

Ancestor Worship in Traditional Benin Kingdom: A Socio-Religious Appraisal

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Abstract

An ancestor is a person in any family who lived a long time ago. This study is a critical inquiry into the traditional practices in Benin Kingdom on the veneration of the living-dead. The dead are believed to be constantly watching over their living relatives. It was discovered that not everybody that died become an ancestor. To become an ancestor, the person must have been an adult, married, and died a natural death. Ancestors are intermediaries between God and humans while the first son is intermediary between ancestors and other siblings in the family. The symbol of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom is *ukhure*, which the people use to pray for protection, provision and healing, among others. There are multiple problems associated with the worship of ancestors, hence, the conflict between Benin tradition and Christianity. This article, therefore, addresses death and the hereafter in traditional religion, rites of passage in relation to ancestors in Benin kingdom, qualifications of becoming an ancestor in Benin tradition, consequences of not becoming an ancestor in Benin tradition, the role of ancestors in earthly families in Benin tradition, problems of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom, conflict between Christianity and African traditional religion on ancestor worship. To do this the study made use of ethnographic and analytical methods. The conclusion reached is that ancestor worship in traditional African religion should not generate crisis if other religions respect and imbibe religious tolerance.

Keywords: Ancestor worship, Religious tolerance, *Ukhure*, Christianity, Benin tradition, Death

Introduction

Worship is the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity. Cartwright (2019) avers that the Kingdom of Benin, located in the southern forests of West Africa (modern Nigeria) and formed by the Edo people, flourished from the 13th to 19th century CE. The capital, also called Benin, was the hub of a trade network exclusively controlled by the king or Oba and, which included relations with Portuguese traders who sought gold and slaves. Benin went into decline during the 18th century CE as the kingdom was rocked by civil wars, and it was ultimately conquered by the British in 1897 CE. Today, the kingdom is, perhaps, best known for its impressive brass sculptures and plaques, which frequently depict rulers and their families; they are considered among the finest artworks ever produced in Africa.

Ancestor worship is the custom of venerating deceased ancestors who are considered to still be a part of the family and whose spirits are believed to have the power to intervene in the affairs of the living. Therefore, ancestor worship in Benin kingdom is the way and manner the people in Benin kingdom venerate their dead relatives who they believe still take care of them. An ancestor is seen as a person in a family who lived a long time ago. Ejim (2018) describes an ancestor as a word that derives from the Latin “antecessor.” It means “one who goes before” or a progenitor. The word implies those who have lived their lives in this world, and died leaving their relatives behind. Worship is the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity. Quarcoopome (1987) reveals that ancestors are souls of the departed heroes and heroines of the various West African tribes. He added that belief in the ancestors is based on the general notion that life continues after death and that communion and communication are possible between those who are alive here on earth and the deceased. The ancestors are believed to have power to make the lives of the living better or worse. Sibani (2015) affirms that:

Ancestors are believed in African traditional religion to be spirits of their fore-fathers. They are no longer visible in the sense that they have become spirits but they still play dominant role in the running of the affairs of the family to which they belong, while still here on earth receive sacrifice from them from time to time.
(p. 57)

Thomas Ebhomienlen (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a priest of Christ Apostolic Church at Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma posited that it is generally believed that the ancestors are intermediaries between God and humans. While the first son acts also as intermediary between ancestors and other siblings; this forms the fundamental challenge of the first son. The first son uses *ukhure* (which is the symbol or staff of ancestral worship) to pray for protection, provision, healing, etc., for himself and his siblings. In Benin, it is believed that the first son can use the *ukhure* to torment his siblings. N.I. Aihie (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a Baptist priest in Emueze Street G.R.A, Benin City, refused the efficacy of the effect of not accepting *ukhure* as Christianity has helped to a long extent to reduce, if not stop the fear that was gravely attached to the worship of ancestors as humans normally have great fear for the dead than the living. What is really ancestor worship in Benin kingdom? What is the qualification to become an ancestor? What is the role of the first son in ancestral worship and its challenges? What is the prospect of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom? This study seeks to provide answers to these and other arising questions.

