

GARRICK BRAIDE AND THE METAPHYSICS OF AFRICAN SYMBOLISM

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a philosophical exploration of Garrick Sokari Braide's prophetic ministry through the lens of African metaphysics and symbolic representation. As a charismatic prophet and spiritual leader in early 20th-century Nigeria, Braide's movement emerged as both a religious revival and a metaphysical protest against colonial and ecclesiastical dominations. Central to his ministry were symbols—ritual objects, healing acts, spiritual visions—that mediated divine presence and invoked African cosmological structures. This study interrogates how such symbols, grounded in indigenous metaphysical concepts like vital force, ancestral agency, and spiritual causality, served not only as instruments of communication but as ontological realities within African thought. By bridging Christian prophetic narratives with African semiotic systems, Braide reframed spiritual authority and revelation in ways that affirmed local epistemologies. Drawing from African philosophy, religious studies, and historical theology, this paper argues that Braide's prophetic symbolism was not merely expressive but metaphysically constitutive redefining being, power, and divine presence in an African Christian worldview. In doing so, the work contributes to contemporary debates on religious hybridity, symbolic ontology, and the enduring resonance of African metaphysical imagination in shaping prophetic identity.

KEYWORDS: African Indigenous Churches, African metaphysics, African Symbolism, Garrick Sokari Braide, Prophetism.

INTRODUCTION

Garrick Sokari Braide remains a pivotal figure in African religious history, embodying the intersection of prophetic vision and indigenous symbolic representation. His emergence in the early 20th century as a charismatic religious leader in the Niger Delta challenged the dominance of Christian missionary influence while simultaneously drawing on deep-rooted African spiritual traditions (Gbule, 2017). Braide's ministry, characterised by healing, prophecy, and a call for

moral and economic self-reliance, resonated widely among his followers, positioning him as both a religious innovator and a symbol of African agency in the face of colonial subjugation (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013; Kalu, 2008; Deezia, 2021). However, despite his historical and theological significance, there remains a gap in scholarly discourse concerning the symbolic dimensions of his movement and how his prophetic activities engaged with indigenous African semiotic structures.

Religious symbolism in Africa serves as a conduit for interpreting spiritual experiences, encapsulating the sacred within culturally familiar frameworks (Ray, 1976; Lawrence-Hart, & Deezia, 2025). In Braide's movement, symbolic elements—such as ritual practices, sacred objects, and performative gestures—played a crucial role in reinforcing his prophetic authority and the legitimacy of his message. While some scholars have examined his role as a forerunner of African indigenous Christianity (Peel, 1968), fewer have delved into the semiotic dimensions of his leadership, particularly how his prophetic identity was constructed through African symbolic systems. Hence, this study seeks to bridge that gap by exploring the confluence of Braide's prophetic vision and the indigenous semiotics that underpinned his movement, shedding light on how African religious symbolism functioned as both a means of resistance and an assertion of cultural identity.

THE PROBLEM OF THE THESIS

Garrick Braide's confrontation with colonial and missionary authorities underscores a broader and deeply rooted struggle between African religious self-definition and the imposition of Euro-Christian paradigms. His persecution and eventual imprisonment were not merely punitive responses to political dissent or ecclesiastical non-conformity. Rather, they reflected a deeper colonial anxiety: the fear that indigenous religious movements could challenge and ultimately dismantle the theological and cultural dominance of Western Christianity and its allied colonial structures (Hastings, 1994). Within the wider religious ferment of early 20th-century Nigeria, Braide's prophetic mission emerged as more than a theological controversy—it represented a clash of worldviews. On one side stood the imported religious ontologies of the West; on the other, the African symbolic, metaphysical, and epistemological frameworks that were striving to reclaim spiritual agency and cultural autonomy.

The central problem this thesis addresses is twofold. Firstly, it interrogates how Braide's prophetic movement operated as a site of resistance against colonially mediated theological categories that sought to marginalise African religious expressions. Secondly, it examines how Braide's use of indigenous religious symbols—rooted in notions such as *vital force*, *ancestral presence*, and *spiritual causality*—was not simply an act of contextual accommodation, but a radical reconfiguration of Christian identity through African metaphysical imagination. His prophetic symbolism functioned not at the level of ornamental indigenisation but as a deep ontological grammar—reshaping ideas of spiritual authority, divine agency, and communal being within the context of African Christianity.

