



Issues and Contentions in the Incursion of Islam and Christianity into Ilé-Ifè, Southwestern Nigeria.

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Abstract:	<p>The late 19th century marked the period when Ilé-Ifè, the reputed cradle of the Yoruba people, witnessed the penetration of Christianity and Islam. Specifically, from the 1890s, both religions established a few years apart through several actors and factors, operated concurrently within Ilé-Ifè. However, the accounts surrounding the periods, initiators and several issues associated with the establishment of these religions have, in the history of Ilé-Ifè, become themes of contention that should be further interrogated from a historical perspective. This study employed primary and secondary data in examining the contested arguments in the narratives surrounding the incursion of these religions in Ilé-Ifè within the context of identifying pitfalls and providing a guide for future studies related to this theme. This study discovered that the issues and contentions include the primordial projection of narratives; and the conflation of the identities of the initiators of the religions, to mention a few. The study is concluded by drawing some lessons from the early peaceful coexistence between the adherents of the two religions in Ilé-Ifè.</p>

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Introduction

Ilé-Ifè is located in the central part of Yòrùbáland in the western part of Nigeria and also plays a significant role in the spiritual life of the Yòrùbá people who today number an estimated 30 million people. The Yoruba people occupy Òyó, Òsun, Òndò, Èkìtì, Ògùn, Lagos and parts of Kwara and Kogi States in Nigeria as well as part of the Republic of Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone and the Yòrùbá diaspora in Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago and other areas in the Caribbean (Skutch, 2013: 1322). The central position of Ilé-Ifè in the history of Yòrùbáland is derived from several factors universally accepted to be right in the Yòrùbá culture. For the Yòrùbá, Ilé-Ifè is believed to be the place where the creation of the world began and that everyone originated from there. This belief is reflected in aphorisms such as, '*Ifè, ibi ojúmó ti'n mó wá*', (Ifè the place from where it dawns), '*Ifè olóri ayé gbogbo*' (Ifè the head of the world) and the appellation reflective of the place of Ilé-Ifè in the Yòrùbá tradition of origin, '*Ifè Oòdáyé*', (Ifè where the creation of the world took place). The Yòrùbá people have various creation stories centred in Ilé-Ifè. These creation stories are woven around many deified culture heroes that make up the Yòrùbá pantheon. For instance, the prominent among these creation stories is that which involves the inebriate Obàtálá and usurper Odùduwà (Eluyemi, 1986: 1). In 1886, Higgins, a Commissioner, was sent by the Lagos government to mediate among the belligerent Yòrùbá groups. He recorded that the Aláafin of Òyó at that time did not want Ilé-Ifè to be left deserted and wanted the people of Ifè to return to their homes because they were the father of all and all people came from Ifè (Johnson, 1966). Ilé-Ifè's position in Yòrùbáland as the place from which virtually all Yòrùbá towns claim to have originated was given further credibility with the archaeological discoveries in the last centuries of incomparable bronze and terra-cotta sculptures, primarily human figures (Blier, 2014: 383-401).

In the world of the Yòrùbá people, Ilé-Ifè is the '*ilú aládé*', (the city of the crown) and the *Oòni*, the king of Ifè, as '*Oba t'on gba idobale oba*', (the king who receives obeisance from other kings). It is regarded as the source from where their indigenous monarchy system spread. They believe Ilé-Ifè's crown gave birth to the Òràngún, Ilèsà, Òyó, Òwu, Popo, Sabe, Ketu, Benin crowns and numerous other crowns scattered across Yòrùbáland within and outside Nigerian borders (Smith, 1988: 18). This universal belief in the Yòrùbá monarchy system found credence in 1903. Two Yòrùbá kings, specifically, the Elépè and the Àkàrigbò, were drawn into a bitter conflict over the former's right to wear a fringed crown. Similar to that which is derived from Ilé-Ifè, the source of all Yòrùbá crowns and monarchy (Smith, 1988: 13). Apart from resolving the conflict for which he was invited to Lagos, the *Oòni* was recorded to have said no other person had the power crown to monarchs across Yorubaland other than him (Onabanjo, 1991: 414). To the Yòrùbá people, Ilé-Ifè is '*Ilú Òrun*' (the city of heaven), not just their source of life or the place where the creation of the world began. It is also believed to be the home of the dead, the place to which dead people return before journeying to heaven (Olupona, 2011: 37). It is believed that there is a cave in Ilé-Ifè, which leads to heaven through which the locals walked right into heaven, and the cave was sealed up because many failed to return (Bolaji, 1962: 13). In

