

SACRIFICE IN ISRAELITE VIS-À-VIS IGBO RELIGIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Many people especially the Igbo of South-east Nigeria view themselves as descendants of the Jews; hence there are striking similarities in the characteristics and outlook of the Igbo man and the Israelites. Some view the Igbo as the lost tribe of Israel. Some of these views are based on the similarities of certain Igbo cultural practices with those of the Jews like, circumcision, confinement and purification of women for a specified period after childbirth, naming of a child after specific events like rituals, puberty rites and so on. On the other hand, some hold that the Igbo came under Egyptian influences. These views may be true but doubtful since there are no existing, contemporary documented and convincing records to prove the claims, and no intensive or extensive study has been carried out on the issue. The aim of this study therefore is to examine the concept of sacrifice in Israelite and that of the Igbo religions, with a view to finding out the relationship between them, if any, and whether they have the same origin.

Concept of Sacrifice in Israelite Religion

By sacrifice we mean an offering at least partially destroyed on an altar in honour of a deity. It seemed that Israelites had one type of sacrifice in the desert, that is, when they left Egypt, namely the 'Passover'; this sacrifice continued when they settled in Palestine. But there are several types of sacrifices which they developed when they settled in the same land before they were taken into exile. These sacrifices are known as pre-exilic sacrifices. They include: the holocaust, communion, expiation sacrifices and cereal offering. Others include, the showbread offering, and perfume offering commonly called the incense, although incense was just one of the elements used in the mixture burned on the altar.

When they returned from exile, that is, post-exilic period, other types of sacrifices were developed. They include: Yom Kippur (feast of atonement or feast/day of expiation) (Lev. 23). Before the exile there used to be a Day of Atonement but after the exile there was annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16), Dedication of the temple (Days of renewal, 1Macc 4:59). This feast did not

mark the original dedication of the temple of Solomon but it marks rededication of the temple in the 2nd century B.C. It originated with the end of the persecution against the Jewish community by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, when his troop entered the temple on the 25th of Chislev and desecrated it, that is, in 167 B.C, in offering sacrifice to Zeus. Judas Maccabeus recaptured the temple and rededicated it and made it an annual celebration (Psalms 113-118: hymns of dedication). Another type of sacrifice developed during this period was feast of Purim. 2nd Maccabeus called it feast of Mordecai. Mordecai was a protagonist in the book of Esther. It is possible that the feast originated from Persia. It is also called 'Lots'. This is because Mordecai who could not pay homage to Ahasuerus was to be hanged by lot. The date of hanging was determined by lots on 15th of the 12th month of Adar, that is, February or March.

For purpose of this study, we take on three types of sacrifice, namely the holocaust, communion and expiatory. We shall begin by naming in Hebrew each type, that is, etymology of each of the sacrifices, followed by description of the rituals involved.

The Holocaust

In Hebrew, the words for the holocaust are *‘ôlāh* and *kalil*. *‘ôlāh* developed from the verb *‘Alah*, which is the verb “to ascend”. The holocaust was given this name because the victim of the holocaust literally went up in smoke. *Kalil* developed from the verb *kalal*, meaning “to complete”, “perfect”, “bring to an end”. It was given this name because the victim of the holocaust was completely burned. The characteristic feature of this sacrifice is that the entire victim is burnt and nothing is given back to the man who offers it or to the priest (De Vaux 1974).

The ritual is described in just two texts (Lev 1:1ff). According to this ritual, the victim had to be a male animal or bird. If it were an animal, it was normally a lamb, a he-goat, or an ox. Poor people preferred fowl generally, a turtle dove or a pigeon. The ritual is marked by the imposition of the hand on the head of the victim by the offerer; this symbolizes that it is being offered for the benefit of the offerer or in his name. Then, followed by slitting of the throat of the animal; the skinning of the animal; its dismembering, the sacrifice itself, that is, the burning of the victim. Everything including the intestine and the hooves or feet were first washed, then placed on the altar and then burnt. The offerer would collect the blood in a vessel which he would take to the priest at the altar, who pours the blood around the base of the altar.

