



THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON *AYELALA* (GODDESS OF JUSTICE) DEITY IN ILAJE KINGDOM OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Change is a fascinating reality in human existence. Everything seems to be affected by change. In the Ilaje kingdom, the worship of *Ayelala* remained a major religious preoccupation of many adherents of *Ayelala* until the wind of change blew across Ilaje after her contact with the Western world through the activities of colonialism and the missionary activities of Christianity and Islam. This study assessed devotion to *Ayelala* deity in the face of change. The study employed the qualitative research design. Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources involved the use of unstructured oral interviews with relevant resource persons. The secondary sources involved the use of text books, scholarly journals, magazines and the internet. The data were analysed using the historical and expository tools. The historical method was used to evaluate the historical evolution of *Ayelala* before colonialism and the incursion of Christianity and Islam. The expository method presented a vivid description of the changes that have occurred with the worship of *Ayelala* Deity in Ilaje kingdom as a result of colonialism, Christianity and Islam. The study found out that various socio-cultural and religious changes have occurred with regards to the devotion to *Ayelala* as a result of colonialism and the missionary activities of Christianity and Islam. The study also discovered that the worship of *Ayelala* has remained impactful in the administration of justice in communities where the deity is worshipped, as even converts to Christianity and Islam still resort to *Ayelala* when they need speedy justice. The study concluded that despite the change brought by colonialism, Christianity and Islam, *Ayelala* is still not only worshiped with pomp and ceremony but is also highly revered and respected for her judicial powers.

Key words: Change, *Ayelala*, Christianity, Islam, Colonialism

1. Introduction

Change is one reality that has proven to be consistent in human experience. Various African communities witnessed this wind of change as a result of many factors, including westernization, civilization, urbanization and religious influence. In Ilaje kingdom, this wind of change blew across the land basically with the incursion of the colonialists, the Christian and Islamic missionaries. The changes that ensued greatly affected the conception and devotion to *Ayelala*, more negatively than positively. This study describes the wind of change across Ilaje generally,

bringing to bare the changes and impacts it created in the conception and worship of *Ayelala* prior to colonialism, after colonialism and how devotion to *Ayelala* has fared after contact with Christianity and Islam.

2. The Wind Of Change And The *Ilaje* Kingdom Of Ondo State

Contemporary society has witnessed a considerable downturn in the influence of *Ayelala*. This has been largely attributed to the effects of Westernization, civilization, Christianization and Islamization of the *Ilaje* society. Notably, the interaction of Africa with the West in the acts of slave trade, colonialism, post-colonization, globalization and other areas have enormously influenced the cultures of Africa; this has been the case with the commitment to *Ayelala* in *Ilaje* land. Obinna supports this assertion by stating that, “the impact of *Ayelala* in areas such as social justice and social order has been gravely affected by the Western culture and foreign religions” (72). It is not only the worship of *Ayelala* that has witnessed this spate of change, various aspects of *Ilaje* kingdom have been blown by this wind of change, which are considered here. One major area that has been blown by the wind of change in *Ilaje* land is cultural change. One might aver that culture is never static, but undergoes periodic changes. In fact, Sibani asserts that “culture in itself grows and changes” (63). But when these changes become sporadic and inimical to some cherished cultural values, it prompts some questions. There is no doubt that western culture has enormously brought about many changes in the culture of *Ilaje* land. Any critical observer would notice that the wind of change across *Ilaje* land brought about both positive and negative influences.

i. Positive Influences

On the positive note, *Ilaje* has embraced western education, orthodox medicine, feminist consciousness, and political structures, among others. Sibani corroborates this by stating that: There has been such intense Western effort to change the status of women all over the world, most especially in Africa where it is obvious that women are lowly placed in the scheme of things when compared with their male counterparts. Western style of education has been entrenched in our African constitutions, styles of dispensing justice and politics (63).

