ABSTRACT

Everyone knows that death is the inevitable end of man. What plagues the mind of many, consciously or otherwise, is the question of what happens to man when he breathes his last breath. While some are of the opinion that after death comes judgment; a determinant of whether one goes to eternal blissful domains, or into everlasting torment; depending on whether he had lived piously or otherwise, while on earth. Another school of thought opines that the soul of the dead will reincarnate by taking abode in a new physical body, born as a new baby and live another normal life, whereby he/she has the opportunity to correct his/her wrong actions in the previous incarnation. While some are of the opinion that when the soul has gathered wisdom, knowledge and understanding through several incarnations, it becomes one with the creator; others believe that reincarnation is a continuous process without neither a beginning nor an ending. The Yorùbá of South-Western Nigeria, like most other Africans, believes that humans reincarnate in order to re-choose their destiny and fulfill their life ambitions which they had no chance to achieve in a previous incarnation. An examination of some Yorùbá traditional songs about death and what follows, show that they believe in ‘a day of reckoning’ and the continuum of the life cycle. Reincarnation, generally speaking, is always thought of, and discussed as a religious phenomenon, most probably because it borders on the super-natural; an issue to which only God; the creative force, has the totally correct answer. My bid in this study is to establish through self-confessed persons that reincarnation is a reality, as against Majeed’s (2012) summation that reincarnation as a phenomenon “serves the need of personality identity and as such, it is irrational”. Aside from that, this study examines and concludes that the acceptance of the reality of reincarnation is not peculiar to the Traditional Religion of the (African) Yoruba, it is a common nexus in other faiths, unlike what obtains in Christianity and Islam; the two officially recognized (foreign) religions in Nigeria. My exemplifications from Ayê kejì (The other world); a particularly selected Nollywood film, is as a result of its direct relativity to the issue of this study, which is pivoted around African indigenous thought system and philosophy.

KEYWORDS: The Yorùbá, Religions, After-life, Grace, Justice.
INTRODUCTION

Man has always wondered about what happens to soul, the life essence of a being, after death. This is because death, the irreversible cessation of all vital functions of the body, usually indicated by permanent stoppage of the heartbeat, indicates man’s permanent exit from the world. Generally, one assumes that death ends the sufferings from all earthly strives and travails, the question that surrounds the issue of death is that of what happens to that essence of living (soul) that has left man’s physical body. This issue is usually looked at from religious perspectives and often related to socio-cultural world-view of different societies. While some believe that death is the final end of man, whereby his body decomposes and becomes nutrients for the soil, others believe that man’s soul stays somewhere, waiting the great day that his creator will judge his actions on earth, which will merit his going into eternal bliss or endless agony in a place of torment. Others believe that the soul takes a new abode in another body after death, to pay for his misdeeds or be rewarded for his positive actions in the previous life. He gathers knowledge or reformations, which makes a current life an improvement over a previous one, until he becomes totally purified and can become a dweller with God in the ‘paradise’. The belief in life after death is waved away by Philippe Aries (1981) as a phase in the dynamic thinking about death, which belonged to the past.

Before the infiltration of foreign religions, the (African) Yorùbá of the South-West Nigeria, had (as still practice) their own Traditional (indigenous) Religion, with a belief in Olódumáre (God) the creator of all there are, and belief also in lesser divinities in the cosmos, who act as intermediaries between man and Olódumáre. The Yorùbá believe that ‘ayı̀ lojá, òrun ni ilé’ (earth is a market place, heaven is the real home), as such they see themselves as sojourners on earth, who can earn going back into the heavenly bliss through virtuous living on earth. This is why they sing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yorùbá</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>È má ṣikà làyé</td>
<td>Do not be wicked while living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torí a ó rórun</td>
<td>For we are returning to heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>È má ṣikà làyé oò</td>
<td>Do not be wicked while living please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torí a ó rórun ó</td>
<td>For we are returning to heaven surely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ti a bá dé bodè</td>
<td>When we get to the gate of heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A ó rojó…</td>
<td>We shall confess all our deeds.</td>
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The people know that ikú (death) is inevitable for all, but they do not take it to be the end of man. To them, there is àsèyìn wáyé (reincarnation); life after death (Ajibade 2017; Adeoye 1980). Returning to the world of the living after death is manifested in various ways in the Yorùbá belief. First is the death of babies or toddlers, re-occurring repeatedly to a particular parent; this is the àbìkú (born-to-die child/children) (Adeoye 1980:321; Kofoworọla 2015: 103). They are believed to belong to a fraternity and have pre-arranged times to die; as punishments for their parents (Johnson 2009:100-101). Various means are adopted to thwart the plans of the àbìkú, to prevent him/her from dying. Some of these are scarification on the corpse, burning or cutting off of some parts of the body like ear, fingers toes or nose. It is believed that when the àbìkú gets back to the members of his/her fraternity
in the coven, he/she will be sent back as a result of incomplete parts of the body, and as such will stay permanently with the parent till old age. There abound shared experiences of such children being born (again) with their bodies dark ‘as if burnt’, or with missing parts of the bodies that were cut in their previous incarnations\(^3\). The other type of reincarnation known to be believed among the Yorùbá is an ôjọ (untimely death) of a young man or woman in his or her prime, buried, only to be seen living (in another physical body) at a distant place from where he was known in a previous incarnation. This is referred to by the Yorùbá as Akúdááyà (one-who-was-dead-and-returns-to-live). Such beings are known to live normally, marry and have a normal family. The spouse however will not know that the wife/husband is a ‘living-dead’\(^4\). The type of burial given to a king, and to other people with physical deformities, also show that the Yorùbá believe in reincarnation. A dead Yorùbá king in the past for instance, is buried with food items, money, wives, servants and some of his chiefs. They are to accompany him to the new world and serve him therein. A hunch back is prevented form reincarnating in his deformed physical appearance, by being buried in a faraway thick forest, inside a large pot (instead of a coffin or wrapped with mat) and covered with another large one (pot)\(^5\).