When the victim was a bird, the offerer would not lay hands on it, nor would he cut its throat. Everything would be done on the altar by the priest. The offering was ‘whole’ because it was wholly burnt on the altar; it was a ‘fire offering’ because it was burnt; it was ‘pleasing odor’ because it was intended to be well pleasing to God.

These are the details we read in Leviticus. The entire book of Leviticus is generally assigned to priestly tradition, which represents the way the ritual was performed in Jerusalem, in the period right from the exile. Those returning from the exile followed the prescriptions given in the priestly account. But we must ask whether it was always performed in the same manner. There are a number of texts referring to the sacrifice, texts more ancient than Leviticus. It seemed that Israel began performing sacrifice soon after the people entered Canaan. Gideon performed one (Lev. 6:16-23) as did Samson’s father (Judges 13:15-25) and Samuel (1Sam 7:9-10, 10:3-8).

After seven centuries there must have been some changes in the ritual. When we read the texts referring to holocaust, we find that these individuals offered the holocaust, but there is absolutely no reference to the priest. Gideon performed the holocaust and the text does not mention the presence of a priest. Samson’s father as well, offered one without the presence of a priest. We have another text without reference to a priest (1Sam 6:14). Thus it is likely that the priest in earlier times was unnecessary because the original role of the priest was not to perform cultic rituals

(Agius 1997).

In the ancient Semitic world, priests were appointed to take care of the sanctuary and its furnishings. So it is possible that in earlier times, private individuals could perform the holocaust without involving the priest. It is not very likely that the absence of reference to a priest is a coincidence. In any case, what characterizes the holocaust is the consumption of the victim.

The Communion Sacrifice

There are two words used to describe this type of sacrifice. The first is *zebah*, which comes from the verb *zabab*, meaning 'to slaughter for sacrifice' or refers simply to 'the sacrifice offered'. The second term is *shelamim*, which is *shalom* in the plural, which is 'peace offering', *šelem* in Hebrew, or 'peace sacrifice'. This sacrifice used to be offered in order to continue or re-establish good relations between God and the offerer. It is also referred to as *zebah-shelamim*.

There were three types of communion sacrifice for three different reasons. There was the sacrifice of 'thanksgiving' or 'praise'. In Hebrew, it is called *todah*. It used to be offered to render thanks or to praise God for a grace or favour received. The second type was called the votive offering/sacrifice, which in Hebrew is called *neder*. It was the type of sacrifice one performed in fulfillment of a vow one had made. Thirdly, there was the voluntary or free-will offering. This was performed on one's own initiative, for any reason whatever. It is called *nedebah* in Hebrew. The ritual of this sacrifice is also described in Leviticus 3. Animals like bird were not allowed in this sacrifice. Victims may be male or female, and in voluntary or free-will sacrifice, a slightly blemished animal was allowed. The laying on the hands, slitting, skinning, dismembering, washing took place in exactly the same manner as in the holocaust (Lev 22:23).

What characterized this sacrifice was what happened to the victim. It used to be divided into three parts. One part was consumed by fire on the altar, specifically the best parts of the victim: the fat around the kidney, liver and tail. The ancient Semitic tradition looked upon fat as testimony to the vigor of one's life. That is why it was given back to God in sacrifice. The second part was given to the priest, specifically, the breast and the right leg. The rest of the victim was kept by the offerer.

In the case of *todah* (thanksgiving or praise) and *neder* (votive offering), this last part had to be consumed by the offerer and his family that day (Lev. 7:15). The *nedebah* (free-will) could be consumed the following day, and anything left over must be burnt on the third day (Lev. 7:16-17). The sacrifice of praise or thanksgiving is to be accompanied by an offering of unleavened cakes and unleavened bread. One of the cakes is a sample for Yahweh and reverts to the priest (De Vaux 1974).

Expiatory Sacrifice

This sacrifice comprises two kinds, the *ḥaṭṭa't* (sin, for sin) and the '*asham* (reparation for a moral crime committed). The purpose was to re-establish the covenant with God when it has been broken by the sin of man. We shall examine each of them below.