Death and the Hereafter in Traditional Religion

Death is the fact of someone dying or being killed. Death is the most fearful experience that humanity dreads but it is inevitable. According to Mbiti (1975), God gave the first human one or more of the three gifts of immortality, resurrection and the ability to become young again. But all these three were lost and death came into the world. There are different explanations as to how the loss took place and how death came about. In traditional African lore, it is said that God sent a message to the first human beings that they would either live forever or rise again if they died. This message was given to one animal to take to them, the animal is often said to have been chameleon. But the chameleon lingered on the way and delayed the message. Meanwhile, God sent another but faster animal, usually said to have been a bird, lizard or hare with another message that people will die. The later message reached the people before that of immortality or resurrection, since then death has remained in the world.

Mbiti (1975) posits another version about a dog and toad sent with the message of immortality and death. While the dog delayed

and stayed behind to eat food, the toad went faster and delivered the message of death first. Others believe that God forbids people from eating certain fruits or eggs and animals. When they ate this forbidden food, death came to them. Still another myth said God used to hunt death when it appeared. He told people to remain indoors and not give shelter to death when they see it running away. One woman, however, went to work in her field, and while she was working, death came and asked for protection. She allowed it to hide under her clothes or to get into her mouth. God came with His hunting dogs chasing after it and when in His great wisdom found that the woman has hidden it, He told her and the people to keep death thereafter while another myth said God gave people a bundle or vessel with a secret in it and forbade them to open it. Overcome by curiosity through a mistake, someone opened the vessel or bag and out came death. All these myths emphasise that death came almost by mistake and that since then it has remained among humankind.

Mbiti (1969) mentioned that humans also believed that death does not come ordinarily but it is normally caused by several factors. People believe that death came into the world at a very early date in the history of mankind; they believe also that every time a person dies this death is caused. There are several ways in which it is caused. Death by sorcery, death by sickness, death by curses, broken taboos or oaths and natural death by old age, disease, accident, lightning, earthquake, flood, drowning, animal attack, among others. Hence when anybody dies, diviners and medicine men and women are consulted to know the cause of the death before burial in traditional African society.

Rites of Passage in Relation to Ancestors in Benin Kingdom

There are rituals concerning the preparation of the corpse for disposal. Burial is the process of disposing a dead body. According to R. Idemudia, (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a former traditional priest of Obe Village, Benin City said that burial ceremony used to take up to seven to fourteen days depending on the family. During these days the extended families eat and celebrate. According to Edogiawerie (2020), burial ceremony in Edoland serves as the last respect paid to the dead, especially for a beloved

one. This is done to any dead person that had grown to adulthood whether the person had children or not. However, Benin burial ceremony is usually performed by the children of the deceased and where the deceased has no child, relations and other sympathizers can perform the burial ceremony to fulfill the demands of the norms and customs of the society.

The extent to which burial ceremonies are done is a function of the capacities of the organisers. Expectedly, where the deceased have many well-to-do children, a very elaborate burial ceremony can be done, but where the reverse is the case, a simple burial, devoid of fanfares and merrymaking will be done. In both cases, the traditional requirement for burial of a deceased person is the same. Burial ceremony in Edoland is usually done in categories: The old aged groups that have children are the ones given more elaborate and befitting burial, usually sponsored by the children and relations of the deceased. Depending also on the grade of the deceased, materials traditionally required for burial are the same even though the style differs. In the Benin burial ceremony on the death of a Benin person, it is the eldest surviving son with his brothers and sisters, who performs the funeral rites of the deceased parent for the family. "For the family" means that all the funeral ceremonies end before the family elder the "Okaegbe" (Aisien, 2018, as cited in Edogiawerie, 2020).

Funeral rites are in two parts: first and second burial ceremonies. First ceremony includes all rituals performed that end with the actual interment of the deceased. The second ceremony which may follow immediately after the first or at a later date depending on the preparedness of the son, includes all rituals performed that end with *Ukomwen* (planting of the *Ukhure*). The *Okaegbe n' okhua* (the eldest head of family) normally delegates *Okaegbe irorinmwin* (the head of the family in charge of the burial) to officiate and guide the children to conclude all the funeral rites, at the end of which the *Okaegbe irorinmwin* with the children presents his report with all items used to the *Okaegbe n' okhua*. He mentioned that the first child at internment pour sand on the grave first followed by other siblings. According to Edogiawerie (2020), the burial rites take seven (7) days for the ordinary people and fourteen (14) days for the king or for important chiefs. Just after death, the body is washed and laid on the bed inside the house and embalmed or in

case of a mortuary the corpse is brought home to be prepared for interment.