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3 ancient days, this belief was firm that people visited Ilé-Ifè to find out if they could locate the
4 deceased to investigate the cause of their death or gather further instructions about unfinished
5 businesses (Olupona, 2011: 13).
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8 The people of Ilé-Ifè, like other Yòrùbá sub-groups, have been described to have their lives
9 saturated with the spirit of religious thoughts (Frobenius, 1913: 186). The people of Ilé-Ifè are a
10 deeply cultural and religious people who have a highly developed and complex indigenous
11 religious system which they call *isèèse* or *isèmbáyé* (primordial religion). This Traditional
12 Religion of the Yòrùbá has been viewed as a unified body of deities under an overall supreme
13 God with all of its components emerging from Ilé-Ifè (Bolaji, 1962: 10). It is also a system of
14 various deities with varying cult practices that emerged from the different regions of Yòrùbáland
15 influenced by local and historical circumstances (Peel, 2016: 52-70). While the nature of the
16 Traditional Religion in Yòrùbáland is not the purview of this work, it is, however, pertinent to
17 state that the Yòrùbá people regard Ilé-Ifè as the springboard for the emergence of their religion
18 and the hub where ancestor worship was paramount to the continued existence of the Yòrùbáland
19 (Johnson, 1966: 232). This is reflected in the aphorism that ‘rituals are done every single day in
20 Ilé-Ifè except for a particular day which no one knows’ and ‘*ebo ni Ifè nje*’ (Ifè subsists on votive
21 offerings).
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27 Ilé-Ifè continued to retain its primal position as the cultural and spiritual centre of the Yòrùbá
28 people until the introduction of Islam and Christianity. The geographical description of Ilé-Ifè
29 (Osun State Government, 2018 and Jeje, 1992: 1), the origin (Wydham, 1921; Eluyemi, 1986;
30 Akinjogbin, 1992; Eluwole, 2001), and the centrality of the city to the religio-cultural practices
31 (Olupona, 2011 and Fabunmi, 1985) of the Yoruba people have been themes of several studies.
32 Ilé-Ifè, the spiritual centre of the Yòrùbá people, was not exempt from the influx of non-
33 indigenous religions that swept across Yorubaland in the past several centuries. The influx began
34 with the incursion of Islam believed by certain scholars to have filtered into Yorubaland from
35 Mali around the first half of the 14th century, while another school of thought put it between the
36 15th and 16th centuries (Gbadamosi, 1977). This early presence of Islam in Old Òyó in the
37 distant past can be argued to have been the basis for the extensive reflection of Islam in *Òtùrá*
38 *Méjì*, the twelfth *Odù* in the Ifá corpus otherwise regarded as *Odù Ìmàle* (Odù of Islam). For
39 instance, an *ese Ifá* describes the birth of a prophet from a Yoruba paradigm:
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45 *Àlaáfíà allahu dífá fún Bùrémò`*
46 *Hań lu ikin fún Àiná*
47 *Àiná ló lóyún òjò èsín*
48 *Wón ní kí ó rúbọ*
49 *Wón ní torí olókíkí ọmọ ni*
50 *Àiná wá bì sínú ilé*
51 *Bibì tí Àiná bì*
52 *Ọmọ ló jadé látenu rẹ*
53 *Njẹ ọmọ ti Àiná bí látenu*
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3 *Kí a máa pè ní Ànábì* (Personal
4 communication with Akanni Elufidipe,
5 Iredumi Road, Okerewe, Ile-Ife, 18th
6 March, 2021).
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10 Aláafia allahu cast Ifá divination for
11 Buremo (Ibrahim)
12 Also cast for Aíná,
13 Aíná was carrying a shameful
14 pregnancy
15 She was told to make offerings
16 Because the child that she was
17 carrying will be a very famous child
18 Aíná one day vomited at the house
19 When Aíná vomited, it was a child that
20 came out from her mouth
21 Then the child that Aíná vomited from
22 her mouth
23 Then decided to call him Ànábì.
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29 In the same vein, *Òtúrá Méjì* indicates the presence of Islamic clerics in Old Òyó:
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31 *Alááfia allahu*
32 *Dífá fún Bàbá Ìmòle Àbèwù gèrèjè*
33 *lọ̀rùn*
34 *Tí ó máa gbé ojúkan tí ire rẹ̀ yío má*
35 *tọ́*
36 *Òrúnmilà ní bí òun básèké*
37 *Òrúnmilà ní bí òun básèdà*
38 *Ojúkan tí Bàbá Ìmòle bá wà*
39 *Nìmọ̀aráyé máańwá ba* (Personal
40 communication with Akanni Elufidipe,
41 Iredumi Road, Okerewe, Ile-Ife, 18th
42 March, 2021).
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48 *Àláfia Allahu*
49 Cast Ifá divination teachings for the
50 elder Muslim
51 The one that is wearing the big
52 garment
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3 He will be in one place, and all
4 prosperities come to him
5 Òrúnmílà says if he is lying
6 Òrúnmílà says if he is fooling people
7 It is where the elder Muslim sits
8 That people of the world go to him and
9 find him.
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14 Probably reflecting the eventual acceptance of Islam followed by its syncretic combination with
15 Yoruba Traditional Religion in Old Òyó, a verse in *Òtúrà Méjì* states that:
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18 *Ki wón ta langa, ki wón fi ní láárí*
19 *Ki wón tà lààrí, bi wón dá*
20 *Ki wón dá Òséni, ki wón dì rugudu*
21 *Olóyè lẹ́ n kí*
22 *Difá fún Òrúnmílà*
23 *Ti óhun bowa gba Àiná ni iyawo*
24 *Ti ó tún má gba Ààwá si*
25 *Tó máa fi gàmbarí se iketa*
26 *A se Ifá wá gbà imòle*
27 *A se Ifá wá gbà imòle*
28 *A wé láwààní;*
29 *A gbé ide sòrùn*
30 *A se Ifá wá gbà imòle* (Personal
31 communication with Akanni Elufidipe,
32 Iredumi Road, Okerewe, Ile-Ife, 18th
33 March, 2021).
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40 To do trading and be successful
41 To sell the special clothes (Àláári)
42 To make the dress (Òséni) and be
43 wrapped well
44 You are greeting the wealthy
45 Cast Ifá divination for Òrúnmílà
46 He was going to receive Aina as a wife
47 He also received Ààwá
48 He took Gàmbarí as the third wife
49 We use our Ifá to convert a Muslim
50 We use our Ifá to convert a Muslim
51 We put on the headwrap
52 We put on beads necklace
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We use our Ifá to convert a Muslim

Be that as it may, it can be suggested that while trade probably introduced Yòrùbá people to Islam, the religion permeated and was established in different parts of Yòrùbáland at different times. For instance, Islam had been established in Ìwó in 1655; Ìsáyìn and Sakí followed suit in 1760. The period when the first person to be known as a Muslim in Sakí was in 1790. Òyó traders were recorded to have introduced Islam to Osogbo in 1820 or 1889 (Ogunbado, 2003). Doi further suggested that other Yòrùbá towns such as Ede, Ìkìrun, Ìjèbú Òde, Abéòkúta, Ìlobù, and Ìkìrè had been aware of Islam long before the emergence of the Fulani jihad (Ogunbado, 2003) which has been severally described as the origins of Islam in Yòrùbáland. Whatever the case, it is generally agreed that Islam was introduced into Yorubaland through commercial activities and trade (Mushin, 2007: 77).

