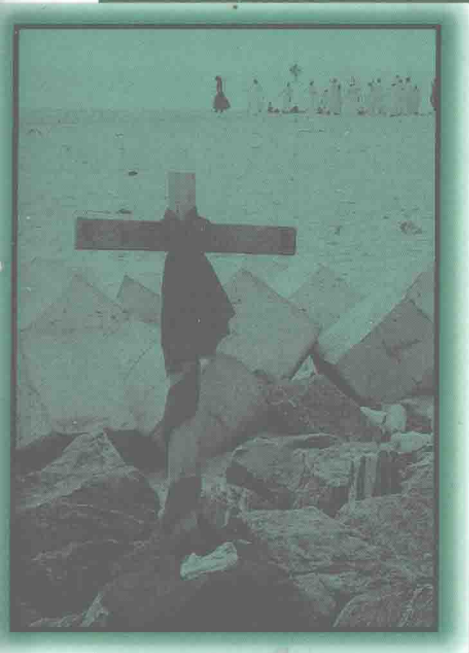




ASHGATE



**AFRICAN
TRADITIONS IN
THE STUDY OF
RELIGION,
DIASPORA AND
GENDERED
SOCIETIES**

**Edited by
Afe Adogame,
Ezra Chitando
and
Bolaji Bateye**

African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies

Essays in Honour of Jacob Kehinde Olupona

Edited by

AFE ADOGAME

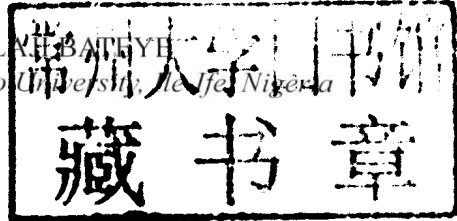
University of Edinburgh, UK

EZRA CHITANDO

University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe

BOLANLE BATHYAI

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria



ASHGATE

© Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, Bolaji Bateye and the contributors 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando and Bolaji Bateye have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editors of this work.

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Adogame, Afeosemimo U. (Afeosemimo Unuose), 1964–

African traditions in the study of religion, diaspora and gendered societies. –
(Vitality of indigenous religions)

1. Africa – Religion – Study and teaching – Africa. 2. Religion and social problems – Africa. 3. Christianity and other religions – African.

I. Title II. Series III. Chitando, Ezra. IV. Bateye, Bolaji.

200.9'6'07–dc23

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

African traditions in the study of religion, diaspora and gendered societies / edited by Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando and Bolaji Bateye.

p. cm. – (Vitality of indigenous religions)

“Book two.” “Essays in honour of Prof. Jacob Kehinde Olupona.” Companion volume to: African traditions in the study of religion in Africa / edited by Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, Bolaji Bateye. Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2012.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4094-4614-9 (hardcover : alk. paper) – ISBN 978-1-4094-4615-6 (ebook)

1. Nigeria – Religion. 2. Africa – Religion. 3. Religion – Social aspects – Nigeria. 4. Religion – Social aspects – Africa. 5. Women and religion – Africa.

6. African diaspora – Religious aspects. I. Adogame, Afeosemimo U. (Afeosemimo Unuose), 1964– II. Chitando, Ezra. III. Bateye, Bolaji. IV. Olupona, Jacob K. (Jacob Kehinde), 1951– V. African traditions in the study of religion in Africa. VI. Series:

Vitality of indigenous religions.

BL2470.N5A34 2012

200.9669–dc23

ISBN 9781409446149 (hbk)

ISBN 9781409446156 (ebk – PDF)

ISBN 9781472404299 (ebk – ePUB)



Printed and bound in Great Britain by the
MPG Books Group, UK.

AFRICAN TRADITIONS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION, DIASPORA AND GENDERED SOCIETIES

The historiography of African religions and religions in Africa presents a remarkable shift from the study of 'Africa as Object' to 'Africa as Subject', thus translating the subject from obscurity into the global community of the academic study of religion. This book presents a unique multidisciplinary exploration of African Traditions in the Study of Religion, Diaspora and Gendered Societies. The book is structured under two main sections. Part I provides insights into the interface between Religion and Society. Part II features African Diaspora together with Youth and Gender which have not yet featured prominently in studies on religion in Africa.