The ḥaṭṭa't (Sacrifice for sin)

This was not known before the exile except in the form of fines. The ritual for this sacrifice is described in Lev. 4. The type of victim used depended on the rank of the person who had sinned. A bull was to be offered for sin of the high priest, for his guilt defiled the entire people. A bull also was to be offered for the sin of the prince; a she-goat or sheep for the sin of private individual. The poor could offer two turtle doves or two pigeons. One of the birds was to be used as a sacrifice for sin and the other a holocaust. The poor could also make an offering instead of these animals.

When the sacrifice was offered for the high priest or for the whole community, there were three successive rites. The priest who is performing the sacrifice first collected the blood, entered into the holy place and there sprinkled the blood seven times against the veil which curtains off the holy of holies; next, he rubbed blood upon the corners of the altar of incense, when stood before the veil; thirdly, he poured out the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar of holocaust (De Vaux 1974).

It should be noted that these were the only animal sacrifices in which part of the victim was carried inside the temple building. When the sacrifice was offered for the sin of a private individual, the blood was put on the horns of the altar of holocaust and the rest poured out at its base. The internal fat as always was burned on the altar, and the flesh was eaten that same day by the priest within the holy place. The essential element was that the flesh which had become 'sin', should be taken away destroyed. However, if the sacrifice is on behalf of the community or the high priest, the priests were not allowed to eat any part of the victim. The remaining were carried outside the sanctuary and placed on the ash-heap. These sacrifices of sin took place on a particular solemnity on the Day of Atonement. Thus, the sin offering is a means by which the sin of man is taken away.

'Asham (Sacrifice of reparation)

The word means an offence and then the means by which the offence is righted, and finally, a sacrifice for reparation. The sacrificial code deals with this kind of offering more briefly (Lev. 5:14-26, 7:1-6), and there, it was stated that rites to be followed are the same as in sacrifice for sin (Lev. 7:7). However, this sacrifice was offered on behalf of private individual only, and as a result, the blood was never taken into the holy place, and the victim was never burned away from the sanctuary; secondly, the only victim prescribed was a ram; and thirdly, in some cases, the sacrifice was to be accompanied by the payment of a fine (Lev. 5:14-16; Nb 5:5-8).

When an individual infringed on the right of God or a man in a way that could be estimated monetarily, then the guilty person had to offer a ram for reparation, and restore to the priest who represents Yahweh, or to the wronged person the monetary equivalent of the damage, plus one fifth. However, this restitution did not form part of the sacrifice.

Sacrifice for sin is offered when a man sins inadvertently, that is un-purposely, against any commandment of Yahweh (Lev. 4:2) but the sacrifice for reparation is observed when somebody unwittingly, that is unwillingly, did something forbidden by the commandments of Yahweh (Lev. 5:17). However, the two sacrifices are prescribed for very similar cases.

Anyone who does not come forward as a witness in court when he ought to, or anyone who makes a declaration in court without consideration must offer *hatta't* (Lev. 5:4). Anyone who commits perjury must offer '*asham*' (Lev. 5:22, 24). Three sacrifices must be offered for the purification of a leper. They are an '*asham*', a *hatta't* and a holocaust (Lev. 14:10-32).

A Nazarite who has been defiled by touching a dead body must offer two turtle doves or pigeons, one for a *hatta't*, the other as a holocaust, and in addition, a lamb as an '*asham*' (Nb 6:9-12).

The Religious Significance of Sacrifice in Israelite Religion

Having dealt with sacrifice in Israelite religion as observed in ancient Israel, it seems relevant to pose the following questions: What was the purpose of sacrifice in Israelite religion? What was its religious significance among the Israelites? What place did it occupy in their conception of relationship between man and God?

Well, we can say that the predominant motive for sacrifice in Israelite religion is their

desire to receive something from God. However, they seemed to be retrospective in nature. They all seemed to have reference to an event in the immediate past which either being acknowledged in thanksgiving or in repentance.

Put succinctly, the purpose of sacrifice in Israel is to maintain good relationship with God, and to atone for sin(s) committed. It is the essential act of external worship and prayer acted symbolically, which expresses both interior feeling of the offerer and God's response to his prayer. The Israelites believe that sacrifice can exercise influence on celestial phenomenon, and that, it is commanded by God himself. This is the reason sacrifices were developed and performed in Israelite religion.