Christianity in Yorubaland, on the other hand, began to operate in the period preceding the partition of Africa. This occurred around 1840, with the activities of the missionaries limited to coastal areas and surrounding communities (Ajayi, 1965 and Ayandele 1966). This stemmed from the abolitionist movements in England which sought to put an end to the slave trade. In the place of slave trade, this movement pursued the establishment of legitimate trade within which interested Europeans could trade with people of the interiors (Stock, 1899). In line with this, the British government encouraged private commerce. Consequently, a group known as the new Society for the Civilisation of Africa was inaugurated (Stock, 1899). This society was to conduct an expedition to West Africa for the introduction the 'three Cs' - Civilisation, Christianity and Commerce (Stock, 1899). To conduct this expedition, it received input from the Church Missionary Society and the Agricultural Society. The former was to provide the Bible, and the latter was to give the plough for the 'regeneration of Africa' (Stock, 1899). The 1851 expedition recorded some successes in re-defining economic relations with Africa yet, it ended up in disaster due to a deadly fever outbreak which resulted in a high death toll amongst the travellers (Dike, 1956).

While the journey failed, it nonetheless placed the educated and proselytised Africans as the agents for the propagation of Civilisation, Commerce and Christianity (Ajayi, 1959: 331-342). These Africans were an aggregation of ex-slaves and recaptives (Falola and Heathon, 2008: 251). Tucker (1854), in her account of the Missionary activities in Abéòkúta, described the situation of the class of these Africans:

education and civilisation had changed the numbers of these enslaved and degraded negroes into men of enterprise and intelligence; the preaching of the gospel had turned them from idol worshippers to serving the living God (Tucker, 1854: 44).

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3 Although many of these Africans became proponents of commerce, anti-slavery movements and
4 Christianity, the most prominent among them nonetheless appeared to have been Samuel Ajayi
5 Crowther. Samuel Ajayi Crowther has been widely credited for his prominent roles in the spread
6 of Christianity. This stemmed from some of his missionary activities in Sierra Leone,
7 Yòrùbáland, the upper Niger River and the Niger-Delta area (Akintoye, 2010). Missionary
8 accounts, however, indicate that the advent of Christianity in Yòrùbáland did not begin with him.
9 Ade-Ajayi (1965) and Ayandele (Ayandele, 1966), among several scholars agree that the advent
10 of missionaries into Yòrùbáland was an attendant consequence of commercial activities. The
11 successes recorded with these commercial engagements were partly responsible for the migration
12 of ex-slaves and recaptured people of Sierra Leone. Tucker records that between 1839-1842,
13 about 500 people had left Sierra Leone and returned to Yòrùbáland, specifically, Abéòkúta
14 (1865).

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19 Akintoye (2010) reported that a British Naval Officer stated that there were about 3,000 migrants
20 in Abéòkúta in 1851. Around the same year, there was a substantial number of migrants in
21 different parts of Yòrùbáland such as Lagos, Ìbàdàn and the hinterlands such as Ede, Òsogbo,
22 Ìlésà, Ìrágbìjì, Èjìgbò and Ìlorin, to mention a few (Akintoye, 2010). The influx of the hitherto
23 Sierra Leone settlers of Yòrùbá origin back into Yòrùbáland, many of whom had acquired
24 western education and had been converted to Christianity, catalysed commerce and served as a
25 medium through which the missionaries penetrated the interiors of Yòrùbáland (Ola, 1989: 88).
26 These migrants who would go on to serve as the agents of epochal changes comprising of
27 Commerce, Civilisation and Christianity were recorded to have stated that
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32 for their lands, they desired that the Gospel of God our
33 Saviour may be preached unto her, that schools may be
34 established, that Bibles may be sent, that the British flag may
35 be hoisted, and that she may rank among the civilised nations
36 of the earth (Ajayi, 1961: 200).
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40 This expression indicated the interest of the migrants to have Christianity established in and
41 spread across Yòrùbáland. In her journal, Tucker (1865) stated that the migrants desiring the
42 church services sent an invitation to missionaries in Sierra Leone to provide Christian
43 ministrations to and proselytise the local Yòrùbá people who were adherents of Yòrùbá
44 Traditional Religion. Extant studies on the spread and establishment of Christianity in
45 Yòrùbáland, particularly that of the Church Missionary Society and numerous others appear to
46 agree that trade preceded the advent of missionaries in Yòrùbáland. Still, they seem to exhibit a
47 disparity over the invitation of the missionaries by the migrants as the beginning of missionary
48 activities in Yòrùbáland. Be that as it may, what is evident is the seeming nexus between trade
49 and migration leading to the influx of the missionaries into Yòrùbáland, a fact expressed in
50 several existing works of literature.
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3 In what seems like a sequential order of events came the incursion of missionaries after the
4 establishment of trade contact and eventual migration. Certain studies appear to disagree over the
5 order and the beginning of missionary presence in Yòrùbáland. Be that as it may, what is evident
6 is that several church organisations sponsored missionaries to Yòrùbáland targeting different
7 parts from where the establishment and spread of their objectives of Christianization and
8 Civilization leapt. The missionary societies known to have partaken in the establishment of
9 Christian Missions in Nigeria were the Church Missionary Society of England, the Wesleyan
10 Methodists, the Scottish Presbyterians, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Catholic
11 Society of African Missions of France. The trade and the efforts of returnees of Yòrùbá origins
12 facilitated the spread of Christianity in Yorubaland. The period of the incursion of these religions
13 in Yorubaland varied. For instance, from the 1850s, the Baptists, Methodists and CMS were in
14 Ògbómòsó, Lagos, Badagri, Ìjàyè (Tucker, 1854 and Falola, 2008) and in Òde-Òndó in 1872
15 (Akintoye, 2010).