The objective of this study is to critically analyse the theological, philosophical, and symbolic dimensions of Braide's prophetic ministry through an interdisciplinary framework that draws from African philosophy, religious studies, semiotics, and historical theology. By exploring how Braide synthesised Christian prophetic discourse with African semiotic and metaphysical systems, this thesis argues that his movement articulated a radical alternative vision of Christian life. In this vision, symbols were not merely representational tools but ontological forces—constitutive of identity, power, and revelation. In so doing, the study contributes to current scholarly conversations on religious hybridity, symbolic ontology, and the enduring relevance of African metaphysical thought in shaping prophetic consciousness and postcolonial Christian identity in contemporary Africa.

AFRICAN SYMBOLISM AND METAPHYSICS: AN OVERVIEW

African metaphysics is rooted in a worldview that perceives reality as an interconnected totality, where the visible and invisible realms interact in dynamic and reciprocal ways (Mbiti, 1969; Tempels, 1959). Within this ontological framework, symbols are not merely representational signs—they carry spiritual potency and metaphysical presence. They embody truth, mediate power, and serve as conduits for spiritual forces. In African philosophical thought, symbols do not simply point to reality; they actively participate in it (Gyekye, 1995). As such, symbols are performative, creative, and prophetic—they shape reality as much as they reflect it.

This symbolic metaphysics informs the role of religious figures, particularly the prophet, who is seen not just as a spiritual guide but as a metaphysical agent. Through ritual, speech, and embodiment, the prophet channels the spiritual order into the social realm. This conceptual backdrop provides a lens through which Garrick Braide's movement in the Niger Delta can be understood—not as a break from African spirituality, but as a continuity and adaptation of indigenous metaphysical principles within a Christian framework.

Symbolism in African religious and philosophical traditions plays a pivotal role in mediating the sacred and the secular. It manifests through rituals, art, colour schemes, gestures, music, dance, and sacred objects—all of which possess metaphysical significance. Ritual symbols, such as libations or ceremonial costumes, reinforce the seamless interplay between the seen and unseen worlds. Sacred objects like masks, totems, and sculptures are believed to embody spirits of deities, ancestors, or natural forces, serving both aesthetic and spiritual functions.

Colour symbolism is equally profound in African religious expressions: white denotes purity and spiritual presence; red connotes vitality, strength, and danger; black evokes the ancestral domain and the mysteries of existence. In other ways, music and dance—especially drumming—serve as symbolic and spiritual acts, facilitating communication with the divine, communal cohesion, and emotional catharsis.

These symbolic elements are not static. African religious traditions have shown a remarkable ability to integrate and reinterpret new religious forms. Garrick Braide's movement exemplified this adaptability by fusing Christian teachings with indigenous symbols, creating a spiritual synthesis that resonated with local cosmologies. Similarly, in African Islam, Arabic calligraphy and architectural motifs are often blended with traditional African aesthetics, reflecting a confluence of religious and cultural influences. African symbolism remains a dynamic and evolving force in the religious landscape. It provides a means for transmitting values, sustaining communal identity, and facilitating spiritual encounters in everyday life. Through symbols, African religious traditions maintain continuity between the past and the present, the sacred and the mundane, the human and the divine.

PROPHECY AND ONTOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION IN GARRICK BRAIDE'S MINISTRY

The exact date of Garrick Sokari Braide's birth remains uncertain, though sources such as M.A. Kemmer (in a 1909 report) describe him as a young man aged approximately 25–27 at that time, situating his birth around 1882/1883 (Ekebuisi, 2015; *Lagos Weekly Record*, 1917). He was born into the Agu family of Obonoma, in present-day Akuku-Toru LGA of Rivers State—custodians of the Agu divinity, whose members often served as its priests (Tasie, 1982). Oral traditions from his descendants note that his conception was marked by anxiety, as his mother, Abari-Iginia, suffered severe health issues and attempted to terminate the pregnancy. A revelatory dream intervened, warning her against it. The child was named 'Sokari,' meaning "one who arrives by his own will." Mystical interpretations surrounding his birth led his family to seek guidance from a diviner, prompting their eventual relocation to Bakana to avoid stigma.

