

**THE CHALLENGES FACING AFRICAN TRADITIONAL  
RELIGION AS A MINORITY RELIGION IN NUPELAND,  
KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

Interaction among religions of unequal size involves challenges. The challenges facing African Traditional Religion (ATR) as a minority religion in Nupeland, Kwara State, Nigeria, were the focus of this study. The aim of this work was to find out the state of ATR in Nupeland, and how it was coping with the challenges confronting it. The historical approach was adopted for the study because the issues involved were existential and related to the life experiences of the peoples involved, while the phenomenological approach was used to investigate and describe the events captured in the research. Data were gathered through participant observation, interview, and library consultation. The researcher found out that some ATR adherents were practising the religion in hiding, in order to avoid being ridiculed, if not attacked. The ATR adherents were coping with the challenges facing the religion through adaptation, syncretism, formation of association of adherents, provision of social and spiritual services, and maintenance of high ethical standards. It could be seen that Muslims assimilated Ndakogboya and Kuti Eyagi masquerades to celebrate their festivals. Some Muslims when faced with perplexity also consulted ATR diviners. The study concluded that the hostility of Muslims to ATR was mitigated by their assimilation of some ATR elements in Nupeland, making the society to be somewhat religiously peaceful and interesting.

**Keywords:** African Traditional Religion, Minority, Nupeland, Kwara State, Challenges

## **Introduction**

African Traditional Religion (ATR) is the religion that evolved from the worldviews of the ancestors of the present Africans and handed down from generation to generation.<sup>1</sup> The traditional aspect of the religion shows that there are things old and new, ancient and current in the religion. This means that there is the constant tension of continuity and discontinuity in the religion, as in most human cultures. Although the hand of change has descended on the religion, it is still relevant in the lives of some Africans, including those who have become Christians or Muslims, consciously or unconsciously. One of the peculiarities of ATR is that its adherents are more concerned with practising the religion than with theorising or philosophising it.<sup>2</sup> The religion is unarguably culture-bound.

There are three religions in Nupeland, Kwara State, namely, ATR, Islam, and Christianity. ATR is the indigenous religion of Nupeland. Islam came to the land and reduced ATR to a minority religion. Christianity came to the land long after Islam was already firmly rooted in the land. Nupe people conceive the Supreme Being (God) as Sokó.<sup>3</sup> They also use the title Tsóci<sup>4</sup> (The Owner of us, Our Lord) when speaking about God. Some divinities (agents of God) in ATR in Nupe context include Ndakogboya (the tall cylindrical masquerade), Gunnu (unmasked divinity holding palm fronds), Ndabazuma (divinity that women and non-initiates must not see), Kutilaci (veneration of spirit), Kuti Eyagi (masquerade divinity of Yorùbá origin), etc.

The problem of this study is that Nupeland is a predominantly Islamic society with an appreciable Christian presence. Both Islam and Christianity are proselytising religions whereas ATR is non-proselytising minority religion whose survival in the land is highly challenged. What are the challenges facing ATR in the midst of Islam and Christianity? The purpose of the study was to examine the challenges facing ATR in the land, and assess how the adherents were coping with the challenges.

The study adopted the qualitative research design, using phenomenological and historical approaches. The phenomenological approach was adopted because the study was concerned with the investigation and description of some visible religious interactions among the adherents of the two religions (ATR and Islam). The historical approach was applied because the experiences investigated happened within time. Data for the study were gathered through interview, participant observation, and library consultation. Some key informants in ATR and Islam were interviewed formally and informally. ATR festivals of Ndakogboya and Gugu Eyagi were attended and observed. Books,

journals, and internet sources were consulted. This study covered Patigi and Edu Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria. The villages and towns visited for the study included Patigi, Lade, Bokungi, Lema, Zambufu, Matokun, Gbado Pati, Patidzuru, Lafiagi, Bacita, and Kpankorogi.