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18 Ilé-Ifè had a peculiar experience with the incursion of Islam and Christianity. Several accounts
19 have indicated that Christianity predated Islam in the order of establishment in Ilé-Ifè, in reverse
20 to what was obtainable in several other parts of Yorubaland (Adelowo, 1992: 337). This
21 peculiarity in the order of establishments perhaps contributed to the contestations in the history
22 of these religions in Ilé-Ifè. Some of these issues include the periodisation of the establishment of
23 these religions, the vanguards of the religions in Ilé-Ifè, and the contested sacred spaces, among
24 other issues. These contentions probably reflect Akinjogbin's point of view that:

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31 the father back in time the traditions of Ifè, the more it
32 would appear they are preserved. The nearer ones, on
33 the other hand, tend to be forgotten (Akinjogbin, 1992:
34 xvii).

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Despite the large number of research works that have emerged from this plethora of studies on
Ilé-Ifè, particularly from the 1950s (Oomer-cooper, 1980: 23-31), little effort has been extended
to the history of Islam and Christianity in the city of 201 gods (Olupona, 2011). Indeed, the few
research works detailing the history of Christianity and Islam in the city are limited in scope and
depth (Fabunmi, 1970; Adelowo, 1992; Ogunleye, 2003; Adetunmbi, 2012; Opeloye, 2012). The
reason for the limited literature on the history of foreign religions in Ilé-Ifè remains unclear.
However, it can be suggested that this dearth of literature mirrors the observation that in Ifè:

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The importance of the events being recounted and the
institutional and religious framework they give rise to
tend to play an important role in their preservation
(Akinjogbin, 1992: xvii).

The narratives provided by extant texts explored a conflicting trajectory of hypothesis bordering
on the origin, *dramatist personae*, sacred spaces and challenges encountered in the incursion of

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3 these religions. In addition to the variegated data contained in the literature indicated above,
4 available oral data collected in the field do not only provide further light into the history of the
5 incursion of Islam and Christianity in Ilé-Ifè, but they also indicate that there are existing issues
6 and contentions in the available records of this theme of study. Thus, this paper will proceed with
7 an analysis of the narratives considered to be contentions in the history of Christianity and Islam
8 in Ilé-Ifè.
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11 **The periodisation of the Advent of Christianity and Islam in Ilé-Ifè: The Problem**

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13 A vital issue in the incursion of Christianity and Islam in Ilé-Ifè is the debate about the exact
14 period both religions surfaced in Ilé-Ifè. For Christianity, the periodisation of incursion has been
15 placed at different periods. The first account reportedly occurred in the 16th century through
16 Portuguese missionaries whose expedition got to Benin. After the visit to Benin, the missionaries
17 were directed towards Ilé-Ifè by the Oba of Benin (Fabunmi, 1970). This account indicates that
18 the Portuguese missionaries visited Ilé-Ifè, converted the Oòni, whose name was given as
19 Ajagun and christened him John Thomas (Ogunleye, 2003). After the successful conversion, the
20 missionaries secured a land upon which they erected a church building at a site called Òkè-Ìlérí
21 (the hill of promise) (Fabunmi, 1970). The second account was ascribed to David Hinderer, a
22 German CMS missionary (Olabimtan, 2011). Prior to the establishment of the Òde-Òndó mission
23 in 1872, David Hinderer had in 1858 conducted a five-week tour across the towns of Ìwó,
24 Òsogbo, Ikirun, Ìpétu, Ìlésà and Ilé-Ifè. During his stop at Ilé-Ifè, he was reported to have
25 preached the Christian gospel to the people, chiefs and king of Ilé-Ifè. However, the response he
26 elicited was that all religion originated from Ifè and that what he had preached was no more than
27 one of the versions that had evolved later in a distant part of the world. It is not particularly clear
28 if the feedback received by David Hinderer facilitated the failure of his attempt to establish
29 Christianity in Ilé-Ifè at this time (Akintoye, 2010). What is, however, known is that during the
30 periods of 1858 and 1859, David Hinderer appointed and stationed agents in the towns which he
31 had toured, including Ilé-Ifè but the re-current communal clashes between the Modékéké and
32 their Ifè host truncated the possibility of establishing a mission station in Ilé-Ifè (Olupona, 2011:
33 63-64).
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37 There are various periods ascribed to the introduction of Islam in Ilé-Ifè. There is a section
38 among the Muslims in Ilé-Ifè with the conclusion that Islam had filtered into Ilé-Ifè much earlier
39 because it is the foremost Yòrùbá town from where every other Yòrùbá towns sprang up. To this
40 group, Islam was brought to Ilé-Ifè around the 11th century through a particular itinerant
41 preacher known as Uthman (Opeloye, 2012: 142). He was reported to have possessed a Quran
42 with which he preached Islam. However, the account indicated that he was eventually murdered,
43 and his Quran was adopted as a totem of worship, inferring the origins of *Edì* (Moremi festival)
44 in Ilé-Ifè (Personal communication with Ismaila Bada, Oke Sokun Mosque, Moore, Ile-Ifè, 10th
45 February 2020). The second account suggests the 18th century as the period of the incursion of
46 Islam in Ilé-Ifè. This is hinged on the dispersal and eventual migration of the people of Òyó to
47 different parts of Yorubaland, including Ilé-Ifè, as a result of the implosion of Òyó (Agiri, 1975:
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1-16). Scholars have, through several studies, established the presence of Islam in Old Òyó before its gradual implosion and eventual disintegration precipitated by the invasion of Ìlorin army (Atanda, 1971: 477-490). The collapse of Old Òyó engendered a spate of displacements and migrations of people from Òyó towns (Johnson, 1966: 4). These multiple waves of migrations led to the influx of the people of Òyó origins across several parts of Yorubaland, including several towns in Ifèland (Elugbaju, 2018). Many of these migrants, who would later become grouped as Modékéké, were said to have brought and practised Islam in Ilé-Ifè (Adelowo, 1992: 336), where they were received and encouraged to integrate. As such, they lived contiguously with the Ifè till they were expelled sometime during the reign of Oòni Adegunle Abewela as a result of the loss of Ifè leadership in Ìbàdàn (Bascom, 1969: 14). While this argument appears plausible, interactions with certain members of the Muslim community in Ifè seem to disagree with the notion that Islam was introduced to Ilé-Ifè through these migrants. This is despite the fact that Daniel May recorded in 1860, with reference to the towns of Ifè and Modékéké in his expedition journal, that "the Mahomedan religion is common in it..." (May, 1860: 215).