The most desired reincarnation looked forward to among the Yorùbá is that of an old man or woman who dies (and ‘joins the ancestors’) and his/her soul reincarnates in the body of his or her grandchild\(^6\). In fact when such a grandfather or grandmother is being buried, one of the usual prayers offered at the graveside is ‘Baba/Mámá, má pẹ̀ẹ̀ kí ó tó wá yà lówó àwọn ọmọ rè o’ (Old man/old woman, do not tarry for too long before you reincarnate into the families of your children). A male child born after his grandfather (or great grandfather’s) death, is named Babáítíndé (Father returns) Babárinde, (Father walks back home) or Babáwáándé (Father has come to look for me). If a female is born after the death of a grandmother or great grandmother, she is named Ìyábò (Mother returns), Yétúndé (Mother is here again) or Yéwáándé (Mother has come to look for me). This type of reincarnation is called ìiyà ọmọ (returning as a child) or àtúnwá (fresh return).

Another evidence for the Yorùbá’s acceptance of reincarnation is the tradition of going to a diviner shortly after the birth of a child, to inquire about his/her ̀àkọséjáyé (primordial horoscope). This is done to ascertain which of the departed patriarchs or matriarchs of a family has reincarnated to the family, and the type of care to be given such a child. Abrádio (one who has returned, among the Akans of Ghana) and ìló ńwá (a return to the world) among the Igbo of Nigeria are evidences that belief in reincarnation may not be peculiar to the Yorùbá. Presently in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam apart from the (Indigenous) Traditional Religion of the people, are the two officially recognized religions. These two religions do not accept that there is reincarnation. In the literary creativity of the Yorùbá, authors and auteurs often portray the issue of reincarnation as a phenomenon for which the Yoruba have no doubt. Kèhìndé Àdébáyò-George, Yorùbá, forty-year-old London-based prolific Nollywood producer and actress, is the producer of Ayè Kejì (The other world). The major theme of the film is reincarnation. During a telephone interview\(^7\) with her, Kèhìndé Àdébáyò-George said the inspiration to write Ayè Kejì came as a result of stories she has heard from different quarters, including self-confessed stories of people who are strongly
convinced that they are not living here on earth for the first time. Though born into a Christian family, the producer said she no longer attends church worships because the Church has not been able to answer several questions that are on her mind. She claims to be a very spiritual person and non-biased about any religion, but is sure that there are many things to life than what meets the eye; things that science may not be able to explain.

The focus of this study therefore is to examine whether the belief in reincarnation is peculiar to the Yorùbá world-view alone or not, with exemplifications from Ayé Kejì (The second world); a selected film from the (Yorùbá) Nollywood; the Nigerian film industry\(^7\), using indigenous African thought system and philosophy as a frame work.

\textit{AYé KEJì: THE SYNOPSIS}

\textit{Eniolá} is the widow of Prince Adédayò. The couple has only one daughter; Rêmilékùn born after her father’s death. Eniolá is helped to a street near home one night by Prince Adéoyè; a total stranger, when her car breaks down. Rêmilékùn meets Adéoyè through Acôfa and Ániké her friends, and falls head over heels in love with him at the very first sight. They thereafter become close friends, but Adéoyè never makes love advances to her, and will not even accept her dressing up in his presence. These Rêmilékùn finds strange and queer, especially because Adéoyè treats her like his child. Eniolá and her daughter meet Adéoyè at a shopping mall later, and he volunteers to drive them home. Adéoyè sees late Adedayo and Eniolá’s photographs on their living room walls and he instantly confirms his suspicion that Eniolá and Rêmilékùn are his wife and daughter in his previous incarnation. Eniolá and Rêmilékùn initially find this strange and they tell him to look for a physician who can help him, for he is deranged. Adéoyè confirms his assertions by referring to the coconut tree outside the building which he planted on the day he died. Eniolá later accepts that Prince Adéoyè is a reincarnate of Prince Adedayo her late husband, and they start a relationship without ‘their’ daughter’s knowledge. Rêmilékùn finds out that her mother is dating ‘sick Prince Adéoyè’, who claims to be her ‘father’. She becomes distraught and highly disappointed. \textit{Olori}; Adéoyè’s mother, is eager to have her son married and asks him to bring his intended wife. Prince Adéoyè takes Eniolá who is by now pregnant, to meet his mother. Olori refuses to accept her because of the wide difference in their age. Adeoye insists that it is either Eniolá or no other woman. The king; his father, sends for \textit{Atupà} the diviner, to find out the truth about Adéoyè’s claim that he is a reincarnated being. The diviner confirms it and tells the king that Prince Adéoyè is destined to re-marry Eniolá his former wife, for the issue is the handiwork of \textit{Olođimàrè} (God). Eniolá gives birth to a boy as earlier postulated by late Prince Adédayo before his death and Prince Adéoyè is shown as the heir-apparent after his father’s translation. Rêmilékùn is convinced by the king about reincarnation she accepts Prince Adéoyè as her father and calls him ‘daddy’.