A Muslim author, Yahaya claims thus:

Traditional religion was practiced before the introduction of Islam. Therefore, traditional religion is no longer recognised nor practised in Nupeland. Where such practises still occur, there is no societal recognition and practitioners are in secrecy due to shame, isolation and degrading status and the condemnation which practitioners are likely to face.<sup>5</sup>

The submission of Yahaya revealed that ATR faces enormous challenges as a minority religion in Nupeland. Since any religion can be a minority in any part of the world, the challenges that minority religions usually face should concern all.

### **African Traditional Religion in Ancient Nupeland**

African Traditional Religion (ATR) was the only religion in Nupeland before Islam and Christianity came to the land. The task here is to examine what the religion was like. The foremost literature that most scholars cite concerning ATR in Nupeland is by Nadel who submits that traditional Nupe people conceive God as aloof from the world He created, and because of this belief, Nupe people do not approach God directly but through appropriate ceremonies or rituals<sup>6</sup> known as *kuti*. On the contrary, Bujo notes and the researcher agrees that it is mistaken to hold that God is far from the African world since all relationships are rooted in God.<sup>7</sup> The world is a sacrament of God for human beings, including Africans. A sacrament is something that reveals a reality that is not perceptible. In agreement with the Psalmist, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1), the whole world reveals the presence of God to humanity, and this implies that God could (and can) not be rightly said to be remote from traditional Africans or any other people. Hence, traditional Africans are known to conduct their activities, such as business, journey, eating, sleeping, waking, farming, etc., with the consciousness of God. When things are confusing, they go to a diviner to enquire what is amiss and what to do to resolve the problem. The attitudes

of traditional Africans described above in relation to God do not suggest that God was far from them.

The transcendence of God shows that human beings are naturally incapable of establishing immediate relationship with God. Therefore, mediation is sometimes, but not always, needed to connect the visible world of human beings with the invisible spirit world even though both worlds are interconnected. Hence, understanding the place of ritual (*kuti*) is necessary to understand ATR in Nupe context. *Kuti*, as an ambiguous word, also means ATR divinities. Talking about *kuti*, Nadel states that Gunnu (unmasked divinity holding palm fronds) is believed to be the most important divinity because it perceptively “harbours the strongest force”<sup>8</sup> that brings solutions to the problems of the people when venerated. Gunnu is a divinity of ancestral veneration. The Yorùbá people refer to this divinity as *ìgunnuko*. This is an erroneous appellation because *gunnuko* means great Gunnu (a name reserved for the priest of Gunnu who is sometimes referred to as Ndazo (an exceptional person). Abioje has done extensive work on ancestral veneration in his *African Ancestral Heritage In Christian Interpretations*. His conclusion that “in Yorùbáland, ancestral veneration is an essential aspect of ATR”<sup>9</sup> is also true of Nupeland and all traditional African societies. He also cites some authorities indicating that all peoples venerate their ancestors through whom God gave them life.

A prominent masquerade in Nupeland is the ritualised anti-witchcraft cult known as Ndakógbòyá.<sup>10</sup> Audu Musa and Jibril Adama who were elders at Lema revealed that Ndakógbòyá exists as a secret society that performs the functions of anti-witchcraft and cleanses the village.<sup>11</sup> This means that the masquerade helps to discourage those who may be attracted to witchcraft. Kohnert had submitted that Ndakógbòyá was a major pillar of occult belief among the Nupe that controls witchcraft.<sup>12</sup> The masquerade is equally a means of ancestral veneration, and Nupe venerate the divinity for good health for the town, that women may have children, and that everything may prosper. Imasogie rightly notes that ancestral worship showed the continuity between the dead and the living.<sup>13</sup>