Braide's spiritual journey began under the Anglican Church. While some claim he may have attended open-air services as early as 1890 (Tasie, 1978), Ekebuisi (2015) asserts that his catechetical instruction did not begin until 1905 under the tutelage of Moses A. Kemmer at St. Andrew's Church, Bakana. Despite early linguistic and cultural challenges—such as the imposed use of Igbo in catechism—Braide's intellectual aptitude impressed Kemmer, who documented his capacity to memorise sermons and catechism (Kemmer, 1909). He was baptised in January 1910 and confirmed in 1912 by Bishop James Johnson. That same year, Braide experienced a transformative encounter during Holy Communion, which he interpreted as a divine calling to evangelism.

Following his confirmation, Braide launched a ministry defined by faith healing, charismatic preaching, and prophetic acts. He began organising public healing sessions, drawing immense crowds. Documented instances include the healing of over 1,000 individuals during one mission and the notable cure of a woman with a chronic nasal condition (Ekebuisi, 2015). By 1915, he was preaching across the Niger Delta, notably turning a private visit to Chief Hatt of Bonny into a

regional evangelistic campaign. His emphasis on preaching before healing illustrated his commitment to spiritual instruction as well as divine intervention.

Braide's movement, while initially Anglican in orientation, evolved into a distinctly African prophetic revival. He challenged the ecclesiastical dominance of European missionaries, advocating a more indigenous and experiential expression of Christianity. His followers regarded him as a prophet, healer, and liberator, earning him the title *Tamuno Ikiakorobo*— "God's prophet" (Tasie, 1978). His movement appealed to local populations alienated by foreign missionaries who preached in unfamiliar languages and imposed intellectualised catechism requirements. Braide, conversely, taught in the local Kalabari language, democratizing access to Christianity and fostering mass participation (Tom Braide, 2021, oral interview).

However, Braide's growing influence was perceived as a threat by colonial authorities and European missionaries. His promotion of local economic autonomy, such as the rejection of imported alcohol, was deemed subversive (Deezia, 2021). He was accused of heresy, his followers of idolatry, and his house became a pilgrimage site seen by officials as a centre of dissent. District Officer P.A. Talbot criticised the movement for destroying valuable anthropological artefacts (Kalu, 1977). Despite efforts from his supporters in Lagos, Braide was arrested, imprisoned for six months in 1916, and died shortly after his release in 1918, leaving behind a legacy of spiritual resistance and indigenous revival (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2019).

Braide's ministry occupies a unique intersection of prophecy, resistance, and ontological symbolism. As a liminal figure, Braide embodied the African understanding of the prophet as one who bridges the material and spiritual realms (Abanuka, 2004). His rejection of colonial sacramentalism, symbolic cleansing rites, and proclamation of divine authority can be interpreted as metaphysical acts aimed at restoring cosmic balance disrupted by colonial impositions. These acts challenged not only missionary theology but also Western ontological assumptions of spiritual superiority. As Mudimbe (1988) argues, colonialism was as much an epistemological project as it was a political one—Braide's actions therefore served as a profound African critique of imported metaphysical structures. Garrick Braide's life and ministry represent a powerful convergence of Christian revivalism, prophetic agency, and indigenous ontology. His legacy illustrates the potential of African Christianity to be both spiritually authentic and politically emancipatory.

GARRICK BRAIDE AND PROPHETIC SYMBOLISM

Braide's ministry thrived on symbolic representations that resonated with African religious sensibilities. Some key aspects include:

***Boma Minji* (blessed mud) and *Boma-Lika* (blessed water) Symbolism**

Another Braide's innovation was the use of *Boma Minji* (blessed mud) and *Boma-Lika* (blessed water) as a prophylactic/therapeutic substance. According to Balmy Braide (2021, oral interview), the establishment of *Boma Minji* (blessed mud) and *Boma-Lika* (blessed water) was a divine directive to Prophet Garrick Braide, and

after the encounter, Braide sanctified a particular spot in Bakana where he dug the *Boma Minji* and *Boma-Lika*. These mud and water are believed to cure different kinds of health challenges and were distributed free of charge. Believers were also being cured of their illnesses when they applied (rubbed) their bodies with the blessed mud wetted by Garrick Braide's birth-water. This innovative use of healing water created a feeling of religious excitement and strong hope in the minds of his teeming followers. This is based on his conviction and understanding that religious faith is intended to serve as a survival strategy in the face of challenging circumstances, and his recommendation of fasting and prayers, the use of holy water and mud as rituals that enabled his followers to face their struggles against evil. News about the mysteries and miraculous effects of the use of *Boma Minji* and *Boma-Lika* spread like wildfire, and people from different walks of life thronged to Bakana to collect the healing water. Some of them rubbed the mud mixed with this holy water on their bodies for healing; some drank the water to repel the forces of evil, while others used both as a spiritual enabler to obtain divine mercies (Karibo, 2022).