\textbf{ISLAMIC RELIGION AND REINCARNATION}

Islam refutes the notion of the soul of man reincarnating in another body in order to re-live and perform the good deeds which he did not do in an earlier incarnation. The only
Ma’ad (returning) in the Islamic belief is in resurrection for judgment after the first and only life of man. Shahzad Khurram⁸ traces the religious belief about reincarnation to ancient Greek and Egypt. In his view, the belief is refuted by all the main monotheistic religions of the world. The reason for the rejection is that if man has to go through many lives, on which life will he be judged on the day of reckoning?

Khurram quotes some quranic verses as evidences of the rejection of the belief in reincarnation. Quran chapter 23 verses 99-100 say:

When death comes to one of them he says “My Lord, send me back, so that I may do good deeds regarding what I have neglected” But no! These are just words he utters. A ‘barzakh’ (barrier) is placed behind them until the Day they are resurrected.

This means that Allah has put a barrier between the world of the living that of and the dead. Once a man dies, the only ma’ad he can experience is for judgment; he can never live another life on earth. Quran 4:11 appears to be talking of a return to life twice for it reads:

They said “Our Lord, twice you have put us to death and twice you have brought us to life; now we have confessed our sins, is there any way out?”

Khurram opines that this verse does not imply reincarnation at all. He says the first death took place in heaven where all were living previously, and where some of us lost our glory because we doubted Allah’s supremacy over Shytan. We therefore descended to earth in a rebirth, to find out for ourselves who is superior between Allah and Shytan. The quranic evidence quoted by Khurram is not in chronological order, but the essence of his view he claims, can be inferred from them. Some of these are; Quran 23:115, 67:1-2, 38:67-69, 33:72 and 24:11.

Khurram’s third argument is that each human being has an apportioned share in life, of what his or her experience will be, in accordance with God’s will (Quran 28:27) and this has nothing to do with actions in any ‘previous lives’. Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid⁸ shares the same view with Khurran. Shaykh al Munajjid says about reincarnation:

This is one of the falsest of false beliefs, and one of the worst form of Kufr or disbelief in Allah, His Book and His messengers. For belief in the Hereafter, the Reckoning, Paradise and Hell are among the things that are well-known in the teachings of the Messengers and in the Books which were revealed to them. Belief in reincarnation is tantamount to disbelief in all of that.
He also agrees that the book of Allah and the Sunnah of his messenger states that everyone will taste death and return to Allah (al-Ankabut 29:57). On the judgment day, Allah will gather the Muttaquoo (the pious) to glory like a delegation presented before the king for honour, but the Mujrimoon (polytheists, sinners, criminals, disbelievers in the oneness of Allah) shall be sent to Hell in a thirsty state (like a thirsty herd driven down to water) (Maryam 19:85-86). Khurram quoted earlier, opines that belief in reincarnation is an unseen contact with Jinns (demonic spiritual beings) who are negative. They are the ones who could be transferring such visions to humans; tricking us that we were once in a previous life. Essentially therefore, in Islamic view, all the (social) experience which were translated to film mode and brought to the fore that life is possible after death in Ayé Keji, are mere figments of imagination which cannot be substantiated. This means that when Prince Adédayo dies in the automobile accident, his soul does not enter into Ethiola his pregnant wife, but goes not straight to Barzakh, to await judgment by Allah on the last day.

In this study, we found out that there are some Islamic sects who belief in reincarnation. Asgharzadeh (2012) mentions the likes of Ikwan al-sofa (Ismailism), Hemarih, Tarih, the followers of Ahmad ibn Khadet and Shia Gulat. He also mentions some other ones who are more prominent in present times. Some of these are the Druze, Alawi, Ahl-e-Hagh and some Sufi orders. The Druze is of interest to us in this study. The Druze faith founded by Hamza and Al Hakun around 1017, is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion. Its beliefs are based on the teachings of high Islamic figures like Hamza ibn-Ahmad, Al Hakin bi-Amr Allah and Greek Philosophers like Plato, and Aristotle. The holy book of the faith is the Rasa’il al-hikmah (Epistles of wisdom). Druze has elements of Ismailism, Hinduism and other philosophies. The Druze religion follows theophany and believes in reincarnation or transmigration. To them, at the end of the cycles of rebirth through reincarnations the soul will be united with the Cosmic Mind (Al-Aq al-kulli). Though the faith has its origin in Ismaili Islam, they are not generally considered Muslims. Druze is however one of the major religious groups in the Levant. They have between Eight Hundred Thousand to One Million adherents. Predominantly, they are found in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and some parts of Jordan. They are also in Venezuela, United States of America, Canada, Australia and Germany. Seen as non-Muslims, the Druze faith is recently facing persecution through cleansing from the state of Iraq, the Levant and Al’Queda.