Contestation over Agencies and Mechanisms of Incursion

There are accounts that have suggested that the beginnings of Christianity in Ilé-Ifè could be traced to one John Adelaja, a rubber trader whose mother was of Ifè descent (Adelowo, 2012: 337). He was exposed to Christianity while Ifè was in exile, and upon the reoccupation of the town, he paid periodic visits to Ifè in connection with his rubber business (Adelowo, 2012: 337). During these visits, he preached the Christian gospel at Òkè-Èshó where he resided and was, at some point, joined by one Daniel Lawani Ologbenla, an Òkè-Igbó returnee. Together, they conducted Christian services on Sundays in the house of one Chief Efunluyi Onile-Aran (Adetunmbi, 2012: 24). However, there exists a conflicting account suggesting that the introduction of cocoa farming in Ifè during the return from Òkè-Igbó and Ìsóyà attracted the missionaries to Ifè (Personal communication with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè, 20th October, 2019). In the foregoing paragraph, an account ascribed the establishment of Islam in Ilé-Ifè to one Uthman in the 11th century. However, another account relates that the emergence of Islam in Ilé-Ifè took place during the reign of Oòni Wunmonije; between 1835-1839 through one Arobi Awotinde of Òrúntó Jàjojo compound, a particular Ìlorin itinerant cleric known as Danialu and Momodu Kasumu Adeosun of Iredunmi compound in Ilé-Ifè (Opeloye, 2012: 142). This account further relates that Danialu, contrary to the reports recorded in extant literature, did not attempt to introduce Islam to Ifè people and it was instead a religion solely practised by non-Ifè settlers at the time, particularly the Ìlorin and Ògbómòsò (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th March, 2020).

Again, an account credits Momodu Kasumu Adeosun with the introduction of Islam to the people of Ifè and laying the groundwork for the entrenchment of Islam in the town and environs (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th

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3 March, 2020). Adeosun was described as a victim of kidnap and enslavement at a young age. As
4 a result, he ended up in the hands of one Alfa Ibrahim reported being a Nupe Islamic cleric
5 resident in Lagos, specifically, at Ìsàlè Ìgangàn (Personal communication with Imam Mutui
6 Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). The location of this cleric also formed an issue
7 of contention. Another account agrees that he was bought by a Muslim cleric but veers in a
8 different direction, indicating that this cleric was of Ìlorin origin who at the time was resident at
9 Ìlorin rather than Lagos (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo road,
10 Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th March, 2020). Despite the variation in these accounts, there is a converging
11 point which states that Adeosun was encouraged by his master to acquire knowledge of Islam, to
12 study the Quran, and partake in the trade-in ammunitions and agricultural products such as
13 rubber (Adelowo. 2012: 144). The trade in rubber extended his travels into the interiors of
14 Yorubaland, specifically Ifè (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo
15 road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th March, 2020).

21 Another account, on the other hand, suggests that contrary to the travels for his rubber trade, it
22 was his mother who encouraged him to return home to Ifè (Opeloye, 2012) 144). Whatever the
23 case, Adeosun returned to and settled in Ilé-Ifè, his hometown where he built a house at his
24 Iredùnmí compound (Opeloye, 2012) 144).¹ The eventual relocation of Adeosun to Ilé-Ifè
25 between 1882 and 1894 facilitated his encounter with Danialu, thereby leading to the beginning
26 of the introduction, establishment, and spread of Islam in Ile-Ifè. What follows is the contention
27 of the personage worth crediting as the initiator of Islam in Ilé-Ifè. Available accounts are split
28 into two sides – a part credits Danialu with the introduction of Islam to Ifè (Personal
29 communication with Professor Muhib Opeloye, Parakin Area, Mayfair, Ile-Ife, 12 January, 2020
30 & Adelowo, 2012: 144), while the other part identifies Adeosun with the establishment of Islam
31 in Ifè (Personal communication with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March,
32 2020). What is, however, significant is that by the opening decades of the 19th century, Islam had
33 gained sufficient foothold in Ile –Ife.