Furthermore, Braide's emphasis on water as an agent of purification extended beyond individual healing to communal restoration. His ministry sought not only to address personal afflictions but also to cleanse communities from perceived moral and spiritual decay. This operation of healing echoes the broader African cosmology in which water rituals are used to renew entire communities, ensuring harmony between the physical and spiritual realms.

The role of water in Braide's ministry also reflected the symbolic association of rivers and streams with divine encounters. The Niger Delta, with its intricate network of waterways, provided a fitting backdrop for his ministry. Many significant religious movements have emerged from riverine societies where water, as a vital and omnipresent force, takes on heightened religious significance. The landscape itself reinforced the theological message that water was a sacred gift imbued with divine power.

Fire as a Metaphor for Spiritual Power

Fire, across diverse religious traditions, stands as a symbol of divine presence, transformation, and purification. In African spirituality, fire represents not just destruction but renewal, a means through which old structures are consumed to pave the way for new possibilities. Garrick Sokari Braide, a prophetic figure in early 20th-century Nigeria, wielded fire as a powerful metaphor for spiritual authority, divine judgment, and the radical transformation of religious consciousness. His ministry was marked by an intense, almost combustible, zeal that sought to purge indigenous communities of perceived idolatrous practices, aligning them with Christian ideals.

Braide's evangelistic fervour bore the unmistakable traits of fire's dual nature—both destructive and creative. He challenged traditional religious institutions, urging his followers to renounce charms, shrines, and indigenous rituals. In his revivalist movements, fire symbolised the consuming force of divine power

that rendered all contrary spiritual forces null and void. His call for the destruction of traditional religious artefacts was not merely a rejection of indigenous religious expressions but an assertion of spiritual renewal, where the old was burned away to usher in a purified, Christianized religious landscape.

The imagery of fire in Braide's ministry paralleled biblical depictions of divine power and purification. In the Old Testament, fire often accompanied divine revelation, as seen in the incident of Moses and the burning bush or the consuming fire on Mount Carmel during Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal. In the New Testament, the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit was signified by tongues of fire, indicating divine empowerment and transformation. Braide's self-presentation and message resonated with these motifs, positioning him as a conduit of divine energy capable of effecting spiritual and societal change.

His fiery preaching evoked the African understanding of fire as both a physical and metaphysical force. Fire is used in African rituals to communicate with deities, cleanse sacred spaces, and establish covenants. Braide, consciously or unconsciously, tapped into this deep-seated cultural symbolism, reframing it within a Christian context. His ministry, therefore, was not merely an introduction of an alien faith but a reconfiguration of existing spiritual structures, harnessing indigenous symbols and reinterpreting them through a Christian lens.

Fire also signified resistance in Braide's movement. His confrontations with colonial authorities and missionary bodies reflected the uncontrollable and unpredictable nature of fire. The British colonial government, wary of his growing influence, viewed his ministry as an incendiary force that threatened established religious and political orders. Just as fire can be both a refiner and a destroyer, Braide's movement sought to refine Christianity in Nigeria, yet its radical nature led to opposition and eventual suppression.

Ultimately, Braide's legacy embodies fire's transformative potency. His ministry ignited a religious awakening, laying the foundation for independent African Christian movements. His use of fire as a metaphor for spiritual power underscores the complex interplay between indigenous religious thought and Christianity. Like fire, his influence spread rapidly, consuming old traditions and inflaming a new religious consciousness that endures in contemporary African Christianity.

Prophetic Staff and African Kingship Symbols

Braide wielded a staff, a common emblem of authority in African leadership structures. The staff, often associated with kingship, chieftaincy, and divination, symbolised his role as a spiritual guide. In traditional African society, a staff denotes divine election and power, signifying a leader's connection to ancestral spirits and divine will.

