

A Brief Look into the Inter-Relationship between Igala Gods and Yoruba Gods

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Abstract: The aim of this work was to study the names of some gods in Igala and Yoruba religion that have the same or related history and/or roles. The work was done using descriptive method. It was observed that most of the gods and goddesses in Yoruba religion are also in Igala religion, though with different names, but almost similar attributes and modes of worship. The studies further revealed that the gods in Igala religion in this work all originated from ancient Egypt where Igala people originated from.

Keywords: Akpabana, Igala, Orisha, Ojo, Sango, Yoruba.

I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, Igala people originated from ancient Egypt and arrived Nigeria (Attagara, Borno state) around 700 BC (Anatole *et al.*, 2017). Yoruba are said to have migrated from Mecca in Saudi Arabia (www.cambridge.org/books), though some sources claimed that their origin is tied to Oduduwa who descended from the sky. But irrespective of the origin of Yoruba, that is outside the scope of this work. Both Igala and Yoruba people have the God Almighty and the personal or individual person's god in their religion. In Igala religion, a person's personal god is called Ojo or Ojo-we, meaning your God. In Yoruba religion, the person's personal god is called Orisha. In Igala, the person's personal god is like a guidance angel who takes his or her prayers to and from God Almighty. This is the same in Yoruba Orisha's case. The God Almighty in Igala is called Ojo omachala, Odoaba or Olichaoke. In Yoruba, the God Almighty is called Olodumare or Olorun.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that Orisha is for Yoruba, and Olichaoke is for Igala. But while Orisha is associated with gods or personal god in Yoruba religion, Olichaoke in Igala religion is associated with God Almighty. Olichaoke literary means God above or God at the top. This refers to the God Almighty in the sky. The personal god in Igala religion is believed to be the incarnate of the person, and this could be a late member of the family.

II. COMPARISON BETWEEN SOME IGALA GODS AND YORUBA GODS

A. Alijenu and Oba goddesses

In Igala religion, Alijenu is Igala goddess of beauty, protection, trick, movement, energy, magic and good luck. Alijenu is a goddess of river like Idu and Iye but lower in position than the two. In ancient Egypt, she was called Isis. The worship of Isis in ancient Egypt dates back to 2500 BC or before. Alijenu goddess can make one rich, or poor especially if the person that she is "on his or her head" does not reciprocate the blessings or worship her as she wants. She can make someone to marry a beautiful or handsome spouse. She can make one to be unmarried no matter how handsome or beautiful the person is.

In Yoruba religion, the equivalent of Alijenu of Igala is Oba goddess. Oba is a goddess of river. She was the first wife of Shango, the third Alaafin (King) of Oyo. She is the goddess of marriage, beauty and Love.



Alijenu



Oba

B. Oka and Orunmila gods

Oka is the god of knowledge, wisdom, and Ifa divination of Igala people. He has the capacity to find out the causes of a problem, and provide the solutions. Oka god in Igala religion is similar to Orunmila in Yoruba religion. Orunmila is the god of wisdom and knowledge, and is a revered deity in Yoruba. In the Afro-Caribbean religion of Santeria, he is often referred to as Orula, the master of the divination system of Ifá.

Oka god is the same as Thoth god in ancient Egypt where Igala inherited his worship from. The worship of Thoth began around 6000 BC. Oka is always made reference to by priests and priestesses during incantation especially during the breaking of kola nuts.



Oka

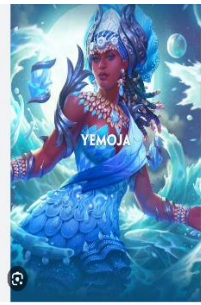


Orunmila

C. Iye-oma and Yemoja goddesses

Iye-oma (Iye) is the goddess of childbirth of ancient Igala religion. In Ancient Egypt, she was called Bes goddess. Bes god came into existence in Egypt around 2450 BC. A related version in Yoruba religion though not in all Yoruba states is

Yemoja. Yemoja is worshipped in Oyo, Ogun states and some other few areas in Nigeria but worshipped in Brazil and Cuba.