Contributors drawn from diverse African and global contexts situate current scholarly traditions of the study of African religions within the purview of academic encounter and exchanges with non-African scholars and non-African contexts. African scholars enrich the study of religions from their respective academic and methodological orientations. Jacob Kehinde Olupona stands out as a pioneer in the socio-scientific interpretation of African indigenous religion and religions in Africa and the new African Diaspora. This book honours his immense contribution to an emerging field of study and research.

VITALITY OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS

Series Editors

Graham Harvey, Open University, UK,
Afeosemime Adogame, The University of Edinburgh, UK
Ines Talamantez, University of California, USA

Ashgate's *Vitality of Indigenous Religions* series offers an exciting new cluster of research monographs, drawing together volumes from leading international scholars across a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. Indigenous religions are vital and empowering for many thousands of indigenous peoples globally, and dialogue with, and consideration of, these diverse religious life-ways promises to challenge and refine the methodologies of a number of academic disciplines, whilst greatly enhancing understandings of the world.

This series explores the development of contemporary indigenous religions from traditional, ancestral precursors, but the characteristic contribution of the series is its focus on their living and current manifestations. Devoted to the contemporary expression, experience and understanding of particular indigenous peoples and their religions, books address key issues which include: the sacredness of land, exile from lands, diasporic survival and diversification, the indigenization of Christianity and other missionary religions, sacred language, and re-vitalization movements. Proving of particular value to academics, graduates, postgraduates and higher level undergraduate readers worldwide, this series holds obvious attraction to scholars of Native American studies, Maori studies, African studies and offers invaluable contributions to religious studies, sociology, anthropology, geography and other related subject areas.

OTHER TITLES IN THE SERIES

African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa
Emerging Trends, Indigenous Spirituality and the Interface with other World Religions

Edited by Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando and Bolaji Bateye

ISBN 978 1 4094 1970 9

Mobility, Markets and Indigenous Socialities
Contemporary Migration in the Peruvian Andes

Cecilie Vindal Ødegaard

ISBN 978 1 4094 0454 5

Blackfoot Religion and the Consequences of Cultural Commoditization

Kenneth Hayes Lokensgard

ISBN 978 0 7546 6826 8

List of Contributors

Olutayo Charles Adesina is Professor of History at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He has held many distinguished academic fellowships, including Salzburg Seminar, Austria; Charles Warren Center, Harvard University; Rhodes Chair of Race Relations, Oxford University; and Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. He was the founding editor of the *Nigerian Journal of Economic History*. He is co-editor of *Globalization and Transnational Migrations: Africa and Africans in the Contemporary Global System* (2009), and *Marginality and Crisis: Globalization and Identity in Contemporary Africa* (2010).

Oluwakemi Abiodun Adesina teaches at Osun State University, Osun State, Nigeria. She holds B.A. (Hons.), M.A., and Ph.D. History degrees from the University of Ibadan. Her fields of research interests include women's history, social and economic change, migrations, and international prostitution. She has had several distinguished fellowships including Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois (2004); Cadbury Fellow, Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham (2005). She has published in local and international journals and books.

Afe Adogame teaches Religious Studies and World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh. He is the General Secretary of the African Association for the Study of Religion (AASR). He has published extensively in journals and books. His most recent publications are (joint ed.) *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora* (2010) and (ed.) *Who is Afraid of the Holy Ghost?: Pentecostalism and Globalization in Africa and Beyond* (2011).

Dorcas Olu Akintunde was Senior Lecturer and former Head of Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She was a dedicated member of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians. She published in local and international journals. She was an African Fellow at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, in 2009.

Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo is a MacArthur Fellow and a Senior Lecturer in Religious Ethics and Interreligious Conflict Management and Peace Building, Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is the acting Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan.

Bolaji Bateye lectures in the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. She is a Resource Person at the OAU Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies and also co-editor of the *Journal of Gender and Behaviour*. She served as a Leventis Scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Dr Bateye has carried out fieldwork on Health, Healing and African immigrant religiosity in the UK and in the USA.

Ulrich Berner is Professor and Chair of the Department for the Study of Religion, University of Bayreuth, Germany. His main interests are European Religious History, African Religions, and method and theory in the study of religion. He is also a principal investigator in the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS).

Ezra Chitando is Associate Professor in History and Phenomenology of Religion in the Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe. His research and publication interests include the mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS in African Religious Studies and Theology, method and theory in the study of religion, and religion and gender. He has published on these themes in various journals and books.