This cultural influence has given rise to acculturation, a process by which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs, practices, values and behaviour of another group. This is largely

noticeable in the areas of language, dressing, food habits, and so on. One must, therefore, acknowledge the positive dimensions brought about by the wind of change in Ilaje land. Sibani outlines some of these positive influences: “Western technology has tremendously improved the lifestyle of Ilaje (Africans) in various areas such as Medicine, Communication, Transport, Agriculture, Sports, Education, Clothing, and so on” (69). Abdulazeez et al corroborate this assertion by positing that:

Western influence (also) brought about tangible changes in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Colonial governments invested in transportation networks particularly railway networks, facilitating trade and communication between Africans. Advances in medicine and sanitation improved life expectancy, while the introduction of Western education systems provided opportunities for some Africans to access knowledge and skills (156).

Unarguably, the Western impact on these areas formed a remarkable springboard for the developmental strides of independent Nigeria. Even though at independence Nigeria and other African countries had to forge their own destinies, the legacies of the colonial imprints formed a basic foundation.

ii. Negative Influences

However, this cultural eclipse has various unpalatable consequences for the Ilaje. Firstly, there was a departure from Ilaje traditional political structure. Ilaje, like most African communities, had an inclusive political ontology prior to the era of rapid cultural change under survey. Under the traditional system, authority and power were resident in and flowed from entire community rather than a few privileged individuals (Adedeji Fasiku, Oral Interview). It was the people who invested power to rule on a group of people chosen by them, together with their ancestors. In this regard, every member of the society possessed some share of the bestowed power. Since it is the community that bestows authority on those to exercise such powers, it creates a mutual bonding and a symbol of unity among the living and dead members of the society in an ontological unity. However, this ontological harmony has been grossly severed as a result of the introduction of the foreign political structure. It is in reaction to this that Telewa submits that:

The political atmosphere in Africa land is now a problem which has made the contemporary African politicians no longer see themselves as leaders who have the mandate of their people to

serve. Today, people now fight, kill and bulldoze their ways into positions of power. This shows deviation and abandonment of values, especially the sacredness of human life (41).

This is obviously against the humanistic culture of traditional Ilaje and other African societies. The ethics of people-oriented leadership has been distorted, giving way to the greedy political structure of winner-takes-all. Many scholars are of the opinion that the coming of the Europeans into Africa generally was for their economic motives. Abdulazeez et al, for instance, contend that:

Driven by economic motives and fueled by racist ideologies, European powers carved up the continent, imposing their political and economic systems. The exploitation of natural resources and the extraction of labor for plantations and mines led to devastating consequences, disrupting traditional social structures and causing widespread impoverishment (156).

This is coupled with the fact that there was gross undermining of African knowledge systems as a result of the infamous imposition of Western style education and foreign religious systems. The religious landscape of Ilaje has also been negatively influenced. The traditional worship pattern of Ilaje, which allows for the rhythmic display of worshippers, accompanied by traditional drums, gongs and other instruments is quickly being replaced. In their place, there are band-sets and English songs, which often leave many people sleeping during worship. To this, Sibani agrees that “the traditional acrobatic dance of the Africans when drums and music are played is far richer than the Western pattern of worship which has gradually turned African worshippers into iroko trees that stand very erect in the place of worship” (67).

Furthermore, the wind of change on culture in Ilaje has created a barrier in fluent communication among the Ilaje. Understandably, communication is the primary medium of transmitting thoughts, ideas and information from one person to other members of the society. In Ilaje, the people had their native dialect and the populace was comfortable with it and could adequately understand each other. However, the wind of change that blew across the area has brought about a deterioration in the mode of communication. Raphael Poroyereports that many sons and

daughters of Ilaje can no longer speak their native dialect today because of English language (Oral Interview). Thus, there are communication variances and barriers in many areas of Ilaje today. There are the aged and those who live in remote rural areas who do not understand

English. There are also those who have had less contact with their traditional lingua franca due to urbanization and Western education. This creates an obvious lacuna in communication, especially during community gatherings.