Yemoja



Iye-oma

D. Iye-Oja/Ayan and Yemoja goddesses

The major difference between Iye-oma and Iye-Oja is that Iye-Oja is the mother of all or mother of the universe in Igala religion and not just childbirth. She is a queen mother. She is older and even play a mother role to Iye-Oma. She is the goddess of river. Her roles are numerous as the mother of all. She is the goddess of music, dance, drum, protection, covenant. That is why some believers also see her as the equivalent of Yemoja from Iye Amoja, meaning mother of all or many. In Igala, it is believed that Yemoja in Oyo state was taken there by Igala-Nupe people who were part of the people led by Tsoede in 1457, who sacked the ruling house of Oyo, took over the rulership for over 75 years before Oyo people reclaimed it back, sending many Igala and Nupe away to Ketu, Togo, Benin, Lagos. Yemoja is within Tapa/Nupe community, but Nupe do not have Iye amoja as their deity except Igala people. Also, mother is not Iye in Nupe language. Iye or Ayan as used in Brazil Igala kingdom is also the mother goddess of music, dance, protection, guidance, wealth, security. In ancient Egypt, Iye was called Mut, which also means mother. She was the goddess of river, because she originated from the Nile river, and was believed to have given birth to the world. She had a divine power to protect her people. Mut goddess had been in existence right from the predynastic era (6000 BC) but became very powerful from around 1539 BC. Ayan is a strong Igala cult or religion aspect in Brazil Igala Kingdom as well as among the indigenous Igala people of Cuba. In Igala kingdom of Kogi State, she is still very powerful. Outside Kogi State, she has other names such as Nene meaning grandmother, Oja meaning old woman, Iya meaning grandmother, Iye-Abucha, Iye Odele, etc. Iye is also called Iye Unyiejima meaning the mother who unites or binds the entire house or universe together.



Iye Unyiejima

E. Idu and Osun goddesses

Idu was queen or wife of one of the earliest kings of Igala kingdom called Abutu Ejeh. After her death, her burial place

became a river. Idu is the Igala goddess of fertility. She is also the goddess of protection, covenant, cleansing and fruitfulness. She is the same as Osun goddess in Yoruba kingdom. Osun was the second wife of Sango. Sango the third king of Oyo ruled Oyo around the 14th century AD. She is the goddess of love, intimacy, beauty, wealth, femininity, fertility, and diplomacy. In Ancient Egypt, she was called Hathor; the goddess of fertility, magic, and health. Till date, believers still visit Idu Okoliko River beside River Niger at Ega for prayers. In Igala kingdom, she is also part of the coronation ritual process of the major traditional rulers. Any chief to be beaded for ruling will visit the river, and immerse their feet in it. The water of the river cleanses the person of all the previous sins, have him purified and transformed into another form to be worthy of the throne of their ancestors.



Idu



Osun

F. Ebo-Oko and Ochochi gods

Ebo-Oko simply means god of the forest or farm. In Igala religion or culture, Ebo-oko is very revered because he is very powerful. Ebo-Oko is the god of the hunt, forests, protection and good luck. Ebo-Oko, though calm, does not associate with many other gods because of his ways of operation especially in the forest thereby making him to keep his secrets instead being leaked through friends to other people or animals hunted. In Yoruba religion, Ebo-Oko is equivalent of Ochochi/ Oxoshi. Ochochi has almost all his features similar to that of Ebo-oko of Igala kingdom.

Ebo-oko is same as the Horus god of ancient Egypt. He was associated with trees and forest. He was also associated with war and hunting. The worship of Horus began around 2,925 BC.



Ebo-oko

G. Akpabana or Ota and Sango gods

Akpabana or Ota is the god of thunder in Igala religion. It is also associated with lightening. It is a very powerful and dangerous god in Igala land. It is invoked in times of strong crises with enemies of the community. It is not found in many communities because of his dos and don'ts. It is found in Ahija clan in Idah, Kogi State, Ogurugu Igala town in Enugu state and some towns in Kogi State. No one ever dares to swear in its temple if not sure of being innocent of the allegation or accusation. The reason why people don't play with the Akpabana god is because it does not waste time before striking

the guilty ones or culprits. In Yoruba religion, it is similar to Shango though there has been thunder before Shango was born by a Nupe-Igala woman who was the daughter of Tsoede, the first Nupe Kingdom King. Shango was the third king of Alaafin (king) of Oyo, and he ruled around the 14th/15th century. Ota or Akpaba Igala god has its root from Baal god of ancient Egypt. The worship of Baal began around 1400 BC

Shango was the third king of the town of Oyo. Oral tradition describes him as powerful, with a voice like thunder and a mouth that spewed fire when he spoke. The Yoruba god Shango is an Orisha associated primarily with virility, lightning, and thunder. He is also known as Chango or Xango.