Concept of Sacrifice in Igbo Religion

Sacrifice plays an essential part in African traditional religion. Quarcoopome (1987) enumerated various types of sacrifices in West African traditional religion. They include, "human sacrifice, votive offering, meal and drink offering, gift or thank offering substitution sacrifice, propitiatory sacrifice, preventive and foundational sacrifices" (p. 89). In Igbo society, neither the culture nor the political system of the Igbo can be understood without reference to religion. Religion is the affair of the whole society. The norms and values of the society seen as ordained by the gods and the ancestors are the affairs of the whole society.

The Igbo recognizes that man is not the master of the world. There are superior powers, invisible spirits, the ancestors, and there are also human spirits of wicked deceased people. Quoting Father Jordan Arinze (1970), states, "Every Ibo (sic) believed that an invisible universe was in action all around him, and that his term of life was short if he happened to fall foul of its denizens. He felt that it was up to him therefore to propitiate them and to treat them with courtesy and deference, that was the fundamental reason why he had such a penchant for sacrifice in all its many forms" (p. 34).

Furthermore, Arinze (1970) groups the ends of Igbo sacrifice under four headings to include, expiation sacrifice to ward off molestation from unknown evil spirits, petition, and thanksgiving sacrifices (p. 34). The importance of sacrifice in Igbo religion is so conspicuous, hence in Arinze's statement, "Sacrifice is the soul of Ibo cult. If it is removed, Ibo traditional religion is almost emptied of its content" (Arinze 1970).

In discussing Igbo sacrifice, in this study, we would divide it into four types namely, expiatory or purification, exorcist, propitiatory and consecratory sacrifices.

Expiatory or Purification Sacrifice (*ḱpụ arụ*)

This type of sacrifice is offered to cleanse the pollution arising from a breach of sacred prohibitions of the earth mother (*Ala*). There are pollutions which the Igbo would call abominations because they threaten the community as a whole, for instance, murder. This is a major pollution. There are also minor pollutions which may affect only the offender and his immediate kindred, for instance, adultery. Purification of both pollutions is called *ḱpụ arụ* but the character of purification rites vary according to the gravity of the crime and the nature of the offence (Metuh, 1985).

Purification for minor pollution is performed by a diviner and or herbalist and things used are according to the prescription of the diviner. The diviner uses an egg and a chicken or a white fowl. He waves it round the culprit's head a number of times with some invocations of the ancestors and the earth goddess to forgive the culprit. The sacrificial victim is later thrown into an evil forest with the belief that the pollution has gone inside the egg (Nzeako, 1981).

Rite of purification for major abomination is performed by a special priest from Nri town. The ordinary victim is ram. The earth spirit and ancestors are invoked to forgive the culprit.

Sometimes the offender is required to say out his abomination aloud before the shrine and to smear his body with ashes. The Nri priest takes a greater part of the sacrificed ram together with a fat fee. Very few people, never the culprit, are allowed to eat of the rest of the ram. After this cleansing sacrifice the offender once more regains full association with others (Arinze, 1970).

Public expiatory sacrifice in an Igbo town or village used to assume special solemnity in the sacrifice of scapegoats. Talbot explains in Arinze (1970) how this type of sacrifice is performed. According to him, a town or a village could heap all its sins on a goat or cow and then offer it to a spirit. The advice of the diviner is indispensable before such a move. Some of these animals were first earmarked and then left to wonder in liberty. Others were tied and thrown into the forest. Arinze (1970) added that “human beings were used to remove the ills of the multitude in a few places such as Onitsha” (p. 37).