The wind of change in Ilaje has also heightened immorality and indecency especially in sexual behaviours. The dignity of sexuality which was sacrosanct in Ilaje kingdom has been downplayed. Balogun Fakunle notes that today, many Ilaje people, especially females, parade the streets half-naked, wearing clothes that expose or partly expose their vital body parts, which was not done in traditional Ilaje (Oral Interview). Jimmetimi Asipa also links various sexual evils to this unhealthy fashion of nudity. He opines that the culture of nudity attracts sexual harassments of all forms which are in the increase in Ilaje today (Oral Interview).

3. *Ayelala* (Goddess Of Justice) Deity In Pre-Colonial Period

Afe reports that “in pre-colonial times, one of the most ritualistic agents of the maintenance of order and social justice among the Ikale, Ilaje and Apoi people was *Ayelala*. This was a deity considered to have an uninterrupted extensive power in the administration of social justice” (103). *Ayelala* played a significant role in pre-colonial Ilaje kingdom. Her influence was strongly felt in the political arena. Kings and title-holders were required to take oaths during coronation. It was a taboo for any title holder to do anything contrary to the oath he took during coronation. Oath taking was part of coronation rites in Ilajeland. Larr states that “it was obligatory for a formal avowal to a god or a higher authority be undertaken to the effect that one would be truthful, profess loyalty to the community and keep to those pledges” (71).

Oath taking by a traditional institution was done with an emblem of *Ayelala*. This instilled the fear of resultant violence of the oath of office in the people concerned and invariably resulted in sanitizing the land. *Ayelala* at the early stages was deified by the Ilaje and believed to manifest her presence and communicate her displeasure through various media such as the following:

Outright Death: *Ayelala* was deified as a potent deity that could inflict death upon those who violated oaths, committed crimes, or incurred her anger in various other ways. Sheba reveals that *Ayelala* could cause death for an offender:

...by releasing snakes, scorpions, bees, or other venomous creatures to bite or sting the offender to death.... She could also bring about death through symptoms like vomiting blood, swollen

stomach, hands and legs, or any sudden illness... The Ilaje believe that she could even cause death by employing natural forces like lightning, fire, or thunder” (14). Oluwafunminiye and Famiyesin report that:

Ayelala causes body swelling, or sometimes dryness in its victims, which is usually manifested in stomach protrusion, with other parts of the body turning grey. The bodily swelling, understood to be caused by water linked to *Ayelala*'s history, because *Ayelala* was sacrificed and buried close to a confluence of two rivers, now called *Ita Ayelala* River (241).

Insanity: Madness was another popular punishment *Ayelala* employed to punish offenders. The insanity struck by *Ayelala* could come in various forms including total or partial loss of sanity, spontaneous irregular behaviour, jumbled speech, and sporadic incidents of running naked in the neighbourhood (Kunle Kolawole, Oral Interview). There were also cases where the offender could be thrown into visions, hallucinations which may be vocal, and even experience continuous nightmares.

Public Confession: Some of the manifestations of the wrath of *Ayelala* usually prompted the wrongdoer(s) to make confessions of their evil deeds in order to be set free. While some of the culprits confessed voluntarily, others confessed without their volition when suddenly struck by the deity. Some others confessed secretly to their families or to an individual priest of *Ayelala* (Okah-Avae 78).

Dreams: Dreams were a popular medium employed by *Ayelala* for communicating and passing information to her adherents on various occasions. Sometimes she used dreams to alert them about imminent dangers or to guide them on choice of action during confusion. Poroye Olowo reports that “in such dreams, she usually appeared as a beautiful woman dressed in white,

holding a pot of water and a knife” (Oral Interview). On other occasions, she could appear as an elderly woman decked in beautiful cowries and beads. On rare occasions, she appeared in the form of any of the animals she uses to chastise offenders (Olakunle Ugbeyinike, Oral Interview). *Ayelala* was always invoked in civil and criminal matters such as; adultery, theft, witchcraft, murder, and related social crimes capable of causing social disorder in Ilaje kingdom. Apart from serving as a means of social control, devotion to *Ayelala* was a symbol of peace and unity (Solomon Netufo, Oral Interview). If *Ayelala*’s directives were violated or any of the moral

crimes mentioned above were committed, it was a common knowledge that the perpetrators would not go without due punishment. Thus, the awe created by *Ayelala* helped in judicial adjudication in pre-colonial Ilaje land. Oluwafunminiyi and Famiyesin quote a British Colonial Officer to have affirmed that:

Ayelala is a good juju and protects the town, and it has the special power of detecting criminals, witches, and the users of bad medicine... If a person leaves any property in the bush and wishes *Ayelala* to protect it, he/she will take a cowry from the shrine and tie it to the load and if a thief interferes with it he/she will swell up and die. In the same way the entrance to a farm would often be protected by an *Ayelala* cowry hung on a string (239).

To avert the anger of *Ayelala*, the culprit needed to confess before the deity. It was a general belief that *Ayelala* is quick to forgive offenders who confessed their guilt and renounce their offences (Segun Lagbayi, Oral Interview). However, such confession needed to be made quickly before it became too late. Upon confession, the culprit made required sacrifices which included the following items: “nine shillings to be shared-equally between the Ilaje and Ijaw priests... two kolanuts, two bottles of gin, two pennies and two yards of white cloth” (DeleAyo, Oral Interview). These items are usually offered in pairs since they are to be shared between the priests of Ilaje and Ijaw, believed to be the two parties that led to the devotion to *Ayelaladeity*. In the cases of grievous offences, the culprit may be required to offer animals like goats, hens, and some amount of money.

In traditional Ilaje society, the personal wealth or belongings of a victim of *Ayelala* must not be used by close family relations, extended or distant, or even among friends. This is because *Ayelala* views all the victim's possessions as part of the punishment that must be meted out for breaching the communal covenant that formed the genesis of *Ayelala*. The properties are therefore handed over to the chief priest of *Ayelala*. That is why it is common sight to notice various old items such as mattresses, clothes and household utensils littered around the major shrines of *Ayelala*.

Because of the reverence in which *Ayelala* was held in the past, it was regarded to be a taboo to call the name of *Ayelala* indiscriminately. In the pre-colonial era, the moral probity and general integrity of Ilaje community was held in high esteem. People from Ilaje were seen as impeccable

in character. Antisocial activities like stealing and cheating were hardly heard of among the Ilaje. Owofola Bode avers that in many cases people could leave their properties anywhere for as long as they wanted and still return to meet them safe. Many people built houses without doors and windows since their belongings were safe even without security (Oral Interview). The honesty, transparency and reliability of Ilaje people made them easy clerks to the colonialists and others who sought their services as house helps in Lagos and environs.

4. *Ayelala* (Goddess Of Justice) Deity In Post Colonial (Contemporary) Period

Ilaje kingdom was one of the areas that came under early contact with Europe and subsequent colonization. According to Don, "Even though Ilaje kingdom is situated in isolation from other Yoruba communities, the area has a common accessibility from the sea" (32). This loosely accounts for its early contact with the West. In the account of Familusi, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach Ilaje kingdom. They arrived through a canal near Ugbo as early as the 16th century (304). Upon arrival, they signed an accord with the people, which they called an 'accord of friendship'. However, they did not stay for long. A German firm arrived Ilaje in early January, 1885, and signed another treaty with notable leaders of Ilaje. The treaty, among other conditions, ceded control of Ilaje land to Germany on the ground that the Germans would not

export any slaves. Another condition was that if need be, Germany would provide military support and protection to Ilaje. Jemiriye and Akinola report that “the treaty was sealed by the Germans offering the following items to the Ilaje elders: five pieces of silk, five bottles of puncheon rum, a hundred cases of gin, and twenty pounds sterling” (550). However, this treaty was short-lived. The British arrived Ilaje kingdom in the middle of 1885. The British covered the whole area and beyond and declared it a British protectorate. They signed a new treaty with the Ilaje people which overruled the previous treaties. This was the beginning of the era of colonialism, which spanned to 1960.