**CHRISTIAN VIEWS ABOUT REINCARNATION**

Any belief in reincarnation will be found to be contradictory to what is written in Hebrew 9:27 of the Christian (KJV) bible. It reads:

> It is appointed unto man to die once, but after this the judgment

Like Islam, it is believed in Christianity that after death, man’s soul returns to ‘purgatory’ where it awaits God’s judgment on the day of reckoning. The righteous will reign with Jesus Christ in paradise, while the non-believers will be sent to the everlasting lake of fire in hell,
where there will be wailings and gnashing of teeth, (Mathew 13:42, 25:30; Luke 13:28).

Peter and Ronald (1994:225-255) have pointed out six basic schools of thought about what happens to us when we die. This first among these is ‘Materialism’; whereby nothing survives when a man dies. These, the two scholars view as “a natural accompaniment to atheism”; a notion they claim to be prominent in industrialized nations. “Paganism” is what they tag another theory. Here, a vague, shadowy semi-self or ghost survives after death and goes to the abode of the dead; a dark gloomy underworld. This theory Peter and Ronald takes to be a pagan belief, the traces of which they claim can be found in Old Testament notion of “Sheol”. Another theory mentioned, is the belief that death changes nothing, as what survives death is the same as what was real before death, only the one changeless, eternal, perfect, spiritual, divine, all-inclusive Reality, sometimes called ‘Brahman’ remains. This theory is called “Pantheism”. ‘Immortality’ is the fourth theory pointed out by Peter and Ronald (1994). According to this theory, soul (the individual) survives death, but not the body. This soul eventually reaches its eternal destiny of heaven or hell, perhaps through immediate stages or perhaps through reincarnation. What survives is an individual, bodiless spirit. The two scholars see it as Platonism; often confused with Christianity. The last theory enumerated by the duo is called ‘Resurrection’, whereby at death, the soul separates from the physical body and it is re-united at the end of the world to its new, immortal, resurrected body by a divine miracle. This is the Christian view, ‘the supernatural resurrection of the body’, rather than the natural immortality of the soul alone. This is the only version of life after death in the Christian doctrine.

Thomas Ryan (2015) refers to a data released by Pew Forum on religion and public life in 2009, to the effect that not only do a quarter of Americans believe in reincarnation, twenty-four percent of American Christians expressed a belief in it. Ryan (2015) sees this as contravening Colossians 2:13-14 and 1 Timothy 1:15, where it is made explicit that Jesus has died for the redemption of the soul of man and as such man does not need to reincarnate to serve the punishments accrued in past life. Ryan also makes reference to a joint international declaration made in 1999 by the Catholic Mission and the Lutherans, on the issue of whether man is saved by his own virtuous efforts or by God’s grace; the heart of arguments on Reformation. Agreement was reached and declaration made, that man’s salvation is not by his own doing or the results of his efforts, rather, it is a gift of God’s grace.

To Ryan (2015) therefore, reincarnation is unnecessary; all that man needs is grace. Ryan however, does not give consideration to justice between a man who for instance, is murdered by another for no justifying reason. If the murderer is granted grace and he is accorded salvation, what happens to the murdered person, who was also created by God? Does it mean he has died in vain and will not be vindicated? Is God then just? Ryan opines that people who more or less accept reincarnation may never have really thought through its complications for other aspects of the Christian faith. To him, one cannot claim to believe in reincarnation without compromising the key tenets of the Christian faith, especially the “atonning role of Jesus’ life and death”. About this, he says:

…the critical role of grace and forgiveness, and the prospect of eternity with omnipresent embodied spirits resurrected, transformed and glorified.
The remark made by Jesus Christ in Mathew 11:7-14 about John the Baptist been the reincarnation of Elijah; an Old Testament prophet who was caught into the heavens in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), has been rejected by Christian scholars as an evidence of, and the possibility and recognition of reincarnation. Towns (2003), for instance, does not agree that the bible is in support of reincarnation. He dismisses the possibility of John the Baptist as a reincarnation of Elijah, firstly by arguing that Elijah the prophet did not die physically; he was taken to heaven alive in a chariot of fire. It is not possible therefore for a physical body that was not shed, to release its soul for habitation in another body. The second argument by Towns (2003) is that the statement “If you will believe, this is Elijah who is to come” is metaphoric. It means that John the Baptist has come in the spirit and power of Elijah, for just as Elijah served the purpose of proclaiming the ways of the Lord in the Old Testament, John the Baptist too came as a forerunner to proclaim the coming of Jesus Christ whom he baptized. The third argument is that Elijah appeared during the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain after the death of John the Baptist, if his soul had already reincarnated in another body, he would not have appeared. It means essentially therefore that the belief that if one dies untimely, with unfulfilled desires and ambition like Prince Adedayo does in Ayé Kejì, who before his death, tells Eniola his loving wife:

Ọmọ ọba ni mì, èmi nàà si maa jè ọba... Ọmọ méjì lo màá bi fùn mì, obinrin kan,
òkùnrin kan... Ti mo bá tún tún ayé wá, iwọ nàà ni ó
màá máa jè iyãwó mì...

