the world during the Itapa festival” with its habitation traceable far back to 350 BCE.⁴⁹ It had two media houses: Osun State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC Orisun FM Radio) and Federal Government owned Nigerian Television Authority (NTA Ile-Ife). It was embarrassing to discover that though, among the OPEC, Nigeria (where Osun State was called the State of the Virtuous) was rated one of the six richest countries of the world yet, Ile-Ife suffered the challenges of underemployment and poverty. There were very few business firms to employ and engage various skills of a large number of youths in the town. Small scale businesses and financial institutions including commercial banks in the town sought for customers from the Obafemi Awolowo University campus (OAU) with its Teaching Hospital complex (OAUTH) that was located in the town. Social vices including theft, fraud, child-labour, swindling, inter-ethnic conflict, ritual killing, etc bedeviled the land owing to under-employment and inadequate engagement of skills of the youth in the town. Contextualization of dream interpretation in this paper emanated from the need to address socio-religious interpretation of the economic problems confronting the residents especially the youths at Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Responses of the New Religious Movements at Ileife

Interpretation of and guidance on dreams or visions were regular contents in the liturgy of the C&S, CLA, and Eckankar movement in

⁴⁵ Ife Ooye: the voice of Ife, 2011. in C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\IFE OOYE ILE-IFE Biblical Garden of Eden was situated here.mht. Retrieved on 17/11/2011.

⁴⁶ J.K. Olupona. 2011. *City of 201 Gods: Ile-Ife in Time, Space, and the Imagination*. California: University of California Press, p. 36.

⁴⁷ Ile-Ife is regarded as “Ile-Ife-The Source of Yoruba Civilization” in Femi Fani-Kayode, 2011. “The History Of The Yorubas”. Retrieved from C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\The History Of The Yorubas_ Facebook.mht, on 17/11/2011.

⁴⁸ According to “Origins of the Feri Folk: The Ife of Yoruba”, the Yoruba are believed to have “originated and migrated from Ile-Ife known for a pantheon of 201 gods for other Yorubalands” in C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\My Documents\Origins of Feri___ Africa.mht. Retrieved on 17/11/2011.

⁴⁹ 2009 www.TheOoni.Org, “HISTORY OF ILE-IFE” at <http://theooni.org/ileife.htm> accessed 14-04-2014.

Nigeria. Interpretation of and guidance on dreams or visions were regarded as gifts and vehicles of revelation and inspiration by these New Religious Movements (NRMs). These religious organizations with many branches in Nigeria periodically organized training and empowerment sessions for youths in their local branches. These NRMs noted that some Nigerian youths complained of unemployment, underemployment, and economic deprivation among other social problems bedeviling the nation. The deprived Nigerian youths complained of neglect and unconcerned attitude of the Federal and State Governments towards masses and youths that were children of the poor in the society. They protested nepotism of government officers that appointed children of few rich public servants into civil and public services while youths from poor background and parentage that had the same qualification as the children of the rich were denied employment. Some of the poor but skilled labour youths resorted to internet fraud known as *yahoo-yahoo* and prostitution known as *agbelepa-owo* at several cyber cafes, brothels and club houses. A group of the youths averred that their destiny had been irredeemably planned by God and revealed to them in dreams. They roamed around streets looking for favour and begging for fortunes. Rather than getting enrolled under discipline of skills by hard work, they were awaiting when God would bring the fortune that was shown to them in their dreams to fulfillment effortlessly. Another group assumed that they were meant to adopt every possible approach in achieving the fortune that their destiny had irredeemably planned out as revealed in their dreams.

Doctor (Mrs.) Ifeanyi Arua expounded that the Eckankar at Ile-Ife taught that there were two main spheres of human existence consisting the awake-physical realities and the sleep-spiritual realities. Although all life was regarded as spiritual yet, there were pure-spiritual plane and lower-spiritual plane. Dream experience belonged to the lower-spiritual plane of interactions (astra/emotion, causal/past-life, mental/thought, and soul/real-being) that human beings had at night or when as sleep. Dream helped the dreamer to handle past life issues in the present life since there was belief in reincarnation. It enhanced recollection of the purpose of being alive in the present life that had been fashioned at previous existence depending on any of the four spheres of the lower-spiritual planes that the dreamer was polarized. But, the dreamer had the responsibility of seeing life and relating with people from positive (cordial not vengeful) perspective in achieving the purpose of existence. Challenges of life were avowed as factors that made people lose control of their life but, dream provided anchor for personal control of life. Owing to Eckankar views that “there is no free food in the universe” and that “whatever you sow you reap in life” people were taught that life was redeemable through counsel on realizable plans, prayer, fasting,

hard work, and aligning efforts along goals of realizing worthy and legal purposes with positive viewpoint.⁵⁰

Apostle Prophet A. Makinde of the C&S asserted that dream and vision connected together Moses Orimolade and Christiana Abiodun as the founders of the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) society at Lagos, Nigeria in 1925. He opined that lessons from dream and its interpretation were used at the beginning of C&S to direct its members on how to negotiate their way through life and organize the future as revealed in the dream or vision. Dream was assumed to be a prediction of the future to the dreamer. Unsolicited prophecies were made by prophets to church members on where caution was to be made and where doggedness should be applied by revelation caught from dreams. Deliberate acts of felony and inhumanity against other humans by a dreamer were presented as issues that could result in divine abandonment, imprisonment from the public, and ostracism from the society where the dreamer had expected to achieve the revealed destiny.⁵¹