Garrick Braide's ministry was deeply intertwined with indigenous African symbols of power, and the prophetic staff he carried bore significant religious and cultural meanings. As in the case of African kings and spiritual leaders, the staff was more than a physical object; it embodied legitimacy, spiritual force, and the ability to

mediate between the divine and the human. In many African societies, kings and chiefs do not rule merely by political might but through spiritual sanction, and their authority is often manifested in the possession of sacred regalia, including the staff. Braide's use of the staff placed him within this continuum of sacred authority, blending traditional African religious symbolism with Christian prophetic ministry.

Among African rulers and prophets, the staff is a mark of leadership, wisdom, and the power to command. In the case of Braide, his staff functioned as an extension of his prophetic presence, reinforcing his identity as a divinely chosen instrument. His ministry, which attracted large followings in the Niger Delta, resonated with many because it incorporated familiar African religious symbols within a Christian framework. To his followers, Braide was not merely a preacher but a spiritual sovereign, a leader whose staff confirmed his divine mandate and ability to effect change in both the spiritual and physical realms.

The staff's significance in Braide's ministry can also be linked to biblical precedents, where prophets and patriarchs wielded staffs as signs of divine authority. Figures such as Moses and Aaron used staffs to perform miracles and assert their God-given power. Braide's staff, like those in biblical traditions, was a symbol of divine intervention, healing, and guidance. For his followers, the staff represented a conduit through which divine energy flowed, reinforcing their faith in his mission and teachings.

Furthermore, African kingship traditions often emphasise the role of the ruler as an intermediary between the people and the spiritual world. The possession of a staff in these traditions is not merely a status symbol but an indication of a leader's obligation to uphold justice, provide spiritual direction, and maintain communal harmony. Braide's ministry functioned within this paradigm, as he sought to reform religious practices and challenge colonial religious structures. His prophetic authority, supported by his use of the staff, positioned him as a counterforce to European missionary Christianity, which often disregarded African religious expressions.

In addition, the prophetic staff in Braide's ministry symbolised resistance against oppressive structures. It was not only a religious instrument but also a symbol of African resilience and identity in the face of colonial domination. Many indigenous movements in Africa have relied on traditional symbols to challenge foreign influences, and Braide's ministry exemplified this dynamic. His followers, drawn from various communities, recognised in him a leader who embodied both the power of African kingship and the spiritual force of Christian prophecy.

Braide's use of the staff also aligned with African concepts of sacred leadership, where physical objects are imbued with spiritual potency. In many cultures, objects such as staffs, sceptres, and wands are believed to contain ancestral wisdom and divine energy. By carrying a staff, Braide signalled his role as a custodian of spiritual truth, someone who could harness divine power to heal, prophesy, and inspire transformation.

Thus, the prophetic staff in the ministry of Garrick Braide was more than a mere accessory; it was an emblem of his authority, a link to both African kingship traditions and biblical prophetic heritage. It underscored his legitimacy as a spiritual leader,

reinforced his role in religious reform, and connected his ministry to broader African religious and cultural symbols. In wielding the staff, Braide stood at the intersection of tradition and modernity, offering a vision of faith that resonated deeply with African sensibilities while challenging colonial religious structures.

Music and Dance as Ritual Expressions

Music and dance played an essential role in Braide's movement. African spirituality frequently employs rhythmic drumming, chants, and dances to invoke spiritual presence. Braide's religious gatherings were marked by vibrant expressions, reinforcing communal worship as a means of accessing divine power. The use of music in Braide's ministry was not merely for aesthetic purposes but functioned as a conduit for divine encounters. Hymns, spontaneous songs, and rhythmic clapping formed an integral part of worship, creating an atmosphere charged with spiritual intensity (Obodoegbulam, & Joel, 2019). These musical expressions helped in stirring the emotions of participants, leading them into a heightened state of spiritual awareness and engagement. The songs often reflected themes of deliverance, healing, and divine intervention, resonating deeply with the socio-religious consciousness of his followers.

Dance, as an extension of musical worship, also played a fundamental role in Braide's revivalist gatherings. Movement to the rhythm of drums and chants symbolised both an act of submission to divine authority and an embodiment of spiritual liberation. The communal nature of the dance further reinforced the collective experience of faith, breaking down social and personal barriers as worshippers moved in unison. The synchronisation of bodily movements with rhythmic beats fostered a shared religious identity, strengthening the bonds between believers and their spiritual convictions. The significance of music and dance in Braide's ministry also extended to healing rituals. Drumming and vocal chants were often used to accompany prayers for the sick, reinforcing the belief in divine intervention. Participants believed that through rhythmic expressions, spiritual forces were activated to bring about physical and emotional healing. The dynamic interplay between music, dance, and prayer created an immersive religious experience that facilitated catharsis and spiritual renewal.