While the corpse is being prepared, the grave is dug. Ordinary persons may be buried in the general cemetery, and the corpse is accompanied there by the children, friends and well-wishers. As the body is lowered in the grave, prayers are said to the effect that in the next incarnation the deceased may not experience the kind of misfortunes that he or she may have encountered. The interment is done completely using the natural red soil that is locally sourced contrary to the carnival and luxury styled burial ceremony of nowadays tagged Christian burial which has resulted in the use of white sand from the sea for interment rather than the natural red soil (*Ulakpa*) a practice that is common in most funerals held (in private properties) outside of the general cemetery. Practically, it is more natural to use the red soil (*Ulakpa*), the same soil that was dug out of the grave irrespective of the status of the deceased, (rich, poor or an average person). R. Idemudia (personal communication, February 20, 2020) a traditional (Olokun) priest in Obe village, Benin City, further mentioned *Isoton*, *Izakhule*, *Isuerhanfua*, etc., as the different aspects of the burial. Otedo.com (2011) gives a breakdown of the seven days burial rites in Benin Kingdom as follows:

1st day: (*Iwa Orhimwin*): This is laying out of the corpse and embalmment.

2nd day: The male descendants and sons-in-law of the deceased offer goats and foods to provide meal for the participants at the burial. Burial songs are sung throughout the nights till morning.

3rd day: (*Izakhue*): Eldest son/child of the deceased slaughters a cow or goat to appease the *Edion* (departed elders) spirit of the family and the meat is consumed.

4th day: The fourth day is used in preparation for the next day event, which is elaborate and time consuming.

5th day: (*Isoton*): This is a procession of the deceased children through the town. Each grown up male son organises it. In this procession *Okun* (a box) decorated with a red cloth and brass ornaments which represent the property of the deceased is used. If the procession is in Benin City, each group visits the statue of Emotan

(a woman that lived in the 15th century and honoured by Oba Ewuare the great for her generosity) to pay respect. The gifts offered at this statue are collected by *Akairo-mwon* (the royal jester), the caretaker of the Emotan statue site.

6th day: (Okpovbie): Wake keep takes place in the evening of the 6th day. During this evening, the children of the deceased entertain all the attendees who usually are friends, well-wishers and other family members. A person is usually chosen by divination and dressed up in fine clothes to represent the deceased. He/she is known as *Eno-derhayi* or the (deceased representative). According to Benin belief system, on no account should he/she sleep during the night. If he/she does, it is believed that he/she will dream of the deceased and he/she may die shortly. People gather around him/her to keep him/her occupied till dawn.

7th day : (Isuerhan Fua): “Casting away” - At dawn, the deceased representative lead the procession to a nearby bush, where a framework of stick covered with cloth is erected. The deceased representative pretends to sit on it, and then the other mourners do likewise. Finally, the structure collapses and its components are thrown away. A few hours later, *Ukhure* (staff representing the deceased) is placed upright on the altar of the deceased. A goat is then slaughtered for the offering. It is also explained that the first son is now made to plant the staff of authority and symbol of ancestral worship. The *Ukhure* is normally made of wood which is carved from trees like the kola nut tree.

Qualifications of Becoming an Ancestor in Benin Tradition

Every dead person does not necessarily become an ancestor for the simple reason that he is dead.

1. Marriage: The first criterion is adulthood and he/she must be married with children not someone without children.
2. Death: A living person cannot be an ancestor. He/she must have died.
3. Natural Death: He/she must have died a natural death. Unnatural death like by accident, drowning is believed to have been caused by the person's hidden crimes. The exception is death in the battlefield in defence of the whole community. This, in fact, enhances one's reputation.