Akpabana



Sango

H. Uloko and Uloko gods

Uloko is a tree. Its English name is Iroko. In Igala, Uloko is a powerful god of justice, protection and battle. Iroko trees were not allowed to be cut down in the early times of Igala. Even till date, some Iroko trees in the community are not allowed to be cut down. Some who tried it could not finish it, as they fell ill in the process or even die. In some cases, the equipment such as modern machines used got spoilt in the process. Some people still pray to Uloko god. In the palace of Attah Igala, there is an Uloko god or tree which had been in existence right from the 14th century AD when the palace was built or relocated there. It also takes part in the burial process of the king that has joined the ancestors, and the coronation of new one returning to the palace. It is Iroko too in Yoruba religion which the tree is believed to have man "spirit" called Iroko-man inside of the tree. Iroko is also associated with kingship, when a king dies, there is always a saying that "an iroko has fallen". It is related to Osiris god of ancient Egypt associated with cedar tree. The worship of Osiris began around Osiris 2400 BC

I. Ichekpa and Eshu gods

Ichekpa is the god of trickster, magic, spells, roads, messengers, medicine and strange gifts. While Ichekpa can be friendly, he or she can also be unfriendly by making one to be lost on his or her way from a place home. Ichekpa can abduct someone they love, take him or her to their kingdom and will return the person after some days or weeks. And when the person is coming, he or she will be given spiritual power of magic, healing and many wonders. It is related to Eshu, also known as Exu or Elegua in Yoruba religion. In ancient Egypt where Igala originated from, the god was known as Heka. The worship of Heka began around 6000 BC

J. Ogu/Agana and Ogun

Ogu/Agana is the god of war of Igala people of Nigeria. He is also the hunting god as he carries weapons of war and hunting at the same time. In Yoruba religion, the equivalent is called Ogun. Ogun god is also in Benin Kingdom. Benin Kingdom is separated from Igala Kingdom by the River Niger. In Benin Kingdom, the god is called Ogun, Ogu or Ogwu. Also, in ancient Egypt, Agana or Ogu god was called Seth god. The worship of Seth began around 1630 BC

K. Ane/Ani (Ojo-ane/ Ere-ene) and Obaluaye gods

Ane/Ani is the earth god of Igala people. It is in almost the compound of traditional Igala family especially those in Igala territories. He is the god of wealth, good health, riches, power, wisdom, peace. It is always the first God brought to a new settlement before the people come into the house. In addition to the ones in various compounds, Ane or Ere-ane is also a big deity in Igala kingdom as there is a central one worshipped or prayed to by Attah Igala for the peace of the kingdom as well as good health, fertile land and free of sicknesses. In ancient Egypt, he was called Geb god. The worship of Geb began around 2600 BC. In Yoruba religion, he is somewhat similar to Obaluaye. Obaluaye is regarded as the spirit or god of the earth.

L. Ojale (Ojo-ale) and Olodumare gods

Ojale is the sky or creator god. Though not very popular, Igala people worship sky or sun god. It is worshipped in the morning when the sun is rising. It is mostly celebrated using white cock or fowl along with water and other food items. It is believed to be the creator God which is also known as Ojochamachala. In ancient Egypt, it was called Amun-Ra. In Yoruba religion, it is called Olurun. The worship of Amun-Ra began around 2040 BC though Ra and Amun were separately worshipped as same gods from 2300 BC and 2600 BC. In Yoruba religion, Olodumare is the supreme, and creator God. Olodumare or Olorun is credited with creating the universe and all living things. Olodumare represents the ultimate source of power and creativity, and he is revered as the highest authority in the Yoruba religion.

CONCLUSION

Using descriptive research method, the study of some gods in Igala religion and Yoruba religion have been undergone. It was observed that most of the gods and goddesses in Yoruba religion are also in Igala religion, but with different or slightly different names. These gods have many similar attributes and modes of worships in the two tribe. The studies further revealed that the gods in Igala religion in this work can have their originate traced to the ancient Egypt where Igala people originated from.

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