After the independence, in Ilaje land, traditional religion continued to be on the decline as a result of some factors, chiefly, the influence of the two world religions, Islam and Christianity, as well as other factors such as urbanization, civilization and exposure. But that is not to say that the people do not believe in Traditional Religion for they still consult the priests and priestesses

in cases of royal succession and the belief in *Ayelala* cult is wide spread among the traditionalists (Babajide Omobuwa, Oral Interview).

One must point out that there have been radical, spontaneous and rapid changes in various areas of life in Ilaje after independence. This could be likened to a revolution which has engulfed every society of the African continent. Many scholars have hinged these changes on the rapid advancements in science and technology, coupled with its corollaries of rapid urbanization, evolution in communication, improved medical services, and propagation of Western education. These factors have altered the conceptions of people in many areas. Njokede describes the situation in the following words:

Many things that used to be mysterious in the past due to lack of knowledge became demystified by current innovations. Western education has helped enormously in the liberation of people from hitherto ignorance... Beliefs which could not withstand logical scrutiny went moribund. Various improved medical interventions have equally waned the potency of the traditional power ascribed to *Ayelala* (38).

This is true because observation proves that some of the ailments that were attributed to *Ayelala* began to be treated in orthodox hospitals. Adegba Ojajuni remarks that swellings in the stomach, legs and hands which were believed to be symptoms of *Ayelala*'s manifestation were found out to be either symptoms of kwashiorkor or other ailments and could be treated in the hospitals (Oral Interview). This has enormously altered the notions of health conditions that were ascribed to the fury of *Ayelala*.

The advent of Christianity, especially the Pentecostal churches and others has curtailed the influence of *Ayelala* among the Ilaje people. These churches take spiritual healing seriously. In fact, as Ehinmowo Ajayi observes, "the spiritual healing of various sicknesses that disturb their members is a major mandate of these churches. Many adherents are attracted to these churches because of their attachment to spiritual healing" (Oral Interview). Sometimes even some of the ailments that were formerly attributed to *Ayelala* are now cured by these churches. This has greatly changed the way *Ayelala* was viewed in traditional Ilaje society.

There have also been some ritual changes in adherence to *Ayelala* between the pre-independence and post-independence eras. Traditionally, it was part of the ritual to have an Ijaw and Ilaje priests on ground before performing some important rituals. However, after the independence and coming forward, this practice has been modified. It has also been noticed that the abuses of *Ayelala* priests have increased after independence. Olakunle Ugbeyinike identified some of these abuses to include: ascribing some sicknesses wrongly to *Ayelala*, defrauding some unsuspecting individuals in the name of *Ayelala* and

some priests have been accused of using *Ayelala* to aid Human traffickers to intimidate their victims to succumb them to the control of their traffickers

(Oral Interview). Omotoye states that "the number of crimes committed by some priests and priestesses of *Ayelala* in recent times are many; in fact, some priests of *Ayelala* seem to be daily making outright mockery of what *Ayelala* traditionally stood for" (32). In essence, *Ayelala* has become prone to various attacks from non-adherents.

Similar to this is the perceived indifference of *Ayelala* prior to the execution of crimes in Ilaje land. Some observers contend that *Ayelala*'s potency should have been extended to curbing crimes before they are committed rather than only waiting for the crime to be committed before

looking for the offenders. Their argument stems from the fact that as guardian of social morality, *Ayelala* should be able to curb certain crimes and prevent them from being committed, example, crimes that involve the taking of innocent lives. This indicates that *Ayelala* could foil the plans and attempts of sorcerers, witches and wizards, and even thieves before they are perpetrated, rather than wait to inflict justice when innocent souls may have been lost (Agbudeloye Funke, Oral Interview).