(I am a Prince; I will definitely become a king... We are going to have two kids; a male and a female... Each time I reincarnate, you will always be my wife...)

as far as Christianity is concerned, are just wishful thinking that can never materialize. In this study, we found out that there had been attempts over the years by certain scholars to reconstruct the history of man’s past in his sojourn on planet Earth. Klimczak (2016) in a study about hidden beliefs in church, mentions that Origen (185-254 AD), suggested that soul exists before birth. This makes Adedayo’s soul which leaves his body at the point of death and relocates to Eniólá’s womb at the scene of the automobile crash that claims Adédéyò’s life, in Ayé Kejì, realizable. Klimczak also refers to the writing of Clement of Alexandria, a disciple of Peter the Apostle, suggesting that his master received few secret teachings from Jesus, one of which was “the concept of physical and spiritual rebirth...” There is a fragment which Klimczak claims to suggest that Jesus knew about reincarnation and past lives. She (Klimczak 2016) says that there has been major alteration in the bible during the early medieval period, about pre-existence and reincarnation as secret teachings by Jesus. In 553AD, this information was declared as heresy at the council of Constantinople. The declaration must have been due to the church’s fear of losing its grip over the believers, because reincarnation nullifies the belief in the existence of HELL; “a place of torment for
sinners who do not make paradise”. It was also a period of the Crusades; when believers were offering their possessions to the Church and fought in the name of Jesus. Any alteration or discovery of the ‘truth’ about death, heaven, hell and reincarnation, would affect their sincere devotion to the cause.

It is important to ascertain the truth or throw light on the diverse opinion about the reality of reincarnation, by examining what other (comparative) religions apart from the (African) Yorùbá Traditional/Indigenous Religion, Islam and Christianity have to offer as explanation or reasons behind the soul of a physically dead person entering into another body, to live again and be able to remember his or her experience in the earlier incarnation.

**COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS AND REINCARNATION**

‘Comparative study of religions’ is an academic discipline, developed within Christian theology faculties. It has the tendency of forcing widely differing phenomena into a kind of strait-jacket-cut to a Christian pattern. The problem is not only that ‘other religions’ may not have much to say about issues that are of burning interests for people generally, but that such other religions may not even see themselves as religions in precise manners like Christianity (de Lange Nicholas 1986). The fact remains however that philosophical and religious believes are a matter of personal conviction, as such, no philosophy, world-view or religion should claim to have perfect and unbeatable views about a phenomenon. The ancient Indian text, *Bhagavad Gita* (meaning “the song of the Lord”), is a seven hundred-verse Hindu scripture compiled by Vyasa and written in Sanskrit. It contains many key topics related to Indian intellectual and spiritual traditions. In Hinduism, it is believed that soul (Atma) is indestructible and eternal. At death, soul leaves the old body and enters into a new body and new birth takes place. The scripture reads:

> Just as the self, advances through childhood youth and old age in its physical body, so it advances to another body after death. The wise person is not confused by this change called death.  
(Bhagavad Gita 2, 13)

The process of shedding the ‘old garment’ in form of our physical bodies is likened thus in the same scripture:

> Just as the body casts off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so the infinite, immortal self-casts off worn out bodies and enters into the ones.  
(Bhavagad Gita 2, 22)

In Hinduism, reincarnation is for the payment of good and bad deeds and also to fulfill unfulfilled heart-felt desires. It is a wide belief in Hinduism that dedicated and deep
love for another human being; be it father, mother, brother, sister, child, friend, romantic partner, or even pets, can be the cause of reincarnation of human beings. This view is in support of the realization of the deep love he (Adéyò) has for Ònišà his wife and Rèmílèkùn his daughter. His reincarnation also makes it possible for him to fulfill his ambition of ascending his father’s throne, and giving birth to a son, as he predicted in his last incarnation. This is known as Maya (attachment) and it is what binds human beings to Samsara (returning to earth). To the Hindu religion, soul continues to reincarnate until it has learnt detachment from all desires, then it becomes one with the cosmic force (God).

In Buddhism like Hinduism, there is also a belief in reincarnation. The differences between the two are that in Buddhism, there is no belief in any externality and in destructiveness of soul. Their view is that state of existence for living beings occur again and again, meaning that rebirth follows the law of cause and effect relationship; because circumstances conducive to birth arise again and again. The Buddhists also believe in Nirvana – reaching oneness with the universal mind (the creator) through detachment from burning passion of desire, jealousy, hatred, greed, love, affection and ignorance, and also material and psychological desires.15

Taoism is a philosophical view of life and nature, whose religious fact is characterized by methods of life, health and mediation. Taoists use the term ‘transmigration’ for the return of a soul from a physically dead body, to another fresh one (body). To them, reincarnation does not have an end. It is a continuum, a coming and going that does not end. To Taoists, birth is not a beginning and death is not an end. They believe there is existence without limitation, there is continuity without a starting point. Chuang Tzu is quoted by Yulan Fung (2015) to have said:

Existence without limitation is Space. Continuity without a starting point is Time. There is birth, there is death, there is issuing forth, there is entering in. That through which one passes in and out without seeing its form, that is portal of God.