It needs to be clarified that Gunnu differs from Ndakógbòyá, because Gunnu is not masked. Ndakógbòyá is a masquerade that is akin to the Egúngún masquerade among the Yorùbá, which Yahaya asserts originated from the Nupe into Yorùbá land.<sup>14</sup> The assertion of Yahaya is not tenable from the analysis of the Nupe name *gugu eyagi* for Egúngún Masquerade. The Nupe word *gugu* means Egúngún and the Nupe word

*eyagi* means Yorùbá. Therefore, Gugu Eyagi is a Nupe term for the Egúngún Masquerade that originated from Yorùbáland. In fact, the Chief Imam of Gbado Pati, Mummadudu Sheriff, told the researcher that Egúngún originated from Yorubaland, specifically Òsogbo in Oşun State, Nigeria, into Nupeland and that everywhere Egúngún is venerated, a Yorùbá must be among the adherents.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, masquerading is generally seen to be an international practice, including the Christian Santa Claus, and some Muslim women in purdah, as masked religious persons.

History holds that some other rituals and divinities existed in Nupeland before the advent of Islam to the land. These included Kuti Mamma (masquerade divinity of leaves and grasses), Dibo Saba ritual, which was a sacrifice to the *kuci* (soul) of an ancestor for the needs of the community and individuals. Sakó (Great Deer) ritual was a hunter ritual for the wellbeing of the community and individual hunters.<sup>16</sup> Ketsá sacrifice, which was led by the priest known as *ndádo*, 'Father *doro*'. The ritual was also known as *ndádo*. Records showed that the ritual originated due to a disastrous flood of River Niger that destroyed all houses and farms and brought famine to the river valley. Thus, at the order of the head of the village known as Muregi, in Niger State, Nigeria, a white cow, a white cork, and some honey were reported to have been sacrificed at the foot of a rock known as Ketsá. Hence, it was reported that whenever there was a danger of flood, the ritual was performed.<sup>17</sup> The origin of the ritual showed that it was connected to people who lived in the riverside communities. The ritual was said to have involved drumming, singing, and dancing. Nadel reported that the Etsu (King) Patigi sent a fowl in 1936 during the ritual as a sacrifice for peace and prosperity in his kingdom.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the king also believed in the ritual reveals that ATR adherents in Nupeland practised their religion freely like Muslims in those years when Islam was not yet established.

Since nothing happens without someone being responsible, as traditional Africans would say, human beings, generally speaking, have recourse to diviners in order to ascertain the cause(s) of their ailment or misfortune. As a means of diagnosis, divination affords the diviner and his client knowledge of the appropriate remedy to a given problem. In divination, the realm of the divine is involved in order to foretell the future.<sup>19</sup> Abioje notes that divination is an occultic (hidden) way of inquiring from God when one is confused about a course of action, and that the uncertainties in human situations predispose them to divination.<sup>20</sup>

Diviners in Nupe are known as *ebásanci*. They are consulted for variety of reasons, such as prospects of trade, cause(s) of a sickness, barrenness, or recurrent stillbirth, enquiries about outcomes of some future journey, undertaking, marriage, desire for favours from the king, etc. Nadel reported that there were two types of divination in Nupeland, namely, the *eba*, which resembles the *ifá* divination of the Yorùbá, that is, the throwing of strings of shells, and the *hatí*, used by Muslim diviners, which involves drawing mystic patterns on sand.<sup>21</sup> Mallam Mahmud Adamu, Head of Department of Agriculture in Lafiagi, Edu Local Government Area at the time of this research revealed that *ebásanci* were also consulted for choice of Emir from among the several contenders in Nupeland.<sup>22</sup>

Since 1942 when Nadel published his work, most of the religious practices have undergone some transformation, one way or another. Some have been abandoned due to modernity, based on Islam, Western education, and Christianity.