Deeper into the post-independence era in Ilaje land, some have considered *Ayelala* as a reality that has become outdated. Her significance has continued to wane among the people at the onslaught of the change eclipse. Many people have embraced Western lifestyles and orthodoxy in place of traditional modes of existence (Adeleke Asogbon, Oral Interview). This is worsened by the fact that the seeming mysteries behind many diseases which were thought to be from the wrath of *Ayelala* in traditional times have been demystified and are being treated with orthodox medicines in post-independence era. But in the midst of all these, it is worth noting that adherence to *Ayelala* deity has not waned considerably among some groups of people in Ilaje such as the elderly and many rural dwellers. Some educated people also attend the rituals of *Ayelala* for various reasons. As Afe also reports, “there are various instances where actual victims of *Ayelala*’s wrath have tried every form of orthodox medicine and the ailment defied such medical interventions until they were brought to undergo *Ayelala*’s ritual in order to be healed” (102).

The post-colonial period has also witnessed the spread of devotion to *Ayelala* across the Ilaje, Ikale and Ijaw-Apoi communities where she was traditionally venerated. Due to increased movements around and across Ilaje area, occasioned by the improved transport system brought in during the colonial era, the power and swiftness of *Ayelala* in the administration of justice grew among neighbouring communities.

This was how *Ayelala* was introduced to areas of Ondo State such as Irele, Iyasan, Ijosun and Akotogbo. It is also within this period that areas like Oluku, Benin, Ijebu and many other communities received *Ayelala*. Oluwafunmiyi and Famiyesin assert that “*Ayelala*’s fame and power as an arbiter of swift justice has encouraged many to procure her emblem for the sake of protection against harm from potential rivals” (246). Once an intended worshipper provided the

required items, he/she is made to pass through the rites of initiation, which comprises among other things, professing belief in the powers of *Ayelala*. Thereafter, the emblem of the deity is handed to the initiate who can now open a shrine in his area. Despite the changes, today, devotion to *Ayelala* has spread to all parts of Yoruba land and beyond.

5. Impact Of Christianity And Islam On *Ayelala* (Goddess Of Justice) Deity In *Ilaje* Kingdom Of Ondo State

Christianity and Islam are among the largest religions of the world. They are both termed Abrahamic religions because they trace their roots to the patriarch Abraham. From the Ancient Near East, the two religions have spread to other parts of the world including Ilaje land. During the colonial period, Christianity and Islam witnessed rapid spread across various African societies, including Ilaje kingdom. This period witnessed an influx of missionaries and traders who helped in the spread of the two religions. Expectedly, this incursion of Christianity and Islam into Ilaje land greatly influenced her socio-cultural and spiritual outlook. These missionaries engaged in the establishment of schools, building of hospitals and provision of several other social services which altered the religious and cultural situation of Ilaje land. The rapid spread of Christianity during this period is not unconnected with the support from the colonial authorities resident in Ilaje and other African societies. Islam, on the other hand, was spread by Arab traders across West Africa and other parts of Africa. No doubt, Ajetonmobi reports that at the earlier period of the incursion of Christianity and Islam in Ilaje, there was a high level of religious syncretism (72). Such aspects of African traditional Religion like divination and veneration of ancestors were practiced side-by-side the new faiths by some converts. In Ilaje, it was easy to find adherents of *Ayelala* equally attending Christian and Islamic services (Osifo Adeanifo, Oral Interview). Ugwukah and Ohaja paint the picture clearly: ...it was not uncommon to find a Catholic Church member who received the communion at the 7 o'clock mass on Sunday and then return home to pour libations to the spirits or gods of his ancestors. The cases equally abound where members of the so-called Pentecostal movements arrive from churches to go to the *babalawos* (medicine men) to receive portions for the progress in their trade or business.

Allegations have been made that some Pentecostal preachers have received their powers for the miracles they perform from traditional priests. And the story is not different in Islam (23-24). In Ilaje kingdom, Christianity engaged in the building of schools to provide Western education, which usually incorporated numeracy, religious instruction and general literacy for the populace. In fact, it is the opinion of Familusi that “schools were not only used as a medium of evangelization, but also as a training ground for African evangelizers, teachers and clerks for the colonial masters” (309). In a similar manner, the *madrasas* (Islamic schools) also provided their own form of education to their converts (Kunle Ogunbiyi, Oral Interview). Analyzing the situation, Afe states that Christian and Islamic organizations founded hospitals and clinics for the treatment of feared diseases as well as to cater for maternal and child care; they provide welfare services such as orphanages and assistance to the poor, among others (102).