(Chuang Tzu 23)

In the course of this study, I came to know about Eckankar – The Part of Spiritual Freedom, after coming across Exploring Past Lives to Heal the Present written by Johnson Debbie in 2004. Johnson (2004) does not only believe in reincarnation, she says the knowledge about experiences of an earlier incarnation can assist in healing, in a present reincarnation. She claims to have been interested in reincarnation since the age of thirteen, because she had the feeling that she had lived before. Reading Morey Bernstein’s The Search for Bridey Murphy with its theory of “reincarnation by validating patients’ memories with research” (p. xii) got her to know that there are thousands of people who believe in reincarnation. Further enquiries by Johnson led her to Eckankar faith; a path she claims to be “a very ancient spiritual teaching streamlined for modern times”, under the leadership of its current leader – Sri Harold Klemp, the Mahanta, the living ECK Master. In Eckankar, life after death is seen as:
… The wheel of Awagawan – the coming and going, the agelong cycle of births and deaths, transmigration and reincarnation. (Shariat-Ki-Sugmad p.276)

The *Shariat-ki-Sugmad* (The way of eternal), the holy book of Eckankar, goes further on the mission of man in life and the place of reincarnation in it. It says:

The aim of man’s life on this earth is to set a limit to his reincarnations, for reincarnation is a lesson somewhat in the form of punishment, which soul is compelled to inflict upon Itself; for as long as It does not feel that it has reached purification, It cannot return to Sugmad (*God*). To attain the last phase, that is never to be born again upon this earth or within this planetary system, is the ideal. To be assured of eternal happiness, assured that the earth shall no longer behold Soul returning to cloak Itself once again in Its gross substance, is the goal of all who must live in this Pinda (*physical*) world. (*Shariat ki Sugmad* p. 277)

While it is believed in Christianity that only God’s grace and not just virtuous living that can earn man paradise, Eckankar, like Hinduism, claims that:

For all must know that none shall achieve absorption into the heart of the Sugmd by prayer alone, nor by good deeds, nor the motives of charity and love for one another. But not alone will any of those take soul to the heart of the Sugmad. Yet if anything can give help, it is detachment from materialism, the act itself, where one single deed or action is worth more than thousand good thoughts and can bring about that which takes soul into the heavenly world. (*Shariyat ki Sugmad* p. 277)

To Eckankar religion, what makes man to reincarnate severally are the five passions of the mind, which makes it impossible for him to learn LOVE. According to their holy book, the passions are Lust, Greed, Anger, Attachment and Vanity (p. 85). Viewing Prince Adédayo’s reincarnation as Prince Adéoyé in the film under study therefore, means that the current incarnation is as a result of the strong attachment which Adédayo had for his wife and daughter, his vain desire for the position of a king, his anger against the enemies who caused his death and probably the lust for, and the greedy lifestyle, usually associated with
monarchs. For while Ọniólá is afraid about the wealth Adédayọ her husband is entitled to as a prince, the large mansion they live in and their general high standard of living and says:

Wo ilé tì à ń gbè bó ń tó, my dear, èrù ń bà mí o
(See how big where we live is, my dear, I am afraid)

Adédayọ replies her with relish on his face that she needs not to worry. That he is used to such lifestyle and says:

Ọba ní bábá mì Èmi nàà màa jọba
(My father is a king I am going to be a king too).

AWARENESS AND CONFESSION OF REINCARNATIONS

Dr. Ian Stevenson (1987) studied several cases about children’s lives that are suggestive of reincarnations, but many see the phenomenon as dissociative personal disorder and cases of schizophrenia. Stevenson, in his quest about the possibility of the soul of a dead person entering into a fresh physical body and living again, had an interview with a Swami of the Rama Krishna order and the clergy confirms that:

Yes, it is true, but it does not make any difference, because in India, we have all believed in reincarnation and have accepted it as a fact and yet it makes no difference… Reincarnation is true and has to be acknowledged.

Johnson (2004) has opined that there are techniques or spiritual exercises that can be carried out, which will aid finding out facts about one’s past lives and their effects on present incarnations. In Yoga too, Patanjali claims that there are meditative techniques that can prove past-life recalls (Yoga-Sultra 3.18)17. These abilities to recall past incarnations have been rejected by many, especially Christian and Muslim clerics and apologists. This is on the grounds that the veracity of the information acquired in altered states of consciousness (especially with hypnotism) is doubtful. In Aye Keji under study, Prince Adéoyé (the incarnate of Prince Adédayọ) is not subjected to any form of altered state of consciousness before recalling his last incarnation. He is a grown up man; an eligible bachelor, who refuses to marry, and this bothers his mother. It is setting his eyes on Eniólá and Rěmilékún; his wife and daughter, which triggers his memory. This, he is able to confirm by giving Eniola and Rěmilékún a ride home from the shopping mall, where he sees late Prince Adédayọ and Eniólá’s photograph on the wall of the sitting room, and the coconut sprout he planted on the day he died in an automobile accident which has started bearing fruits. He confirms all these by reminding bewildered Ọniólá of her phobia for switching on refrigerators. Ọniólá is flabbergasted at how well Prince Adéoyé; a non-relation and total ‘stranger’, knows so much
about her last marriage and things happening around her. Essentially, it must be noted that a literary piece says a lot about the sociology of the people in the area where it is produced.