Braide's adaptation of African musical traditions into Christian worship was revolutionary in its approach. By incorporating elements of indigenous spirituality, he contextualised Christianity within the cultural framework of his people, making it more relatable and impactful. The seamless fusion of African rhythms with Christian hymns demonstrated an innovative religious synthesis that resonated with his followers, providing them with a familiar yet spiritually transformative worship experience.

Moreover, the participatory nature of music and dance in Braide's movement challenged conventional modes of worship that emphasised passive reception over active involvement. His gatherings encouraged worshippers to express their faith through bodily movement and vocal expression, fostering a dynamic and interactive form of worship. This approach not only energised congregational participation but

also reinforced a sense of divine immediacy, as believers felt directly engaged with the spiritual realm through their musical and dance expressions.

The legacy of Braide's musical and dance-infused ministry continues to influence contemporary African Christian worship. Many Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Nigeria and beyond have adopted similar elements, recognising the power of rhythmic expressions in fostering spiritual experiences. The integration of traditional African musical elements into Christian worship underscores the enduring relevance of Braide's approach, highlighting how indigenous cultural expressions can enrich and deepen religious practice.

In essence, music and dance were not peripheral to Braide's ministry but were central to the spiritual efficacy of his movement. These expressions served as vehicles for divine encounter, social cohesion, and personal transformation, reinforcing the experiential nature of faith in African religious thought. Through music and dance, Braide's followers found a powerful means of worship, healing, and communal solidarity, solidifying their collective religious identity and deepening their spiritual commitments.

THE CHALLENGE OF COLONIAL RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

Colonial religious structures posed significant challenges to the expression of indigenous spirituality in Africa. The arrival of European missionaries marked the beginning of a systematic attempt to replace traditional African religious practices with Western Christian doctrines. These missionaries, driven by a belief in the superiority of their faith, often regarded African spiritual traditions as primitive, superstitious, and incompatible with Christianity. This led to the suppression of indigenous religious symbols, rituals, and belief systems, which were dismissed as paganistic and idolatrous.

Despite the missionaries' efforts to impose a rigid and dogmatic Eurocentric interpretation of Christianity, African communities found ways to integrate their spiritual heritage into their new faith. One of the most notable examples of this adaptation was the movement led by Prophet Garrick Sokari Braide in the Niger Delta. Braide's ministry, which emerged in the early twentieth century, redefined Christianity through the lens of indigenous spirituality. His teachings emphasised direct spiritual experiences, healing, and prophecy—elements deeply rooted in African religious traditions. By doing so, he challenged the hegemony of Western religious structures and demonstrated that Christianity could be reinterpreted to reflect African worldviews.

The colonial religious framework not only sought to reshape African spirituality but also restructured the socio-political landscape. Missionary activities were closely tied to colonial governance, reinforcing European dominance over African societies. Churches became sites of cultural transformation, where Western values were inculcated, and indigenous customs were discouraged. This resulted in a form of religious alienation, as many Africans were forced to abandon their

traditional beliefs in favour of an imposed religious identity that often disregarded their cultural realities.

However, resistance to colonial religious structures was not limited to Braide's movement. Across the continent, independent African churches and religious movements emerged as alternatives to missionary Christianity. These movements sought to reclaim African spiritual agency by incorporating traditional elements such as drumming, dance, and communal worship into Christian practices. By doing so, they challenged the notion that African religiosity was inferior and demonstrated the resilience of indigenous spirituality in the face of colonial suppression.

The legacy of colonial religious structures continues to shape contemporary African Christianity. Many churches today still grapple with the tension between Western theological influences and African cultural expressions of faith. While some denominations remain aligned with their missionary origins, others have embraced a more contextualised form of Christianity that acknowledges and integrates African religious heritage. This ongoing struggle highlights the enduring impact of colonialism on African religious identity and the continuous efforts to decolonise Christian expression in Africa.