Lady Captain F. Adejumo (Eri-Mother) noted that as a mentor of youths, the story of biblical Joseph in Genesis fitted the situation of youths in Osun State, Nigeria in general and Ile-Ife in particular. For her, Joseph, a Hebrew youth had a dream of future prosperity and success amidst challenges of step mothers and step brothers that culminated in enmity, rivalry, suffering, domestic violence, and human trafficking and slavery. Joseph realized his dream by submission to authority, hard work, diligence, and flexibility and toughness of resilience. Captain Adejumo added that she was guided in a dream as an adolescent that she was meant to be a church founder. She sort counsel, attended Teachers Training College and was trained to harness and align her skill and services towards preparing for the dreamed goal of the future. She graduated to become a class teacher at a private primary school for some years. Fatalism would have turned her dream into a mirage but, her doggedness towards realizing the dreamed goal in socially approved and legal ways, especially by using her God-given gifts and talents in helping people accelerated her commitment into fruition. She tenaciously submitted to leadership and correction of the proprietor of the school till when the proprietor voluntarily permitted her to commence church entrepreneurship. She emphasized that whoever had a dreamed goal should

⁵⁰ Eckankar as the way of the Holy Spirit was presented as “the religion of the light and sound of God” and practiced at No. 8 Igboya Street, Ile-Ife.

⁵¹ Most Senior Apostle and Prophet Abiola Makinde was the minister in charge of the first to be established Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Church at Ile-Ife later called Evangelical Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim (Orisun-Iye), Itapa, Ile-Ife. He was the Secretary of the Cherubim & Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria (C&SUCN), Ife-East Zone. He was interviewed on 10-05-2014.

avoid crime, immorality, and illegality that were known to be hindrances of success.⁵²

In the opinion of Venerable J. Adebajo, dream and vision were regarded as divine means by which God revealed his plans and purposes to his creatures in line with the commands of the Bible. Discovery of the goal of God for one's future through dreams or vision demanded more commitment on the part of the dreamer towards a cautious, sober, and reflective life. Decisive and timely effort on the part of the dreamer at obeying the directives and guidance included in the dream was viewed as non negotiable. Discipline and perseverance observed in the model of Joseph, son of Jacob-Israel were presented as unavoidable virtues that the dreamer seeking acceptance and trust from his/her society needed to demonstrate and emphasize for relevance. Suffering, test and trials in the hands of human beings for one's perspective while standing with truth, righteousness, and submission to constituted authority were assumed as inevitable. Desperation for affluence and pleasure was listed as a hindrance to securing divine support and connection with the destination and purpose of the dreamed goal. Every act of social demeanor was condemned as capable of derailing the dreamer from attaching his/her goals with the picture of the future that was revealed to him/her.⁵³

Assessment of the Contextualization of Dreams by the NRMs

Traditional African culture of Ile-Ife believed in the idea of the sacred as the controller of the profane in the universe. Human interactions and relations were assumed to be purposed after a management of the profane by the directive of the sacred. The socio-economic challenges confronting technologically underdeveloped Africans propelled a search for an anchor amidst the tossing-up and down of life at Ile-Ife. The belief in possibility of discovery of future prospects and challenges through dreams among Africans became a common ground for the C&S, CLA, and Eckankar in ministering to the youths at Ile-Ife. Consequently, the NRMs considered dream and its interpretation as the familiar and easily accessible means of rallying attendees to their programmes and instilling some controls upon their members.

The NRMs exploited the traditional belief in value of dream and its interpretation to cite passages and texts from the Bible and the holy book of Eck on dream as vehicle of revelation and discovery, to replace consultation with priests of African Traditional Religion (ATR) and traditional African

⁵² Lady Captain F. Adejumo (*Eri-Mother*) was the Founder and General Overseer of St. Mary C&S Church, Oke-Atan, Ile-Ife. She was interviewed at her church during a programme for the youths on 07-05-2014.

⁵³ Venerable James Adebajo, the Regional Overseer of the Church of the Lord Aladura, B Zone, situated at 51b, Obalufon Street, Ile-Ife was interviewed on 08-05-2014.

use of *Opon-Ifa* (tablet of divination). Texts from the holy books on how God revealed future misfortune and ways employed in averting it were quoted or paraphrased to reinforce effective use of dreams in the NRMs from time immemorial. The stories of dream of Pharaoh of Egypt about famine, dream of Joseph about future social elevation, dream of Jacob-Israel about divine protection in Laban's house with transfer of wealth to him, and dream of biblical Solomon, King of Israel on divine support and guidance among others that were fulfilled served as reference points in this regard.

The NRMs confronted the idea of fatalism about predestined and unpreventable future with counsels on steps to make things regarded as unavoidable as exorable and redeemable. They emphasized the virtues of decisive and timely efforts at obeying divine directives and guidance, discipline, truth, righteousness, legal and moral acts, submission to authority, commitment towards a cautious, sober, and reflective life, and perseverance of suffering, test and trials. Consequently, internet fraud, crime, immorality, prostitution and all forms of illegality were highlighted as hindrances of success for any dreamer that sought divine assistance towards realizing his or her dream.

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Lady Captain F. Adejumo (*Eri-Mother*), a female, was the Founder and General Overseer of St. Mary C&S Church, Oke-Atan, Ile-Ife. She was interviewed at her church during a programme for the youths on 07-05-2014.

Most Senior Apostle and Prophet Abiola Makinde, a male, was the minister in charge of the first to be established Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Church at Ile-Ife later called Evangelical Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim (Orisun-Iye), Itapa, Ile-Ife. He was the Secretary of the Cherubim & Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria (C&SUCN), Ife-East Zone. He was interviewed on 10-05-2014.

Venerable James Adebajo, a male, was the Regional Overseer of the Church of the Lord Aladura, B Zone, situated at 51b, Obalufon Street, Ile-Ife was interviewed on 08-05-2014.

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