Exorcist Sacrifice (*!chụ Aja*)

This sacrifice is usually undertaken after a series of misfortune for which no natural explanations can be found, prolonged illness which has defied all cures or many deaths in a quick succession in a family. The step is to consult a diviner who would in most cases recommend this kind of sacrifice. The spirits to whom these sacrifices are offered are evil spirits of the dead – *akalogoli*. According to Metuh (1985) “The characteristic feature of this sacrifice is that it is altogether with joy” (p. 64). It is usually performed by a diviner or the head of the family as the case may be. Nzeako (1981) enumerated the sacrificial ingredients to include the less valuable things such as cowries, chickens, pieces of yams, lizards, eggs or egg-shells, kola nuts, pieces of cloth, fowls, miscarried young goats or cows” (p. 117). Basden (1966) observed that “no particular preparations are made for this sacrifice” (p. 224).

The offering demands no more space than a wooden platter, a fragment of a broken earthen pot, a boat shaped container woven from palm leaf tendril in which the person acting as the priest puts the despicable offering telling the evil spirits to eat and leave them alone. The container is dropped at the place prescribed by the diviner especially a junction. This sacrifice is offered to escape from the evil designs and activities of malignant spirits.

Propitiatory Sacrifice (*Imegha mmụọ*)

This sacrifice is usually undertaken to please a god or spirits. Offerings are made either to dispose the god or assist man to achieve some of his aspirations. It includes offerings made to ancestral cult annually during some festivals organized for them. Such festival is *alommụọ*. It is also offered to some idols according to the instruction of a diviner. The traditional Morning Prayer is included in this category because in it, there is element of sacrifice like offering of kola nut. Sacrifice for thanksgiving can be categorized under this.

The general thing is that this sacrifice is offered with joy. It is for the ancestor. The eldest in the family offers it. The blood of the victim is sprinkled on the cult while the flesh is cooked and eaten by all present. The priest of the deity is responsible for the sacrifice for that deity. This sacrifice is usually communal.

Consecratory Sacrifice (*Ido Nsọ*)

The Igbo had the practice of consecrating some animals to a deity alive. Such victims after the sacrificial ritual are allowed to wander around the neighbourhood or the premises of the god as its property (Metuh, 1985). In the past, this includes human beings whom after the ritual are called *osu* (outcast). The immolation or ritual killing of the victim is symbolically expressed by either making a deep cut on the animal to let some of the blood to drop on the altar, or slicing off a tiny bit of its body as a token offering to a deity. The scar thereafter remains as a mark, meaning that, it

is the property of the deity. The ceremony of dedication which takes place at the shrine is performed by the priests and titled men of the community. With the *ofò* (Detarium Senegalense), the victim is consecrated while the ancestors are invoked to receive the gift and protect him (Metuh, 1985).

This practice is still obtained in some part of Igbo land. For instance, in Ekwusigo, Ihiala, Nnewi South Local Governments, one can see some of the animals dedicated to a particular deity roaming the streets. *Ogwugwu Okija* is a vivid example of this practice. It has a number of goats, cows, fowls, and so on, belonging to it. Usually dead people who are believed to have been killed by the deity are also deposited there.

Religious Significance of Sacrifice in Igbo Religion

Sacrifice is an act of the virtue of religion. God created man and conserves him. He is the final end of man, reaching from end to end mightily and ordering all things sweetly. By sacrifice man acknowledges God's supreme dominion and excellence and offers him adoration (Arinze, 1970). The Igbo, therefore, offer sacrifice to expiate offences both major and minor; to ward off the wicked molestation of evil spirits; to make their manifold petitions and; to thank the good spirits and the ancestors and; in general, to show them subjection (Arinze, 1970).

Comparative analysis of the two religious societies and their sacrifices

In summarizing this work we would like to provide the answers for the reasons stated earlier as the aim of this topic, that is, to find out the relationship between sacrifices in Israelite and Igbo religions (if any) and whether they have the same origin.

Thus we cannot say that the concepts of sacrifice in the two religions are the same. This is because the Israelites explain the historical events with reference to primary cause, while the Igbo seek to explain the principle of cause and effect but only in regard to secondary causes.

Furthermore, certain differences can be noticed, depending on the different development of the societies and the influence of external factors on them. However, the concept of sacrifice can be seen in the two religions for it is (sacrifice) the principal act in the worship of the two religions (De vaux 1974; Arinze 1970).