4. According to Quarcoopome (1987), “those disqualified also include those who died through unclean diseases such as leprosy, epilepsy, sleeping sickness, madness, smallpox and so forth” (p. 45).
5. Only good people become ancestors. The ancestors are still not separated from their earthly families by death and therefore are still considered part of their human families. Indeed, in Edo context the family is made up of *Erinmwin*, *Noragbon*, *kevbe Namahebie* (dead, living and the generation yet unborn). The people thus have personal memories of the ancestors who are believed to return to their human families from time to time and to share meals with them, however, symbolic, R. Amuenmwenhi (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a former traditional priest in Evbuomoma village, Benin City,

Consequences of not Becoming an Ancestor in Benin Tradition

It will be proper to discuss the adverse effects because this is the reason why children try by all means to give their parents a befitting burial ceremony. Atomon and Osagiede (2018) said that the spirit of the Benin person goes home after the *Isoton* rites during which the family prays for a safe passage through the narrow and steep hilly road to heaven (*Oke n' alubode*) which according to history is at *Ughoton* deemed as the gateway to heaven (*erhinmwin ofumwengbe*). The necessary rites, however, have to be carried out by the family of the deceased, especially the children. Failure to do so may have consequence. *Omo noma ye erha lode nokheke vbe ogha wu, a luburubu okhianren!* (A curse is on the children that would not bury their father well) because this will hinder their father. According to R. Amuenmwenhi (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a former traditional Priest in Evbuomoma village, Benin City, the children may fall sick and may even die. Imasogie (1985) opined that if a person is not properly buried to become an ancestor, he automatically becomes a ghost. He added that to be a ghost is to be cut off from the family as a ghost cannot be invoked at the ancestral shrine.

The Role of Ancestors in Earthly Families in Benin Tradition

1. Ancestors as Family Police

R. Amuenmwenhi (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a former traditional priest in Evbuomoma village, Benin City, states that the affair of the family is the concern of the ancestors. They know and have been interested in what is going on in the family when they appear in dreams generally to the first son of the family, they enquire about affairs and may even warn of impending danger or disasters and rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instructions. P. Ikhifa, (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a Baptist priest in Evboukhun village, Benin City and E. Eghosa, (personal communication, February 20, 2020) at 2 Mission Road, Obe confirmed it.

2. Ancestors as Family Guardians

Quarcoopome (1987) confirmed the role of ancestors in the life of the family and community at large that it cannot be underestimated. He said that they are guardians of family affairs, property, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is ultimately against the forefathers, the divinities and ultimately God, the source and upholder of the social and moral order. In this regard the ancestors act as invisible police force of the families and communities. They are the unseen president at every family meetings, in other words the ancestors are the spiritual superintendents of earthly families of which they remain members and not mortals anymore.

3. They Reward and Punish

Quarcoopome (1987) further explains that the nearest and closest link people have of the spiritual world is the ancestors. They are believed to be bilingual, speaking the language of human beings with whom they lived until recently and also that of the spirits and God. Through the ancestors, the spirit world becomes generally real to the Edo people; the ancestors seem to be the best group of intermediaries between the divinities and God on one hand and humans on the other since they are believed to have full access to the divine beings. As intermediaries from above they have delegated authority from God. They have the mandate to reward right conduct and to punish the whole ethnicity or clan or lineage or family or the

individual for crimes against the society. He added that it is believed that with their delegated power and authority the ancestors naturally command awe, fear and respect from the people.

As a result, great care is taken to ensure that the ancestors get befitting burial. All rituals must be meticulously performed to avoid displeasing them as they would not hesitate to punish with misfortune any negligence in performance of these rituals. Similarly, all instructions given by the ancestors before their death with regard to say peculiar ritual procedure must be faithfully carried out. Thus the families spare no effort in following the proper practices and customs regarding the burial or other means of disposal of the dead. They pour libation and give food and offerings as the case might be. Some societies like some people in Benin will not taste food unless they have offered bits of it to the ancestors. They would also have some food over night on a table otherwise the ancestors would become angry on visiting the house at night and not finding food to eat. In other societies, great care of the grave is taken and the practice of periodic remembrance observed in a way of worship or veneration.

4. The Ancestors and Morality

The ancestors are also believed to have a keen interest in the moral order. Opoku (1978) mentioned that they act as invisible guardians of morality, for they have led exemplary lives on earth and had trodden the moral path laid down by the first grand ancestors (*Aveerhamwenedede*) or over lord of the society. They are believed to know more than the living, for they had lived in this world and now also familiar with the spirit world, they are sometimes erroneously spoken of as the source of moral sanctions in the society. Idowu (1974) explains that the ancestor is believed to take an active interest in the family or community and his/her power over it, is now considerably increased as he/she is no longer restricted by earthly conditions. Matters affecting the family or community are thus referred to him/her for sanction or judgment. In the words of Ebhomienlen (2014), they (ancestors) are believed to be constantly watching over their living relatives. They punish those who break the customs or fail to fulfill their obligations to their kinfolk. To such people, misfortune and illness or even death looms over them. Hence, psychosomatic diseases are often taken care of by sacrifices and rituals in Africa.