Samson Adetunji Fatokun is a Senior Lecturer in Church History and Pentecostal Studies at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His fields of expertise include African Christianity, historical theology, early church history and doctrine, African Pentecostalism, and New Religious Movements in Africa.

Musa Barnabas Gaiya has been teaching Church History and Muslim—Christian relations at the University of Jos, Nigeria since 1990. He is presently involved in a two-year project on the social and religious engagements of Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in West Africa, sponsored by the Templeton Foundation, USA.

Danoye Oguntola Laguda teaches in the Department of Religions at Lagos State University, Nigeria. He is a member of many professional associations, including American Academy of Religion, African Association for the Study of Religion, and Nigeria Association for the Study of Religions (NASR). His research interests include religion and conflict, religion and politics, religion and social changes, and religions in Africa. Laguda has published in several local and international journals.

Janice McLean (Ph.D.) is on the faculty of City Seminary, New York, USA. Her publications include “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord: Music and Songs within Pentecostal West Indian Immigrant religious communities in Diaspora,” *Studies in World Christianity* (2007); “Mission perspectives among Pentecostal West Indian religious communities in New York City and London: By my Spirit says the

Lord,” in Stephen Spencer (ed.), *Mission and Migration* (2008); and the co-edited *Understanding World Christianity: The Life and Vision of Andrew F. Walls* (2011).

Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome is a Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. She is past President of the African Studies Research and Forum. In February 2000, Mojubaolu was one of three co-chairs of the New York State delegation to the National Summit on Africa, and led the second-largest delegation to the Summit in Washington, DC. She has published *A Sapped Democracy: The Political Economy of the Structural Adjustment Program and the Political Transition in Nigeria, 1983–1993* (1998), as well as various journal articles and book chapters in the areas of her research interests. She is the founder and editor of the online peer-reviewed journal, *Ìrìnkèrindò: a Journal of African Migration*.

Elisha P. Renne is professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Department for Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Her research focuses on gender relations, religion and textiles, politics and health, and the anthropology of development, specifically in Nigeria. Her publications include *Cloth That Does Not Die* (1995), *Population and Progress in a Yoruba Town* (2003), and *The Politics of Polio in Northern Nigeria* (2010).

Lucas Nandih Shamala has a Ph.D. from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology. He is an Assistant Professor, African and African American Studies at the Metropolitan State College of Denver. He is the Founder of the SAFI (Support Africa Empowerment Foundation International) NGO.

Abel Ugba is a senior Lecturer in the School of Arts and Digital Industries, University of East London, London. His academic qualifications include an M.A. in journalism (DCU, Dublin) and a Ph.D. in Sociology (Trinity College, Dublin). His journalism career began in mid-western Nigeria in the mid-1980s and he has worked as a sub-editor for and contributor to newspapers in Nigeria, Germany, and Ireland. Abel’s research interests include immigrants’ religious and media practices, media and religion, and media and transnationalism. His publications include *Shades of Belonging: African Pentecostals in Twenty-First Century Ireland* (2009).

Preface

Ulrich Berner

It is a pleasure writing a preface to this collective volume published in honor of Jacob Olupona. Space does not allow me to give a comprehensive overview on his contribution to the study of African religions worldwide, with regard to all his publications. Therefore, I shall limit my focus to his contribution to the emergence and development of the study of African religions in my university.

Professor Olupona joined my department at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, for a period of time, about twenty years ago. Although it was rather a short period, his presence had a lasting impact on the development of this department which had been established just a few years earlier. During his stay at Bayreuth University, he was working on a collective volume on *Religion and Society in Nigeria* (1990), co-edited with his colleague Toyin Falola, a historian. This combined an historical perspective with a broad view of the contemporary religious field in Africa. Also at that time he was preparing the publication of his doctoral thesis: *Kingship, Religion and Rituals in a Nigerian Community* (1991). The subtitle of that book—*A Phenomenological Study of the Ondo Yoruba Festivals*—does not reveal the broad range of his methodological approach. He draws on various disciplines, going much beyond traditional phenomenology, as, for instance, by providing descriptions of the kinship system and of economic life—themes that would have been neglected by phenomenology but emphasized in the anthropology and sociology of religion. It is this combination of historical, phenomenological, anthropological, and sociological approaches that has been a model for the study of African religions at the University of Bayreuth.