There are different types of sacrifices in the two religions and they serve different purposes. However, the following sacrifices seem to be the same in the two religions: the holocaust, communion and expiatory sacrifices. In other words, these three types of sacrifices in Israelite religion seem to be similar to propitiatory, expiatory/purificatory and consecratory sacrifices obtained in Igbo religion. Though their sacrificial methods are different, their ends are the same. The sharp difference is exorcist sacrifice noticed in Igbo religion. Besides, expiatory sacrifice in Igbo religion seems to be different.

In Igbo religion, direct and indirect sacrifices are performed. Direct sacrifice takes the form of holocaust and communion respectively. It has four different types: *Igba mkpu Chukwu* (celebrating God's mound), *Aja Eze Enu* (sacrifice to God, king of heaven), *Iruma Chukwu* (installing the altar of God) and *Ikpala Chukwu Ugbo* (making a sacrificial boat for God on marriage). *Igba mkpu Chukwu* and *Aja Eze Enu* usually take the same method of sacrifice. Thus the sacrifices consist of libations of palm wine and liquefied white chalk poured on the altar of God, and the immolation of a goat. The shrine is smeared with the blood of the sacrifice, then the meat is cooked. Some is offered to God on the shrine and the remainder is eaten by the participants. While pouring the libation and making an offering of the food, the officiating priest also offers prayers for the welfare of the group, for a good harvest and for peace and prosperity within the community (Metuh, 1981). Both festivals take place twice in a year. These are before planting season and

during the harvests.

In *Iruma Chukwu* the victim of the sacrifice is the same as in *Aja eze enu*. In this sacrifice, the suspension of the offerings on a bamboo pole is preceded by a ritual in which the initiate prays with the phallic chalk for the health and prosperity of his family and village. Thus, one fowl is offered in the mid air to *Chukwu* while the other is killed and shared in a communal meal. Thereafter, the bamboo set up is taken down and replaced by another, this time planted between two planks of *ukwa* (bread fruit), iron wood, and each about four feet high. A white fowl, yams, an eagle's feather and so on, are tied to the bamboo pole for *Chukwu*. Then a castrated goat is offered up, along with a second white fowl. These are later slaughtered and shared in a communal meal.

Ikpalu Chukwu ugbotakes a different form. It was offered by a father on behalf of his daughter who was about to marry (Madu, 2004). The principal objects for the sacrifice include a cock, some tubers of yams and a boat-shaped container woven from palm fronds. Usually the officiating priest was the priest of earth deity of the place. The offerings put in the boat and the blood of the cock sprinkled over it while the priest prays to God to accept the offering, protect the bride-to-be and asks for offerings for the girl and her husband, long life and prosperity (Madu, 2004).

Direct sacrifice, in Igbo religion, is different from indirect sacrifice. Thus in indirect sacrifice, the offerings and the favour of God are sought through the means of the lesser divinities.

In holocaust sacrifice, the similar thing in the two religions is that the victim is entirely for God. God is directly involved as he is the absolute and ultimate recipient of the sacrifice. Propitiatory sacrifice in Igbo religion is also the same as communal sacrifice in Israelite religion hence the victim is shared among the priest, God, and the offerer. Part of the victim is also cooked and eaten by all present.

At this juncture, it should be noted that Israelite sacrifice did not begin as a highly, sophisticated and completely articulated ritual but as a simple, undifferentiated act which contained within itself the seeds of later development. Thus in Israel, before the time of Josiah, sacrifices were offered at different places or sanctuaries, which were rocks. Hezekiah made the first attempt to centralize worship which was carried further by Josiah. His idea triumphed in the end, for the community that returned from exile never had any sanctuary in Judah except the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

In Igbo religion, sacrifices are offered at the cult of different deities and other places outside the shrines as may be directed by the diviner. There is never a central sanctuary where the Igbo offer sacrifices together.

In Israelite religion, sacrifice was offered by the head of the family: Abraham (Gen. 22:13), Jacob (Gen. 31:54, 46:1). The institution of priesthood started in Mosaic period. Moses himself was a priest and prophet. Later, formal priesthood was established. At the command of God, Moses consecrated Aaron and his three sons to minister in the priestly office (Ex. 28:1). All subsequent priests were believed to be descendants of Aaron. These subsequent priests performed sacrificial function on behalf of the people.