### **African Traditional Religion in Nupeland as a Minority Religion**

As at the time of this study in 2018, Nupeland was predominantly an Islamic society. It was believed that Arab traders and Islamic clerics tried to spread Islam to Nupeland before the Fulani Jihad.<sup>23</sup> Sheshi<sup>24</sup> states that notwithstanding such informal Islamisation, formal Islamisation of Nupe took place in the 1650's through the Islamic scholars and traders of Yemen origin who were believed to have settled at Borno in Northern Nigeria but later migrated to Nupeland and settled at Kutigi, Enagi and some other Nupe villages around the eighteenth century.

Report has it that syncretism was prevalent right from the early stages, as some Nupe who adopted Islam combined it with the veneration of Ndaduma (River Niger), Gunnu, Ketsa Rock, and some other African traditional divinities and rituals in Nupeland. This situation was said to have prevailed until one Etsu Jibrilu (1746-1759)<sup>25</sup>, the fifteenth Etsu after Tsoede (the founding father of Nupe kingdom), ascended the throne. He was credited with the zeal for Islamic reform like that of Uthman Dan Fodio. It was reported that Jibrilu made great efforts to impose Islam as a "state religion" on the entire Nupeland. Some measures that Sheshi noted that Jibrilu utilised to Islamise Nupeland included appointing judges throughout the kingdom and forcing common people to embrace Islam through the imposition of heavy tribute or tax on those who refused to abandon ATR. He was said to have exempted those who converted to Islam from such tax. The implication is that Nupe people did not

voluntarily abandon their traditional religion for Islam, generally speaking, but in order to be protected economically and legally. This view plays out in the fact that syncretism is very common in the practice of Islam in Nupeland.

Furthermore, after the reign of Jibrilu, as Falola, Uhomoibhi, Mahadi, and Anyanwu<sup>26</sup> noted, Nupeland under Etsu Ma'azu, the 19<sup>th</sup> king of Nupe, Mallam Dendo came to the land as an emissary of the Fulani Emir of Gwandu. Dupigny believes that Dendo was a missionary to Nupeland from Birnin Kebbi, and that he successfully subverted the Nupe dynasty and enthroned the Fulani dynasty in the land.<sup>27</sup> Dendo was noted to have led the Fulani Jihad that gradually conquered Nupeland through military expedition and thereby brought the land under the Caliphate. History has it that since 1833 when the son of Dendo, Usman Zaki became the first Etsu Nupe of Fulani descent<sup>28</sup>, Nupeland has undergone a radical change in religious landscape, such that ATR was drastically suppressed in the land. Islam is so dominant in Nupeland to the extent that it has all the trappings of a 'state religion'.

The grip of Islam on Nupeland obviously informed the submission of Yahaya that Islam had altered the culture of Nupe people and that the society does not recognise ATR.<sup>29</sup> Except that Osun state has granted an annual holiday to ATR, that is the prevalent situation in Nigeria, to the advantage of Christianity and Islam. In addition, Koro asserts that Islam has caused the disappearance of about sixty-three divinities (*Kuti*) whose festivals were reportedly celebrated in Koro village before the advent of Islam. He mentions one of the festivals known as Aruku, which Islam refused to accommodate because it was considered as public idol worshipping.<sup>30</sup> Koro is a person whose place of birth is also known as Koro in Nupeland. The village is located in Patigi Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Mallam Mahmud Adamu, with whom the researcher interacted in August 2019, explained that in Lafiagi, due to stigmatisation, names of houses associated with "idol" and its appurtenance like wine had been changed. Consequently, *Emi Ndakuti* (the house of custodian of Ndakogboya divinity) has become *Emi Nasara* (the house of luck or success), while *Emi Barasa* (The house where wine or alcohol is brewed) has been changed to *Emi Zam-Zam* (House where Holy water of Mecca (*Zam-Zam*) can literarily be obtained).<sup>31</sup> The tendency to eradicate ATR from family memory through changing the family name cuts future generations of the affected families from their religious roots. Meanwhile, while Islam had made most converts from ATR, Christianity had also

made some converts from among adherents of ATR in the villages where the influence of Islam has not been very strong. For instance, Baba Ibrahim was an adherent of ATR before he converted to the Catholic faith in Patiko, his hometown, in Edu Local Government Area.<sup>32</sup> Both Islam and Christianity have contributed to the drastic reduction of ATR in Nupeland, even though the dominating force of Islam is undisputable.