Ultimately, the challenge of colonial religious structures was not merely about religious conversion but also about power, identity, and cultural survival. The resilience of African religious traditions, as seen in figures like Braide and in the proliferation of independent African churches, attests to the ability of African societies to navigate and reinterpret imposed religious paradigms. By reclaiming their spiritual agency, African communities have reshaped Christianity into a dynamic faith that reflects their historical, cultural, and religious experiences.

BRAIDE'S ENDURING LEGACY IN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

Garrick Braide's legacy in African Christianity transcends the boundaries of his time, leaving an indelible mark on religious expressions in the continent. His movement, characterised by a fusion of Christian beliefs and African spiritual sensibilities, set a precedent for indigenous interpretations of Christianity. Through his prophetic ministry, Braide challenged colonial missionary orthodoxy, advocating for a faith that resonated with the lived experiences of his people. His influence persists in contemporary African Christianity, where indigenous churches draw from his model of spiritual autonomy and contextual theology.

Braide's ministry emerged at a time when Christianity in Africa was largely mediated through Western missionary frameworks, which often dismissed African religious expressions as pagan. In response, Braide's approach validated African spirituality by integrating familiar symbols, rituals, and cultural nuances into Christian worship. He emphasised divine healing, prophecy, and direct access to spiritual power—elements that mirrored traditional African religious structures. This adaptation of Christianity facilitated its acceptance among local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and active participation in religious life.

Braide's role as a prophetic figure positioned him as a mediator between the divine and his followers, much like traditional African religious leaders. He proclaimed messages of spiritual renewal, personal holiness, and divine intervention, reinforcing the belief that African spirituality had a place within the Christian faith. His teachings often confronted social injustices, economic disparities, and political domination, aligning him with broader movements of African self-determination. Braide's influence extended beyond religious spheres, contributing to the nascent expressions of African nationalism and resistance to colonial rule.

The persecution and suppression of Braide's movement by colonial authorities reflected the threat that indigenous religious autonomy posed to the established order. His imprisonment and subsequent death did not quell his influence; rather, they solidified his legacy as a martyr of African Christianity. The churches and spiritual movements that emerged in his wake continued to embody his vision, emphasizing African agency in theological and ecclesiastical matters. Today, many indigenous African churches, such as the Aladura churches in West Africa and other prophetic movements, owe aspects of their theological orientation and ecclesiastical structures to Braide's pioneering work.

Braide's legacy is also evident in the persistence of African Christianity's emphasis on spiritual power, healing, and prophecy. His movement demonstrated that Christianity could thrive outside the confines of Western missionary oversight, paving the way for the proliferation of independent African churches. His contributions challenge the narrative that Christianity in Africa is merely an imported faith; instead, it is a dynamic tradition that continues to evolve in dialogue with African religious and cultural heritage.

The enduring impact of Braide's work underscores the adaptability of Christianity in Africa, affirming the resilience of indigenous religious expressions. His movement remains a testament to the agency of African believers in shaping their religious destinies, blending Christian doctrine with African cultural frameworks to produce a faith that is both authentic and transformative. As contemporary African Christianity continues to grow and diversify, the foundational principles laid by Braide remain relevant, serving as a beacon of indigenous spiritual ingenuity and religious self-determination.

CONCLUSION

Garrick Braide stands as a seminal figure in the philosophical interrogation of African religious symbolism and prophetic identity. His legacy demonstrates that indigenous metaphysical constructs—articulated through symbols, visions, and ritual actions—were not annihilated by Christianity but reinterpreted within its framework. Braide's prophetic ministry reveals that, within African ontological systems, prophecy transcends predictive utterance to function as a mode of symbolic representation: a metaphysical articulation of divine agency grounded in communal experience.

As a spiritual innovator, Braide embodied both resistance to colonial religio-political domination and the affirmation of African epistemologies. His deployment of symbols, healing practices, and performative prophecy reflects an African

worldview in which reality is multidimensional, spiritually saturated, and ontologically interconnected—where both objects and persons act as conduits of transcendence. Ultimately, Braide's movement represents a unique philosophical paradigm in which African traditional spirituality and Christian prophecy are not antithetical but dialogical. He emerges as a liminal figure—a bridge—demonstrating that African religious identity, rather than being effaced, is capable of reconfiguring and revitalising Christian expressions. Further scholarly inquiry should examine Braide's symbolic legacy within the broader contexts of inculturation, religious syncretism, and the ongoing decolonisation of African Christian thought.

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