Case I

Obáfemi Adékünlé⁰ is a retired nursing officer. He had a cousin who was an albino, named Ídówú. Ídówú was accidentally shot one evening on his way home from his place of work – Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Ikenne, Ògun State, Nigeria. The unknown person who shot him ran away and Ídówú bled profusely overnight before he was rushed the next day to General Hospital Sagamu, Ògun State, Nigeria. The blood loss that he suffered was too much, so his life could not be saved. Before he died, he told his aunt who stayed with him while on admission in the hospital, that she should stop crying and not to worry, for he would return very soon from a journey he must embark on. He said when he returns, the pigmentation of his skin would be normal, but he would be recognized. Neither the aunt nor other relations that were there attached any seriousness to the postulation made by the dying albino. About two years after the incidence, Ídówú’s aunt was delivered of a very fair baby boy with dazzling eye balls like that of an albino. He was named Abiódún. On the back of the baby are three very dark spots; the exact places where late Ídówú received three gunshots. By three years old, Abiódún started to display queer behaviors. He saw the old bicycle which belonged to Ídówú and which he was very fond of, and he said:

Aaa! Kékè mi yii niyi. Ò tiè sì wà nibi. Óòò aago kékè mi yén niyi o. Òhun ní mo máá ń fì pe àwọn ọrẹ mi tì mo bá ti ń lọ si oko…

(Haa! My bicycle. It is even still in this place. Oh! The bell of my bicycle! This was what I used to beckon to my friends on my way to the plantation…)

Abiódún also remembered the clothes, shoes, wristwatches, alarm clock and other personal effects used by late Ídówú as ‘his belongings’. He was also very fond of adding extra salt to his food as a young boy, and when asked why he was doing that, he would reply:

E ó mò pé mi ó ki jé iyò lánnà yèn ni, óunjè mi ki í dün. Mo tí fè máa jé iyò dáadáá báyíi.

(Do you not remember that I was not eating much of salt yesterday, as such my food was not tasty. I am ready to be adding much salt to my food now.)

Abiódún’s parents were scared about his queer behaviors and these made them to consult diviners. They were advised to let him be, for he is late Ídówú, and that all the past-life
memories would wear away as he ages. The marks of the gun shots are still very visible on Abiódún’s back to date and of this he is aware. In a telephone conversation with Abiódún, he confirms that his parent recounted the said memories to him at about twenty years old and that the marks are on his back truly. However, Abiódún claims that he does not believe in reincarnation, “since the bible does not support it and moreover I am a Pastor.” Asked why he chose to go into agriculture as a Professional Accountant, a vocation wherein he is doing very well, he says he just love agriculture naturally and it does not have anything do with a past life.

Case II

His Imperial Majesty, Èniítàn Babátúndé Ògúnwùsì; the Oòni of Ifẹ\(^1\); the highest monarch in Yoruba land, is a self-confessed incarnate of a person who most probably must have been an earlier Oòni, or a prince in Ifẹ palace in the past. This is because the monarch was quoted to have said:

… Very strange and magical things happen… I think I am a reincarnated spirit. My name is Èniítàn… with a spiritual meaning: a child of history and mystery. I bear Babátúndé, and Yorùbá believe in reincarnation. In Ifẹ now, I’ll tell them something was in existence here before and I’ll bring experts, anthropologists and archeologists, and we will continue to dig… So far, we have seen a lot of mysteries… I sleep and remember things that have happened in another world to me and I bring them to reality when I wake up. I believe I have existed before… There is life beyond what we see…\(^2\)

Case III

On my way to Lagos from Ògò-Ìwòyè about three months ago, I was in the same commercial car with four other passengers. I intentionally started a conversation, geared towards return of the dead as new-born babies. Chief Olugboye’s experience is the most relevant to this study\(^3\). He said he loved his mother dearly and was very sad when she died about fifty-six years ago, when he was a young man. He got married later and his wife gave birth to a girl who is the exact replica of his late mother. This made him happy and he named the girl Toyin – one of his late mother’s names. At about four years old, Toyin called her father one afternoon and said:

Má jẹ́ kí n bínú síẹ́ o. Mí ò fè bí o ẹ́ sẹ́ ma ò gbá mí lábára yẹn o. Sẹ́ o ọ́ mọ́ pé émi ní mìmá ẹ́ ní...? Tí o bá dé ọ̀rùrà mí ní ọko, wa ilé léyìn ilékùn mí, kí o jẹ́ kí ì jín
Chief Olúgbọyègá said he was shocked initially, and after few minutes, he apologized for beating his ‘mother’ and the little girl rubbed her two palms on his head. He went to the family village and did as he was instructed. Lo and behold, there he found many expensive traditional beads that he and his siblings knew that their mother owned, but could not find after her death. The beads were sold and the money was used to open a bank account for Toyin. Today, Toyin is an accountant with a communication firm in Lagos. Asked if Toyin could be reached for an interview, Chief Olugboyega said she does not like discussing the issue, especially with non-relations, more so now that she is a pastor’s wife.

Case IV

Chibuzor Williams, forty-two years old, is from Delta State Nigeria. He sells electronic wares in Benin. I met him in a wedding reception in Lagos Nigeria. Here is what he said about reincarnation:

As you see me here, I believe in reincarnation. My mother told me I was born before and when I became sixteen, I died in the river when I went to swim with my friends. Later my mother-born me again… I remember that when I was a small boy, I knew so many things that people were always asking me how I came to know about them. The reason is that those things were very familiar to me… like my clothes, my school books, my local toys, friends and things like that…Now I do not like going near rivers. I don’t join friends to go to beaches. If I do, I will have goose flesh all over my body… I do not remember those things again, but sometimes I would see some faces and have strong feelings that I have seen then before. My mother
reminded me that then; I had flair for electrical things…like joining wires, making torches, electric toy cars and stuffs like that. May be that is why I am an electrical engineer today. I have Higher National Diploma in it. All these have not affected me negatively today at all. I am happy doing what I am doing. Returning to life is nothing bad. I am a Christian. I pray and my prayers are answered. Reincarnation is not a lie…