Jacob was also instrumental in developing his approach to the study of African religions at Bayreuth University, by recommending and sending Nigerian students and scholars to join my department for Ph.D. studies and to teach about African religions. Afe Adogame, one of the editors of this book and a former student of Jacob's at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, was the first Nigerian doctoral student in my department. Afe completed his Ph.D. in 1998 and then taught at Lagos for a couple of years before rejoining my university as a teaching and research fellow in 2000. Afe, in turn, recommended Asonzeh Ukah, who completed his Ph.D. in 2004 and has been teaching at Bayreuth, with an emphasis on "religion and the media," since then. Jacob also recommended the late Professor Ogbu Kalu, his former teacher at Nsukka, who spent half a year at Bayreuth as a visiting professor (1999/2000) on an invitation by the Institute of African Studies. I would also like to mention Umar Danfulani from the University of Jos, Nigeria, and Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, one of the editors of

this book, both of whom came to Bayreuth for a period of one year, on Humboldt fellowships. So there is a strong tradition of African scholarship in my department in Germany, resulting from Jacob's activities during his short stay at Bayreuth University, twenty years ago.

ULRICH BERNER
Chair of Religious Studies I (Lehrstuhl Religionswissenschaft I)
Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Bayreuth, Germany

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	ix
<i>Preface (Ulrich Berner)</i>	xiii

Introduction: African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Contending with Gender, the Vitality of Indigenous Religions, and Diaspora	1
<i>Ezra Chitando, Afe Adogame, and Bolaji Bateye</i>	

PART I: RELIGION AND SOCIETY, RELIGION IN SOCIETY

1	Approaches to Peacemaking in Africa: <i>Obuntu</i> Perspectives from Western Kenya	13
	<i>Lucas Nandih Shamala</i>	
2	Religious Pluralism and Secularization in the Nigerian Religious Sphere	25
	<i>Danoye Oguntola Laguda</i>	
3	Faith, Spiritualism, and Materialism: Understanding the Interfaces of Religion and the Economy in Nigeria	35
	<i>Olutayo Charles Adesina</i>	
4	Toward a Civil Religion in Nigeria	47
	<i>Musa Barnabas Gaiya</i>	
5	The Implications of Ancestral Veneration Manifesting in National Symbols for National Integration and Moral Transformation in Nigeria	61
	<i>Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo</i>	
6	The Concept of Expiatory Sacrifice in the Early Church and in African Indigenous Religious Traditions	71
	<i>Samson Adetunji Fatokun</i>	

PART II: DIASPORA, YOUTH, AND GENDER DYNAMICS

7	Researching African Immigrant Religions: Boundaries, Belonging, and Access <i>Abel Ugba</i>	85
8	<i>Ainí obinrin kò seé dáké lásán, bí a dáké lásán, enu níí yo ní:</i> Women's Leadership Roles in Aládürà Churches in Nigeria and the USA <i>Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome and Elisha P. Renne</i>	99
9	The Place of Second-Generation Youth in West Indian Pentecostalism in the Diaspora—New York City and London <i>Janice McLean</i>	115
10	Religion and Masculinities in Africa: An Opportunity for Africanization <i>Ezra Chitando</i>	133
11	Rethinking Women, Nature, and Ritual Purity in Yoruba Religious Traditions <i>Bolaji Bateye</i>	147
12	The Impact of Christian Women's Organizations on Nigerian Society <i>Dorcas Olu Akintunde</i>	163
13	The Northern Nigerian Muslim Woman: Between Economic Crisis and Religious Puritanism <i>Oluwakemi Abiodun Adesina</i>	175
	<i>Index</i>	189

List of Figures

- | | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 2.1 | This demonstrates the religious landscape of Nigeria. Where Islam and Christianity dominates ATR based on the 2007 population census in Nigeria. | 28 |
| 2.2 | This is a representation of “needs” of individual(s) that cut across the three dominant religious traditions in Nigeria. This will suggest that syncretism could be due to “needs” of individuals or groups. | 31 |
| 2.3 | Nigerian Religious Situation—Pluralism | 32 |

Introduction

African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Contending with Gender, the Vitality of Indigenous Religions, and Diaspora