The provision of these services led many people in Ilaje to convert to Christianity and Islam from the worship of *Ayelala* and other deities. Those that were converted to the new religions abandoned their devotion to *Ayelala* and other deities they hitherto worshipped. They also abandoned religious practices which were forbidden by the new religions such as polygamy (for Christians) and other initiation rites. Thus, various cultural practices witnessed changes, value systems were altered and the social structure of Ilaje was altered (Okah-Avae 83).

Unlike in the belief systems of Christianity and Islam where sin is repeatedly forgiven and judgment reserved for the afterlife, grave offenders against *Ayelala* are not forgiven. A victim who commits a light offence and confesses is quickly relieved of his body swelling through regular urination. But an unlucky victim is usually struck by death and the body is never allowed to be given a befitting burial by the family members and the community. In other words, victims face punishment and judgment immediately by falling ill and being subjected to several abuses while still alive. When anyone dies as a victim of *Ayelala*, family and friends are not permitted to weep or mourn or even be remorseful. In the event of death, the corpses of victims are thrown into the forest or handed over to the chief priest of *Ayelala* to be taken to the shrine for secret sacrifices (Fabiye Kalejaiye, Oral Interview).

Another area of *Ayelala* devotion that has been influenced by the introduction of Christianity and Islam in Ilaje land is music, art and literature. The traditional Ilaje music to *Ayelala* that was accompanied by lively rhythmic displays and hysteric drumming gave way to the solemn liturgies of Christianity. Islamic

calligraphy, a popular artistic writing which deeply reflects the beauty of Islamic arts, culture and faith equally became popular.

Notably, in Ilaje land, early missionaries outrightly condemned the worship of *Ayelala* and other indigenous deities, names, music and dance, arts, etc. They termed all of them as fetish and idolatry. That is why many scholars have criticized the attitude of Christianity towards *Ayelala* and African Traditional Religions for calling them fetish, pagan, juju, etc. However, Ugwukah and Ohaja remark that “Islam adopted a more subtle way of acculturation and therefore did not paint the exact picture of an impostor on the African religion and its way of life” (20). This made Islam to spread faster when it arrived Ilaje land. They did not condemn *Ayelala* and the cultural values of Ilaje but existed side-by-side these practices. Rather, it was observed that the religion of Islam:

...was accompanied with forbearance, sympathy and respect for native customs and prejudices. The progress of Islam and its spread in Africa has been attributed in part to the fact that it did not denigrate Africans as inferior caste nor seek to destroy their cultures completely as unworthy of existing alongside itself (Ugwuka and Ohaja 25).

Apart from the above, the Islamic missionaries seemed more genuine to many Ilaje people since they came with genuine trades and mingled with the locals more readily. They did not consider the converts as inferior as was the case with Christianity. Thus, they won many people from the worship of *Ayelala* to Islam.

Despite the impact the two revealed religions had on Ilaje kingdom, the worship of *Ayelala* continued to thrive. The deity remained endeared to many people because of her instantaneous response and her swiftness to justice, compared to the deities of Christianity and Islam who would either forgive or postpone justice to a long period of time. In other words, the justice rendered by *Ayelala* is palpable and could be noticed readily while the justice of the deities of Christianity and Islam are not visible. This makes many Christians and Muslims who seek urgent justice to resort to *Ayelala*. Thus, it is common to notice both Christians and Muslims visiting the shrine of *Ayelala* for quick solutions to their problems despite still being adherents of their respective faiths (Adetusa Tobi, Oral Interview).