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have foregrounded that the Yorùbá of South-Western Nigeria believe in reincarnation. Examining Christianity and Islamic faiths; the two most recognized (foreign) religions in Nigeria, we found out that both of them do not recognize reincarnation. Both religions see anyone who believes or accord the phenomenon any recognition as a sinner or Kafr, who is due for eternal condemnation. However, apart from the fact that a large number of adherents to both faiths are interested and do believe in reincarnation, a quest into some brands/sects of Christianity and Islam show that they believe in living after death. We have pointed also, to the fact that other ‘comparative’ religions like Taoism, Hindinism, Buddhism and Eckankar, all believe that soul reincarnates in a fresh (physical) body severally after death, to become part of the creative force (often called God), after it has become pure by dropping all baggages of undue attachment and thereby attain knowledge except for Buddhism that sees reincarnation as a continuing. Furthermore, our findings reveal that at the beginnings of both Christianity and Islam, there appeared to have been teachings/knowledge of reincarnation (albeit as an esoteric issue), but were withdrawn, in order to force the belief in the existence of Hell into the followers’ psyche, in order to sustain their adherence, for ethical and financial commitments, to the religions and the society generally. It is my summation that reincarnation is a simpler and more meaningful explanation for the reason behind the existence/creation of man. It shows that man is on his sojourn on earth to gain knowledge and learn perfection in order to be God-like. He keeps repeating his ‘class’, until he has learns what is takes to attain perfection. “Grace” to enter ‘paradise’ at the ‘whims and caprices of God’, does not show that God is just; if virtuos living and inter-relationship with fellow men does not count. Does it mean then that vices can be written off? It will be totally unfair if a wronged person does not receive indication at the end of life. The only plausible way to settle the score is by meeting again as reincarnated souls. Islam and Christianity for instance may not be able to explain how come a new baby may be born blind, lame, deaf or dumb. Is God wicked? Is the new baby being punished for his sins or that of his innocent parent? It is my opinion that as the general level of spiritual consciousness and rational thinking of man continues to expand, the concealed truth in some quarters about man’s spirituality, his purpose on earth and what his ultimate end must be, will become clearer to more people than the Yoruba Traditional Religion and other comparative Religion adherents.
NOTES


2. Known as ogbanje among the Igbo and as amanakpa among the Efik tribes in Nigeria.

3. Dr. Akanni, 55 years old and a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria, told me about an itàbíkú in his compound while growing up. The child died and his left outer ear was severed from his body before burial only to be re-born three years after, with his outer left ear missing. The new child was named Malomó (Do not go again). The young man is about 46 years old now.

4. Madam Símótu Badru, 86 years old, of Araromi Area Ikire, Osun State, Nigeria, told me about such ânciaìrìàìáì: Kóládè. Kóládè died at about 33 years old in Gbóján (also in Osun State, Nigeria) and was buried some year later. A woman and three children come to take Kóládè’s parent’s house, to tell them that she is Kóládè’s wife and presented the three children as those of Kóládè. Asked where Kóládè was, she told them that they all arrived together from Accra that evening, and he, Kóládè, was across the road chatting with some of his old friends. Kóládè’s relations searched the whole town and could not find him. The wife was shocked when shown Kóládè’s grave, for she showed them Kóládè’s photographs and they confirmed that late Kóládè is the one in the photographs. The wife and children are said to be alive and living normally after given traditional treatment.

5. The earth is dug for putting the pots, and left in the open, for the corpse to rot.


7. The telephone interview took place around 11.00am on 4th May, 2018

8. See www.quran_Islam.org/articles/reincarnation_theory-(P1170)


10. https://reincarnation.quoran.wordpress.com


13. www.ancient-origins.net/history/hiddren-beliefs-covered-chruch


16. Know before now as “The Religion of Light and Sound”. Light and sound are taken to be the two attributes of God, by which IT can contact man.

17. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga-Sutras-of-Patanjali

18. Adékúlé Ọgbáfémí is 64 years old. The discussion took place in his residence; 9A Ogunfowora Street, Qta Area, Ijebu-Ode, on 21st of March, 2018.

19. Ifé, presently in Oṣun State, Nigeria, is the historic cradle of the Yorùbá


21. Chief Olugboyega is 76years old. He lives in Araromi village, Ogun State. The discussion was on 17th February, 2018.
REFERENCES

Appendix

The informants were interviewed by Marshella the student of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities University of Buddhi Dharma Tangerang.

Name: Hendra Lim
Place and date of birth: Tangerang, November 1st 1979
Age: 40 years old
Sex: Male
Address: Sewan, Tangerang

He is the Tionghoa activist. He gets the knowledge about Cio Tao from the book because he is a lecture of Tionghoa Courses. The writer was interviewed by Marshella the students of English Department Faculty of Social Science and Humanities Universitas Buddhi Dharma Tangerang at April 28th, 2019.

Name: Kwee Keng San
Place and date of birth: Tangerang, November 11th 1973
Age: 46 years old
Sex: Male
Address: Kosambi Timur, Tangerang

He is the Chinese-Benteng society. He gets the knowledge about Cio Tao from his father. The informant was
interviewed by Marshela at May 1st, 2019.