Ezra Chitando, Afe Adogame, and Bolaji Bateye

All the planners of the study of religions should take a hard look at the lack of women scholars in the profession. It is a disgrace to this profession that men keep on writing Ph.D. theses on women and religion. When indeed, some of the best students in the undergraduate programme are young women who are anxious to do graduate work in religion. Two problems are responsible for this. There is still a cultural bias against women's participation in university teaching jobs. Indeed, Religious Studies Departments have some of the most conservative teachers any university will ever see—they of course also have some of the most progressive! (Olupona 1996: 205)

“Bringing those absent” has become an urgent undertaking within the academic study of religion in Africa. The citation above captures the frustration of one of the continent's leading male practitioners in the field. Jacob K. Olupona has battled to ensure that the study of religion accommodates women in a fundamental way. He has sought to undermine its patriarchal foundations by promoting female African scholars of religion. Unfortunately, the picture that he painted decades ago still obtains, to a large extent. The eloquent silence of women haunts the discipline. Women have been rendered invisible at two critical levels: first, as researchers and teachers of religion, and secondly, by not having their voices heard as the focus of research. The discipline of religious studies in Africa, as indeed elsewhere in the world, remains preoccupied with male interests and methodologies. The interface with women's studies has yet to transform the discipline in a profound manner (Sharma 2002).

Despite the massive odds staked against them, female African scholars of religion have refused to allow male scholars to speak on their behalf as if they were dead. Individually and collectively, they have ensured that gender is placed firmly on the agenda of religious studies in Africa. Dealing with existential issues such as violence, HIV and AIDS (Phiri and Nadar 2006) and other themes, they have provided a promising foundation for the Africanization of the discipline. Perhaps due to the fact that, for them, the study of religion is directly linked to their situation of marginalization, female African scholars are well placed to contribute to the emergence of African traditions in the study of religion in Africa.

In our own understanding, the Africanization of religious studies implies that the discipline reflects seriously on its African context, takes on board African issues, and has an African flavour or outlook. Consequently, African scholars of religion need to continue to belong to the global community of scholars (since Africans are an integral part of the human family), but they must be painfully conscious of their identity as Africans. It is this political commitment to Africa that is at the heart of the quest to Africanize the study of religion. Addressing issues that concern Africans is thus an integral part of the Africanization process. The emergence of African traditions in the study of religion in Africa depends on this unwavering focus on African issues. As we have argued, female African scholars are poised to make, and are making, a significant contribution to this quest.

Storming Strongholds: Female African Scholars of Religion

It is critical to note that without the courage and commitment of female African scholars of religion, the theme of gender would not be finding its way into the curricula of departments of religious studies in Africa. As Olupona has noted, most of these departments are “manned” (see Muchemwa and Muponde 2007) by highly conservative males. In many instances, the men who man departments of religious studies are the same men who wield power in church circles. In both set-ups, they have resisted the advancement and ordination of women. Employing the rhetoric of “African cultural authenticity,” they charge that women who are clamouring for gender justice are uncritical consumers of “Western cultural decay.” “Decent African women,” they contend, “know their place!” Regrettably, this place is supposed to be under the feet of men!

Female African scholars of religion face formidable odds. To begin with, both colonial and missionary education tended to promote the education of the boy child. In line with the patriarchal ideologies that permeate biblical, Western, and African cultures, it seemed “natural” that the boy child received preferential treatment in the area of education. As Susan Rakoczy has observed: “In patriarchy the male is the norm and women are understood to be inferior in every way: biologically, intellectually, anthropologically, socially. Women—all women, every woman—are inherently of less value than any male human being” (2004: 10). The net effect was the marginalization of the girl child in the formal education system.

In an informative essay, Isabel Phiri (2009) has examined the major challenges for African women theologians in theological education in Africa. The factors that she identifies for women theologians also apply to female African scholars of religion. These include male dominance in institutions and the attendant marginalization of women. Limited scholarships, unfair recruitment and employment practices (for example, many women lecturers are on short-term contracts), and the absence of an engendered curriculum are some of the key factors.

Despite the heavy odds, female African scholars have managed to bring the theme of religion and gender to the fore. Whereas previously African male scholars

were the sole authorities on religion in Africa, including women's religious experiences, the rise to prominence of female African scholars in the 1990s has changed the landscape. Female African scholars have sought to remind researchers that African male scholars are "outsiders" in relation to African women's religious experiences. They have also exposed patriarchal assumptions in indigenous cultures and how these often get transferred to departments of religious studies (Nadar 2008–09).