The Igbo society believes in the priesthood of all heads of house-hold, lineage and clan. *Ozo* titled men are also priests in so far as they offer sacrifice and perform ritual function including praying to *Chukwu* (Great God) and to the ancestors. If the sacrifice is to be offered to a deity, the priest of that deity is responsible for the sacrifice. There are also priests who are professionals in offering sacrifices like the *Nri priests*. They are invited to offer expiatory sacrifices. There is never a single priest who offers sacrifice for the whole community or Igbo society.

Another important difference observed in this study is that while most of the Israelite sacrifices are retrospective in their main inspiration, those of the Igbo are forward-looking in so far

as they are designed to influence the course of future events.

Influence of External Factors

There are external factors on the sacrifice of the two religions. In the case of Israelites, the semi-nomadic life, desert experience, Canaanite religion, settled life of agriculture, religion of other surrounding nations and exilic experience influenced their sacrificial rituals, persons responsible for offering sacrifice, places of sacrifice, sacrificial victims and types of sacrifices.

In Igbo religion, the influence of the missionaries and colonial masters is noticed in terms of sacrificial victim and method. For instance, the use of human beings either killed or consecrated is reduced to barest minimum, if not eliminated.

The Motive of Sacrifice in the two Religions

We can say that the predominant motive is the people's desire to receive something from God or deity; thus, sacrifice is offered in order to maintain good relationship with God or the invisible being, a being that is greater than human beings. The two societies believe that sacrifice can exercise influence on celestial phenomenon. By sacrifice, the people acknowledge God's supreme dominion and excellence and offer him adoration.

Sacrifice for the two societies is the essential act of external worship and prayer acted symbolically which expresses both the interior feeling of the offerer and God's response to his prayer.

Conclusion

From observation in this study, one can see that there are striking similarities between sacrifices in the two religions as well as striking differences. But we should not make the mistake of understanding them to be of the same origin. However, in all religions the following elements can be found: the creed, that is, the belief; cult or liturgy, that is, worshiping/sacrificial system; norms or ethical principles and guidelines. One or more of these elements in one religion may complement with another religion.

Moreover, despite the differences in the two religions, there are striking elements of sacrifice in both religions, and indeed, in all religions. They include, the gift/consecration of human being to the deity; the homage of the subject to the deity; the expiation of offences; communion with the deity in the sacrificial banquet; life released from the victim, transmitted to the deity, and conferred upon the people gathered.

Finally, in spite of some similarities between the sacrifices in both religions, they do not have a common origin whatsoever. This submission can be proved when one examines the differences between them; for instance, the non availability of records to prove the origin of the Igbo; the geographical location of the two races, some cultural differences, including language and so on. These differences have become the barriers in concluding that the two religions have common origin.

Recommendations

In the course of this study, findings were made as articulated in the comparative analysis above. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are therefore made:

1. Notwithstanding the external factors that influence the Igbo sacrifice, the Igbo should revive the traditional priesthood of all heads of house-hold for sanctity.
2. One can become a priest in Igbo traditional society not only by training but also by ascribed

status like the *Ozọ* or family head and; by virtue of this status, one exercises a priestly role. This ascribed status should be encouraged in the contemporary Igbo society; hence every family head represents the family before the living and the dead; and as a mediator, it is his responsibility to pray for his family members for their progress, protection and other blessings.

3. The essence of sacrifice in every religion is to maintain a harmonious relationship between the visible and invisible and to see that man lives a balanced life with other elements in the universe (Okeke, 2012); therefore, the concept of sacrifice in traditional religions should not be misconstrued or relegated, rather, there should be a meeting point between Christianity and traditional religions in form of dialogue so as to study the sacrificial method of each religion, that way enculturation will be possible.
4. The Igbo should not shy away in recognizing the fact that they have no recorded history; therefore, effort must be made by the present Igbo scholars to dig out their identity and historical past, and this study has proved that the Israelite and Igbo societies do not have a common origin, though there are similarities in some of the sacrifices performed in both religions.

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