39 **The Dilemma of Islamic Sacred Spaces in Ilé-Ifè**

41 Sacred sites for worship and periodic rituals are essential to religions. Being identified with the
42 core of the Yoruba Traditional Religion, Ilé-Ifè is a town known to have sacred sites in the form
43 of groves, shrines, monoliths and sacred water bodies (Holywell) scattered across it (Adesoji,
44 2012 and Raheem, 2020). Christianity and Islam did not only have to contend with acquiring
45 converts but securing spaces for the construction of sites considered sacred. The Christian
46 missionaries enjoyed a brief period of unification under the Church Missionary Society leading
47 to the construction of what would become generally recognised to be the first church in Ilé-Ifè
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52 ¹ During the fieldwork for the research, the site of this building was visited. While the building
53 has remained unoccupied, the members of the Adeosun family have continued to conduct
54 maintenance and repairs of the property which they hope would serve as an Islamic monument or
55 tourist site in Ile-Ife.
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(Adetunmbi, 2012: 25). However, the early Ifè Muslim community seemed to have operated with the dichotomy of indigenous Muslims and migrant Muslims, with both operating separate mosques. This, therefore, contributes to the issue and contention of according appropriate recognition to the Islamic sacred sites operated by the early members of both Muslim groups.

The emergence of mosques in Ilé-Ifè is a contested aspect in the history of Islam in Ilé-Ifè. Available accounts suggest that the mosque built at the present day Ojà Ìta Akogun of Òkèrèwè quarters in 1903 was a central mosque (Adelowo, 1992: 144). Another account relates that it was the first mosque constructed in Ilé-Ifè rather than a central mosque (Personal communication with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). The mosque operated by the non-Ifè migrants, otherwise referred to as the Danialu mosque, which is currently not in use and in a dilapidated state, was built in the middle of buildings occupied by mostly Ìlorin and Ògbómòsó migrants (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th March, 2020). These migrants required a religious site for prayers and, as such, erected a structure within their settlement to serve as a point of convergence of prayer for them (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th March, 2020). The size of the building indicated a probably low number of Muslims at the time. However, the few people of Ìlorin origin still residing around this site said *'bó ti rí tóóró'un, ó gba ogórùn ènìyàn lèèkan soso'* (despite looking minute, it can accommodate a hundred people at a time (Personal communication with Alfa Tunde Saliu, Iremo road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 24th March, 2020). This mosque also served as a place where Danialu practised his profession of spiritual consultations and divinations (Personal communication with Alfa Aduragba Onibonoje, Iremo road, Iremo, Ile-Ife, 20th March, 2020). For this group of non-Ifè settlers, the mosque used by Danialu and their progenitors was the first mosque in Ilé-Ifè.

Despite the implosion within the Muslim community in Ifè elicited by the tussle for Imam leadership (Opeloye, 2012: 147), it has managed to sustain a presence in the town through the renovation of early Islamic structures and the recollection of the history of the advent of the religion through the families of Imam Adeosun and early Ifè converts. The assessment of the latter in particular suggests that the indigenous Ifè Muslims disagree with the notion that the mosque used by Danialu, the Ilorin and Ogbomoso migrants was the first (Personal communication with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020).

Interrogating the Issues and Reconstructing the Narratives

The preceding paragraphs have detailed the disparities in the narratives surrounding the incursion of Islam and Christianity into Ilé-Ifè. Therefore, this study will attempt to interrogate these pieces of these contested perspectives for the reconstruction of a history of the incursion of these religions into Ilé-Ifè. For Christianity, there have been attempts to introduce Christianity to Ilé-Ifè before 1899. The establishment of Christianity in Ilé-Ifè began with the opening of an eastern trade route which passed through Òndó from Lagos (Akinjogbin, 1998); the emergence of a Christian mission station in Ode-Òndó (Laitin, 1986); and the introduction of the planting and

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3 cultivation of cash crops such as cocoa (Berry, 1986: 439-451). These three factors, when
4 combined, suggest a type of interconnectivity that set the ground for the presence of Christianity
5 in Ilé-Ifè. This was such that the eastern trade route from Lagos to Òndó facilitated the migration
6 of people and long-distance trade. Among the migrants were missionaries who adopted the
7 opportunity in the trade route, which opened up other previously inaccessible parts of the
8 hinterlands for their exploits. Also, the traders and cocoa planters in the towns of Agége and
9 Ìbàdàn sought new markets (Berry, 1986: 439-451). At the time of this establishment of
10 Christianity and cocoa farming in Òndó, the Ifè people who were displaced as a consequence of
11 the Ifè-Modakeke war within the broader Yoruba internecine wars were exiled to Òkè-Igbó and
12 Ìsóyà (Olupona, 2011: 63-64).

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17 The history of Òkè-Igbó has been covered elsewhere (Fabunmi, 1986: 122). For this study it
18 should be mentioned that Oke-Igbo was initially an Ondo town which was occupied by the Ifè
19 led by Derin Ologbenla after a conquest at Ondo town (Akinjogbin, 1998). This notwithstanding,
20 Òkè-Igbó would go on to host a significant cocoa plantation and a prominent presence of
21 Christian missionary probably as a result of its proximity to Òndó (Berry, 1986). With a
22 negotiated truce between the warring Yoruba factions, the people of Ilé-Ifè who had hitherto
23 moved out of their city for safety began to return to the city. This resettlement did not only lead
24 to the reconstruction of the city but also the introduction of cocoa farming, the participation in
25 the rubber trade with Lagos through the eastern trade route of Yorubaland, and the presence of
26 the Christian missionary. The cocoa farming and long-distance trade facilitated the presence of
27 Ifè Christian proselytes, a class to which John Adelaja, Daniel Lawani Ologbenla, and Chief
28 Efunluyi Onile-Aran belonged (Adetunmi, 2012: 24). Available accounts have indicated that
29 these people attempted to spread Christianity and even hosted Sunday services. The extent to
30 which the effort of these people was impactful is not very clear. However, it can then be
31 suggested that since they were converted and had become members of the Church Missionary
32 Society, their activities were subsumed under the broader missionary effort situated in
33 farmsteads in the outskirts of Ilé-Ifè.