The presence of female African scholars has enriched the academic study of religion. We anticipate that their vibrancy will increase the pace towards Africanization. As we alluded to above, female African scholars have been keen to tackle existentially pressing issues. More importantly, they have granted space for African women to articulate their religious experiences. This is vital as women represent the most vibrant religious constituency in Africa. In his Foreword to Olajubu's *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, Olupona acknowledges the vitality that female African scholars of religion bring to the discipline. He writes:

We are at a very critical time in the history of religions and gender studies in Africa. African nations, and particularly African universities, are obscuring the call from several quarters, both national and international, to recognize the tremendous role of women in the society. Most importantly, Africans are obscuring the call to provide space in the academy for women to tell their own stories, rather than for men to pontificate on their perceptions of women's religious experiences. (Olupona 2003: vii)

Male scholars of religion such as Olupona, who, by word and deed, demonstrate commitment to the engendering of the discipline, are a powerful resource for the quest to Africanize the discipline. Since gender properly refers to socially defined relations between women and men in a given society, it is critical for male scholars of religion to appreciate the urgency of applying gender as an analytical tool to the study of African religions. As they reflect on their privileged status, African male scholars of religion must recognize and contribute to African women's struggle for inclusion in the discipline, as well as to the overall quest for gender justice on the continent (Chitando 2010). By joining forces with female scholars of religion, male scholars will ensure that African traditions in the study of religion in Africa thrive.

Abiding Traditions: The Vitality of African Indigenous Religions

Alongside the turn towards gender that we outlined in the foregoing section, the Africanization of religious studies will continue to be reflected by the space granted to African Indigenous Religions in the curricula of African institutions of higher learning. Again, Olupona has been an inspiring leader in this quest. His teaching, research, and publications on African Indigenous Religions have been highly informative. Urging researchers to go "beyond primitivism" (Olupona 2004), he

has maintained that indigenous religions have not been forced into oblivion by the onslaught by modernity. Instead, these religions remain vibrant and provide “worlds to live by” to millions of their followers.

In line with Olupona’s insights, Africanization will entail African scholars placing priority on African issues and concerns. In pursuit of this ideal, they will need to have the courage to investigate the vitality of indigenous religions in their own contexts, without somehow feeling that they need to seek the approval of “big brothers/sisters” operating from metropolitan centers. Obviously, they have to be mindful of the general bias about the capacity of Africans to undertake serious academic study. Africa remains an enigma to many researchers. Thus: “Owing to centuries of negative discourse on Africa, current discourse on Africanisation is conducted in the midst of several historical, ideological, theological and contemporary landmines. Historically and ideologically, Africa has been represented as the ‘dark continent’...” (Maluleke 2010: 371).

Against the background of a negative discourse on Africa as outlined by Maluleke above, African scholars publishing on indigenous religions have to be careful to avoid reinforcing negative perceptions and stereotypes. Although the debate on terminology continues to evolve, it is vital for African scholars to employ terms that do not perpetuate negative images of the continent and its religions. The process of Africanization necessarily involves the quest to promote value-free and accurate descriptions of African religious phenomena. African scholars have to jettison disempowering and misleading labels of African Indigenous Religions. This will enable African traditions in the study of religion in Africa to gain ground.

As part of the process of decolonization and Africanization, African scholars working in the field of African Indigenous Religions have to assert their methodological independence. This is a very sensitive area as the trend has been to portray African scholars as blind followers of the latest methodological fads brewed in Europe and North America. Given the historical development of the academic study of religion in Africa, the “center–periphery” axis has been dominant. However, African scholars must allow the character of African Indigenous Religions to determine the relevant methodological tools. Olupona has rejected the idea of forcing African scholars to undertake the study of religions like Europeans. We cite him at length below:

There is an urgent need to develop a conceptual framework for making meaningful interpretations. The implication of our research work for scholarship in the study of religions is also important. Having said this, let me add that I am not in agreement with the general criticism we hear from colleagues in the West that our scholarship is too descriptive, uninteresting and lacks [an] analytical framework. While I have been a convert to this idea in the past, I have been rethinking the whole issue lately. It is becoming clear to me that some advocates of critical theory and a theory of based analysis in the study of religions are increasingly pushing this agenda to please some Western scholars who have made it a habit to dictate what our academic agenda should be. The implication is that