### **The State of ATR in Nupeland**

Despite the Islamic and Christian dominance in Nupeland, ATR has not ceased to exist, even though it can be described as endangered. It was discovered that most of the divinities such as Sako, Ndaduma, Kuti Mamma (masquerade divinity of leaves and grasses), and Ketsa that Nadel mentioned in his work have become extinct. Even the divinities that Madugu<sup>33</sup> claimed existed in 2009, namely, Ladi (thunder), Duwa (strong medicine that becomes an invisible snake divinity when thrown into the river), and Kutilaci (veneration of spirit) have become extinct. A festival becomes extinct once the priest or priestess and the devotees die without replacement or anybody to carry on the tradition.

The state of ATR in Nupeland can also be described as subservient because the religion is used to serve the interest of Islam. For instance, report has it that the colonial officers and missionaries tried unsuccessfully to destroy the Ndakogboya masquerade because of its anti-witchcraft function.<sup>34</sup> However, Ndakogboya has become a means of entertaining Muslims during their festivals in Nupeland. During the 2018 sallah celebration in Lade, Ndakogboya performed on the third day after sallah in the presence of the Ndalile (village head), the villagers, and other dignitaries at Lade primary school. Lade is one of the villages in Patigi Local Government Area in Kwara State. During the celebration, the singer reminded the custodians of the masquerade concerning the importance of repeating the festival yearly. The custodians had whips in their hands to scare intruders who might attempt to unmask the masquerade. The dancers danced in groups and they made a loud shout at intervals as they entertained the guests. The researcher interacted with the Ndalile who narrated that they inherited the celebration of the masquerade from their ancestors. He said that they venerated the Ndakogboya as a divinity, and that if they performed the celebration, they get answers to their requests.

Audu Musa, whom the researcher met at Lema in Edu Local Government Area on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018, testified that Ndakogboya also exists in Lema, and that Kuti Ndayasu, otherwise known as Ndabazuma or Orò among the Yorùbá (a divinity that women and uninitiated must not



see) is practised adamantly even though the villagers are mostly Muslims. This divinity is also known as Kuti Vuguvugu because of the sound it makes when it appears. It is celebrated also in Lade. When this divinity comes out, women are prevented from seeing it. As in Yorùbá society, this divinity serves to drive away or cleanse the community of evil spirits or mysterious infections.

Moreover, in Gbado Pati, the Mohammadu Lile Gbado Pati family was the custodian of ATR. Tsòdedè (Tidzana (chain of Tsòdedè)), Kuti Bassa (also known as Vuguvugu, Ndabazuma), and Ndakogboya are the divinities in Gbado Pati. Narrating how Tsòdedè started as a divinity, Mummadudu Sheriff, the Chief Imam of Gbado Pati, explained that Tsòdedè was a man who settled at Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria. Tsòdedè was promised to be the next king but his brothers pursued and tried to kill him. Hence, he ran from Idah. At the death of Tsòdedè, a chain was made as his symbol and it has become an object of veneration. Gbado Pati, Patigi, and Edogi Kpasanako were reported as the only people with the symbol of Tsòdedè.<sup>35</sup>

Ndakogboya used to be an anti-witchcraft masquerade. As Koro observed, the usefulness of the masquerade is now seen in entertainment and discipline.<sup>36</sup> At Gbado Pati, the researcher observed during his fieldwork on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019 that the masquerade warned and prayed, and the celebrants answered *ezo* (Amen). For instance, the masquerade warned the women that travelled to other villages and made bad friends to desist. The masquerade threatened that if they did not desist and there were calamity in the village, they would die. It further said if people failed to desist from evil, evil would happen to them and the celebrants answered *ezo* (Amen). The masquerade therefore functioned as a moral conscience of the village, or a moral police to instil discipline into the villagers. From the discussions, one noticed that ATR in Nupeland has undergone changes. However, the assumption or claim that ATR is no longer in existence in Nupeland is not true, even though its low status in the society cannot be rightly denied.