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40 The missionaries in Òndó sought to establish their religion in Ilé-Ifè during the period of its
41 reconstruction and resettlement after several years of exile. However, accounts suggest that the
42 presence and the activities of the missionaries were vehemently opposed leading to persecution.
43 The intolerant disposition of the Ifè caused the missionaries to relocate to the farmstead in the
44 outskirts, where farmers cultivated cocoa and other crops (Personal communication with
45 Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè, 20th October, 2019).² It was
46 here that the missionaries introduced Christianity to farmers who spent most of the time at the
47 farms tending to the cultivation and security of their cocoa plantations (Personal communication
48 with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè, 20th October, 2019). The
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54 ² Oke Esho which formed the hub of the Christian activities of John Adelaja, Daniel Lawani Ologbenla, and Chief
55 Efunluyi Onile-Aran is considered an outskirt of Ile-Ife due to its location as a frontier settlement between the space
56 occupied by the Modakeke and Ife town.
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3 tolerance accorded to the missionaries in the farmstead led to the introduction of best practices
4 for cocoa farming and western infrastructures such as schools, improved healthcare practices and
5 miniature churches (Personal communication with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro
6 Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè, 20th October, 2019). The cooperation between the missionaries and the
7 proselyte locals in the farmsteads led to a growth in the population of proselyte given at 20 Ifè
8 and 120 Modakeke people and the development of a Christian community (Personal
9 communication with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè, 20th
10 October, 2019).
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14 The missionaries in Ifè and the local converts requested the support and assistance of Reverend
15 Charles Phillip, who at this time had become a Bishop, for the formal establishment of a church
16 community. Reverend Phillip in turn, sent Reverend R. S. Oyeboode from Ìlésà on 4th of March,
17 1899; Reverend E. M. Lijadu from Òndó; Reverend T. Harding; and a Mr Atandaolu from Ìlésà
18 (Personal communication with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè,
19 20th October, 2019). This crop of reverends whose activities still linger in the memory of the Ifè
20 people contributed to the intensified effort at ensuring the further spread of Christianity to the
21 farmsteads across Ifèland (Personal communication with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode,
22 Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè, 20th October, 2019). They also set the groundwork for the
23 eventual congregation of these converts for the construction of a church building within the town
24 (Personal communication with Venerable Adeboye Awoyode, Aiyetoro Area, Okerewe, Ilé-Ifè,
25 20th October, 2019). In May 1899, Bishop Charles Phillips attempted to bring the converts
26 scattered across different farmsteads in the remote areas of Ilé-Ifè together. For this purpose and
27 at the request of the continuously growing Christian community in Ilé-Ifè, he dispatched one Mr
28 E. A. Kayode, a schoolmaster with a paternal Ifè origin, to the growing Christian community in
29 Ilé-Ifè to serve as their Catechist (Adetunmi, 2012).
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36 The presence of the Catechist indicated the beginning of an Anglican Church in Ilé-Ifè. This
37 probably informed the attempts made by the community led by Mr E. A Kayode and Bishop
38 Charles Phillips at securing a space within the city of Ilé-Ifè for the construction of a church
39 structure. The first attempt made to secure land for this project was the request made for space at
40 Ìta-akogun, a place located within the centre of Ilé-Ifè. This was, however, rejected by the Ìsòrò
41 (autochthonous kings and priests), Modéwá (head servants) and Àgbà-Ifè (town chiefs and
42 subordinate war captains) groups through Oòni Adelekan Sijuade Olubuse I (1894-1910). The
43 Oòni stated that he could not permit the relocation of the Christians to any part of Ilé-Ifè town
44 because Òránfè, the Ifè deity of fire, thunder and lightning, would not accede to it and that it was
45 in the Modékéké town that such practice could be permitted (Adelowo, 2012: 338). Further
46 attempts were made by the members of the Christian community to secure a space at Ìtaàsìn and
47 Ìráyè, which Bishop Phillips turned down but eventually settled for a space at Ìyékéré, a request
48 which was approved of by the Oòni. The Christian community erected a church in 1899 where
49 converts in the Ifè farmsteads gathered for religious activities and therefore making the
50 beginning of the establishment of Christianity in Ilé-Ifè (Adeyombo, 2010).
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3 In 1858, Daniel May recorded the presence of Islam during his visit to the composite towns of
4 Ifè and Modakeke (May, 1868). This suggests that Islam was practised in Ilé-Ifè in the early
5 parts of the 19th century. However, it would appear that the religion was primarily popular
6 among the non-Ifè settlers from Old Òyó metropolis and several other towns such as Èjìgbò,
7 Òffà, Ede, Ìkòyì, Ògbààgbá, Òjé, Òkò, Ìráwò to mention a few (Elugbaju, 2018). The narratives
8 surrounding the influx of migrants into Ilé-Ifè and her frontier towns have formed the subject of
9 several studies. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to state here that these migrants have been exposed to
10 Islam, possibly through their experiences with trade or the Ilorin army Jihad wars (Ogunbado,
11 2003). This religion was consequently brought to Ilé-Ifè when Òyó imploded, causing a spate of
12 migration waves across Yorubaland.
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17 To the people of Ilé-Ifè, Islam was a practice common within and restricted to the community of
18 the migrants, and the religion did not infiltrate the Ifè community until 1903 (Opeloye, 2012:
19 145). There is a consensus within the Islamic community that Islam was brought to Ilé-Ifè
20 through the encounter between Obalufe Awotinde and Mallam Danialu on the one hand; and
21 Mallam Danialu and Kasumu Adeosun on the other hand. However, there appears to be a
22 problem of disparity over the personality worth crediting with the establishment of Islam in Ilé-