According to N. I. Aihie (personal communication, February 20, 2015) averred that women who commit adultery are usually exposed by the ancestors. In Benin, when a child is sick or a man is sick, the woman is made to confess of what she has done and sacrifice to ancestors will be done if she really confesses. F. Aimienrovbiye (personal communication, February 20, 2020), residing at No. 7 Messiah Street, Benin City, mentioned that this has helped the women to really live a modest life. On the other hand, those who obey the law and customs and fulfill their obligations receive help and blessings of the ancestors. Opoku (1978) vouches that the ancestors also see to it that the crops of such people are plentiful, that children are born to them and that their undertakings prosper. The people of Benin kingdom do not joke with their ancestors.

5. Peace and Security

M. Oboh (personal communication, February 20, 2020), a Baptist priest at the Baptist College of Theology, Benin City explained that the ancestors ensure peace and security. They act as check and balances so that people will not maltreat their neighbours and if they do, they discipline the person. R. Aimuenmwenhi (personal communication, February 20, 2020), residing at No. 7 Messiah Street Benin City states that women are made to take oaths of allegiance that they will not harm their husbands and his family members. This will make their husbands and family have a sense of security and peace.

Problems of Ancestral Worship in Benin Kingdom

There are many problems associated with ancestral worship in Benin kingdom. This paper will examine the following:

1. The First Son and Ancestral Worship

R. Idemudia (personal communication, February 20, 2020) opined that one of the greatest problems of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom is the challenges the first son face during the ancestral worship. The first son is being dragged about by the extended family and made to plant *ukhure* tree (which is the symbol of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom). Thus, he is involved in the buying of goat, cowries, kola nuts, etc. They mould red sand where he will plant the *ukhure*. They kill the goat and rub the *ukhure* with its blood

after which they would pray for the first son. Idemudia further explained that the elders would cut small white cloth and tie it at the centre of the wood; there, *ukhure* food is normally cooked in order for everybody around to eat. They will put the *ukhure* down and after one year it is re-venerated as their father's remembrance. The first son can use the *ukhure* to torment his siblings so that they keep coming to him to make sacrifice to ancestors. When anyone has problem in the family like sickness, bareness, accident, poverty, etc., he is the first suspect. Idemudia added that if the first son is a wicked person or a wizard, he would continue to trouble his siblings or if people that are using mysterious powers are close to him, they will hide under the *ukhure* to disturb the family members and the people would think it is the first son that is the problem. He concluded that in Benin kingdom, *ukhure* is supposed to be used to pray for everybody for healing, protection, provision, fruitfulness, etc., but some persons use it for evil.

2. The Atrocities of Okagbe (Head of Family) and Ancestral Worship in Benin Kingdom

O. Ugiagbe (personal communication, February 20, 2020) residing in Okpamen Street, Benin City lamented that during husband's burial; widows are made to take oaths, sit on leaves on the floor and threatened as if they killed their husbands. After the burial, the widows may be forced to marry the okagbe or any other male in the family.

3. Polygamous Family and Ancestral Worship

R. Aimuenmwenhi (personal communication, February 20, 2020) complained how turbulent it can be when the first son in charge of *ukhure* symbol of ancestral worship is not from the same mother. He added that all the other children ran away from their father's house. When he discovered that the other children ran away from the house, he too left and abandoned the *ukhure*. The house dilapidated. That was the end of ancestral worship in that family.

4. Ancestral Worship seen as Superstitious

N.I. Aihie (personal communication, February 20, 2020) looked at ancestral worship as a superstitious belief. According to him, most of the issue is feared because his eldest brother though now late

was taken away from home for fear that other members of the family would kill him. His uncle later confessed to his father that all what he did to him did not affect him as it affected other siblings in the family. He also said that some first son make charms and use magical powers in addition to the *ukhure* that is why they can use it for evil and to disturb and worry other people in the family. He mentioned that it is ordinary wood, the same ancestors they represent with wood has also reincarnated in a baby born within the family. Therefore he called it superstitious belief and that the people are only deceiving themselves. In his opinion, Christians should not accept *ukhure* and should reject ancestral worship. F. Ezele (personal communication, February 20, 2020) a Baptist priest residing at No.1 T.V Road, Benin City stated that one can reject *ukhure* in order to have peace.