The introduction of Christian and Islamic missionary activities into Ilaje kingdom had a great impact on the worship of *Ayelala*. Apart from the impacts that have been discussed, the literacy these two religions brought made it possible to begin to document the powers and functions of *Ayelala*, rather than by oral

narratives as was previously carried out. With this new development, people no longer rely on frail memories to remember and narrate things about *Ayelala* as was the case prior to the coming of the missionaries.

Closely related to the above point, with the expansion of missionary activities of Christianity and Islam, those who could now read and write, saw the many abuses, callousness, lack of sympathy and rate at which lives were being taken, especially by unscrupulous *Ayelala* priests. They fought relentlessly for the abolishment of obnoxious practices among such *Ayelala* adherents. It was also this exposure that led to the abolition of the killing of twins which was a popular practice in Ilaje land (Ade Tunde, Oral Interview). Missionary activities brought in a new social order, even among *Ayelala* worshippers. And as a result of the civilization brought by these religions, many people began to put on better clothes, eat good food and maintain a higher standard of personal hygiene.

6. Conclusion

This paper explored the impact of change in Ilaje kingdom on the worship of *Ayelala* (Goddess of justice). In light of the positive and negative impacts of the wind of change on the worship of *Ayelala* in Ilaje kingdom, it is pertinent to make the following recommendations. Firstly, change is natural; but the Ilaje have to be careful about welcoming and imbibing changes that are inimical to their cherished cultural values. Secondly, the worship of *Ayelala* needs to be critically assessed in order to ascertain its efficacy and relevance in the midst of the ongoing wind of change.

In conclusion, this paper has thematically explored the effect of the wind of change that has been blowing across Ilaje kingdom as a result of her contact with the Western world as a result of colonialism, Christianity and Islam. It is ascertained that this wind of change impacted Ilaje kingdom both positively and negatively. One of the areas most affected is the devotion to *Ayelala* deity which has dwindled drastically due to the positive missionary activities of Christianity and

Islam. However, despite the influence of these two missionary religions, *Ayelala* has remained a revered deity among a cross section of Ilaje people.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF INFORMANTS

SN	NAME	AGE	SEX	OCCUPAT ION	PLACE	DATE
1	Adedeji Fasiku	60	M	Ayelala Priest	Aheri	26/05/2024



2	Raphael Poroye	68	M	Ayelala Priest	Aheri	27/05/2024
3	Balogun Fakunle	50	M	Ayelala Worshipper	Mahin I	27/05/2024
4	Jimmetimi Asipa	60	F	Ayelala Priestes	Mahin I	27/05/2024
5	Kunle Kolawole	55	M	Ayelala Worshipper	Mahin III	28/05/2024
6	Olakunle Ugbeyinike	67	F	Ayelala Priestess	Mahin IV	28/05/2024
7	Poroye Olowo	54	M	Teacher	Ugbo I	29/05/2024
8	Solomon Netufo	65	M	Elder	Ugbo II	29/05/2024
9	Segun Lagbayi	50	M	Trader	Ugbo III	30/05/2024
10	Dele Ayo	56	F	Civil Servant	Ugbo IV	30/05/2024
11	Owofola Bode	40	M	Farmer	Ugbo V	12/06/2024
12	Babajide Omobuwa	50	M	Trader	Ugbo VI	12/06/2024



13	Adegba Ojajuni	52	M	Teacher	Etikan	13/06/2024
14	Ehinmowo Ajayi	69	F	Elder	Etikan	14/06/2024
15	Agbudeloy e Funke	50	M	Herbalist	Mahin II	14/06/2024
16	Adeleke Asogbon	57	M	Elder	Mahin II	16/06/2024
17	Osifo Adeanifo	42	M	Trader	Mahin III	16/06/2024
18	Kunle Ogunbiyi	61	F	Fisher	Mahin IV	19/06/2024
19	Fabiyi Kalejaiye	39	M	Student	Ugbo I	19/06/2024
20	Adetusa Tobi	41	M	Fisher	Ugbo II	19/06/2024
21	Ade Tunde	53	M	Herbalist	Ugbo III	23/06/2024