23 Ifè, particularly between Danialu and Adeosun. The subsequent paragraphs will attempt to
24 resolve this problem by analysing the roles played by each *dramatis personae*. The event leading
25 to the introduction of Islam into Ifè was placed in the reign of Oòni Wunmonije, between 1835-
26 1839. Extant texts and oral accounts recorded that one Arobi Awotinde of Òrúntó Jàjojo
27 compound was an itinerant merchant who had an encounter with Mallam Danialu. During this
28 encounter, the Mallam predicted that Awotinde would be honoured with an indigenous political
29 office in Ilé-Ifè (Adelowo, 1992: 144). The materialisation of this prediction engendered the
30 invitation extended by Awotinde to his cleric friend (Opeloye, 2012: 145). As such, Mallam
31 Danialu engaged in visitations to Ilé-Ifè and continued to ply his trade of magico-spiritual
32 services for his friend, Awotinde (Personal communication with Goke Awotinde, Oluyole Estate,
33 Ibadan, 23rd March, 2020).
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40 Available texts indicate that Mallam Danialu lodged at Òrúntó Jàjojo compound during his visits
41 (Adelowo, 1992: 144). However, a tour of the site of his residence revealed a partly collapsed
42 building situated in Òwín compound conterminous with Òrúntó Jàjojo compound. This, therefore,
43 suggests that he settled at the Òwín compound rather than the Anikin compound as recorded in
44 certain accounts (Personal communication with Ifalekan Elugbindin, Chief Megbon Awo Ireto,
45 Orunto Jaojo Compound, Ireto, 5th April 2020). Furthermore, existing literature relates that
46 Danialu introduced Islam to Ile-Ifè (Opeloye, 2012: 145). However, it is generally agreed within
47 the Ifè Muslim community that Danialu did not attempt to introduce his religion to Ilé-Ifè and it
48 was instead a religion solely practised by non-Ifè settlers at the time, particularly the Ìlorin and
49 Ògbómòsò migrants. Rather, Momodu Kasumu Adeosun was credited with the introduction of
50 Islam to the people of Ifè and laying the groundwork for the entrenchment of Islam in the town
51 and surrounding settlements.
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3 The presence of Mallam Danialu in Ilé-Ifè preceded that of Kasumu Adeosun despite being a
4 native of Ifè from Iredùnmi compound of Òkèrèwè quarters. This is predicated on the experience
5 Adeosun had with being kidnapped and sold as a slave at a young age (Personal communication
6 with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). As a slave, Adeosun was
7 encouraged by his master to acquire knowledge in Islam, to study Quran, and partake in trade in
8 ammunitions and agricultural products such as rubber (Adelowo, 1992: 144). The acquisition of
9 raw materials and search for market led him into the interiors of Yorubaland, including Ile-Ife.
10 This trade was profitable for Adeosun, and during one of his business travels to Ilé-Ifè, he
11 proceeded to the palace where he sought help with locating his family (Personal communication
12 with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). The eventual relocation of
13 Adeosun to Ilé-Ifè between 1882 and 1894 facilitated his encounter with Mallam Danialu
14 (Personal communication with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020).
15 This encounter between Danilau and Adeosun is generally agreed to mark what would go on to
16 be the beginning of the introduction, establishment, and spread of Islam in Ile-Ifè.
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22 In point of fact, as a result of Danialu's acquaintance, Adeosun expended a certain number of
23 years expanding his knowledge in Islam through visitations to several towns with a strong
24 presence of Islam (Personal communication with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15
25 March, 2020). After the extensive acquisition of Islamic learning, Adeosun began a gradual
26 diplomatic method of introducing Islam to Ifè. This entailed hosting the people of Ifè to a daily
27 supply of assortments of food and locally brewed alcoholic beverages (Personal communication
28 with Imam Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). These included *sèkèté* (corn
29 beer), *ògòrò* (bamboo wine), *emun* (palm wine), *bùrùkùtù* (liquid from a fermented admixture of
30 several fruits and water) (Bascom, 1951). At the end of this feast, Adeosun encouraged his guests
31 to partake in Islamic prayer sessions with him (Personal communication with Imam Mutui
32 Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). This further raised curiosity among the people
33 who were said to have at various times asked him questions about the prayers, the Muslim
34 rosary, and other general questions about the religion (Personal communication with Imam
35 Mutui Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020).
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41 In this manner, Adeosun was said to have injected Islam into Ilé-Ifè, and by the 20th century, the
42 need for a local mosque in Ifè became topical. Muslims had difficulty acquiring land and, as
43 such, leading to the eventual acquisition of a waste midden known as *akitan aso* located in the
44 present-day Akogun market of Okerewe quarters (Personal communication with Imam Mutui
45 Adeosun, Ita Akogun Mosque, 15 March, 2020). A building made of burnt clay bricks was
46 erected on the midden after it had been cleared of waste. In 1903, the first mosque in Ilé-Ifè had
47 become fully functional for prayers (Personal communication with Professor Muhib Opeloye,
48 Parakin area, Ilé-Ifè, 10th May, 2019).
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52 **Conclusion**

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3 This paper adumbrated the contentious issues of the incursion of Christianity and Islam into Ile-
4 Ife, in Yorubaland, Nigeria. Exploring extant literature and oral accounts, this paper
5 reconstructed and established the varied but contentious narratives surrounding the incursion of
6 Christianity and Islam into Ile-Ife and sifted the possible time and local agencies that were
7 instrumental in the spread and consolidation of the two religions in Ile-Ifè. From the evidence
8 adduced from the study, it is shown that while at the initial time, the people were sceptical about
9 Islam and Christianity, over time, the relationship was characterised by conflict and concord.
10 Again, the symbiotic relationship between the adherents of traditional religion, Islam and
11 Christianity, over time has become so amicable that Ile-Ife, is a classical case of a community
12 built on religious tolerance.
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