5. Limitations of Women in becoming Ancestors in Benin kingdom.

According to Igun (2008), burial ceremonies in Benin kingdom is almost the same for both men and women. In Benin kingdom, the patriarchal system is practised. When holding serious family meetings, women are made to enter the kitchen and cook for the men. During marriage ceremony, they are made to sit inside the house while the fathers are in the living room where the bride price is being paid. So also a woman is not considered as an ancestor because they are not regarded as the head. A woman cannot also be with the *Ukhure* (symbol of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom). According to R. Amuenmwenhi (personal communication, February 20, 2020) who shouted and said a woman cannot become an ancestor just as a woman cannot become Odionwere (leader of a street or community). The researchers then queried the reasons given as not satisfactory because if the woman pass in all the qualifications of becoming an ancestor why then will she not be an ancestor?

Conflict between Christianity and African Traditional Religion on Ancestor Worship

M. Oboh (personal communication, February 20, 2020) explained that there is a kind of conflict between Christianity and African traditional religion in respect of ancestral worship. He further

mentioned that before Christianity, God has a way of leading His people and Benin people still believe in God. The ancestors served as intermediary between man and God. The ancestors served as God's representatives. He said now that Christianity has come, the intermediary between man and God is not the ancestors but Jesus Christ who now plays the role of ancestors. He added that there have been series of arguments saying that Jesus Christ is the greatest ancestor. Ukpeakuimode (1999) affirmed that Jesus Christ is an ancestor because he plays the intermediary role between humans and God. As a man He came to die to reconcile humanity to God. Although Jesus is God, when he viewed from African traditional point of view, the African person can perceive Jesus Christ as an ancestor. His relationship with Jesus Christ will not be like the one with ancestors where they worship with rituals but through prayers. He further said that it will be difficult for the African man to believe that Jesus Christ can play the role of the ancestors without all those rituals and sacrifice.

He agreed with N. I. Aihie (personal communication, February 20, 2020) that ancestral worship is superstitious belief since the same ancestors they worship are the same people who have reincarnated in their children. C. Itota (personal communication, February 20, 2020) an Igbaghon priestess of Obe Village argued that Christians also worship other ancestors like Mary in the Catholic Church. She strongly refused ancestral worship as superstitious. Meanwhile, G. Obasuyi (personal communication, February 20, 2020) a former traditional (Sango) priestess of Uwagboe Street, Benin City, narrated how she left ancestral worship because of too much sacrifice. She shouted: *Ijesu Christi ore ancestor mwen* (Jesus Christ is now my ancestor). The fact cannot be denied that the worshippers of African traditional religion will want to continue with ancestral worship and Christians continue to see Jesus Christ as the best and greatest ancestor.

Conclusion

Every dead person does not necessarily become an ancestor. They are adults who died by natural death at old age and those who died while defending their society irrespective of their age. Ancestors serve as intermediary between God and man and between the spiritual world and the physical world. It is also believed that the

first son is the intermediary between ancestors and other siblings in the family in Benin kingdom. The *ukhure* is the symbol of ancestral worship which the first son uses to pray for himself and other members of the family. He can use it to pray for protection, provision and healing. There are many problems associated with ancestral worship in Benin kingdom such as: the first son seen as one that uses *ukhure* to torment his siblings and the wicked manipulating the use of ancestral worship for wickedness especially in a polygamous family. There are a lot of prospects in ancestral worship such as: ancestors maintaining peace and security, moral order etc. Those that use *ukhure* are to be advised to use it with fairness and justice. While Christians should not accept *ukhure* and reject ancestral worship for Jesus Christ is playing the role that is more than ancestors and intermediary between God and human beings. Based on the issues examined in this study, it is recommended, among other things, that those who practise ancestral worship should do it with clean mind; *Ukhure* should not be used to torment other members of the family and anyone culpable should be sanctioned; *Ukhure* should be used for the purpose it was originally intended such as praying for protection, provision and healing, etc.; and all first sons should give their lives to Jesus Christ (the greatest ancestor in Christianity) so that they will be free from the danger of rejecting *ukhure* (symbol of ancestral worship in Benin kingdom).

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