### **Challenges and the Approaches to the challenges facing ATR in Nupeland**

Most of the ATR adherents were syncretists, in the sense that they were mixing being Muslims with being adherents of ATR. In addition, most of the ATR adherents hide to practise the religion in fear of being ridiculed as idol worshippers. For instance, Ibrahim Jiya was a secret adherent of Ègún (Iron divinity) and Vuguvugu (divinity whose emblem

women must not see). When the researcher met Ibrahim Jiya at Bokungi on August 10, 2019, he explained that fear of being mocked and the condemnation of ATR by the religious leaders of Islam and Christianity turned him into a secret adherent of ATR. Although Jiya believed that his prayers were answered whenever he sacrificed to the divinities, he could not summon the courage to venerate the divinities publicly because of social stigma.<sup>37</sup> Having been denied social recognition in Nupeland, the option left for ATR adherents was to belong to the socially recognised and approved religions, Islam or Christianity. Most ATR adherents adopted Islam, the socially dominant religion, which enhances societal acceptability. Therefore, the major challenge facing ATR is lack of social recognition. ATR has been reduced to a subservient status as a means of survival. This is the reason why the most important period that the adherents publicly practise ATR openly and vigorously is during Islamic festivals. The adherents hide under Islam to venerate some of their divinities.

ATR exploits its subservient status for its own survival. For instance, Ndakogboya masquerade has received the official stamp of the Emirs, and this recognition has helped in assimilating ATR into popular Muslim festivals and other important occasions when Nupe people display their cultural heritage. Such official endorsement has also given the custodians huge reputation in the society. This has further secured the future of ATR because the children of the custodians of ATR proudly learn to step into the shoes of their parents and keep ATR alive.

### **The Future of African Traditional Religion in Nupeland**

By nature, ATR is accommodative and non-aggressive. Therefore, it has been able to develop the capability to withstand the religious rivalries, and enlist participation of youths who will continue in its beliefs and practices. An examination of the condition of ATR in the selected towns and villages revealed that the future of Tsoèdè seemed to be certain in Gbado Pati where the custodians maintain the shrine of Tsoèdè and children are initiated into its veneration. The future of Kuti Eyagi is also certain in Patigi since the shrine of Kuti Eyagi is maintained in Ndalupo's compound and Ndalupo's children and the children of Aliu Ndazo and members of Kuchitangi Emi Ndadzoko in Makun ward, Patigi are involved in the masquerade celebrations. The researcher met Mallam Mohammed Ndababo (elder brother to Ndadzoko), Mohammed Baba (son of Ndadzoko), Mohammed Abubakar (son of Ndadzoko's elder brother, Mallam Mohammed), Umaru Ndegi (son of Ndadzoko), and Usman Baba

Niger (Elder brother to Ndadzoko) who were proud of their Kuti Eyagi heritage and were determined to continue the practice.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, the researcher met Mayaki Jiya Gulufu who was a traditional medicine practitioner and an adherent of Ndakogboya at Bacita. Gulufu told the researcher that his children had been initiated into ATR. According to him, he delivered pregnant women without undergoing operation once he performed his incantation and he enquired from the oracle before embarking in any undertaking.<sup>39</sup> Gulufu expressed the belief that ATR has a future because his children were initiated into its beliefs and practises and he believed that his children would continue in the practice even after his demise. The elderly man reiterated that ATR adherents believe in the existence of God and they venerate the different divinities.

At Bacita, the researcher met an elderly man named Tsado Abubakare Gbaguta who was a Muslim and an adherent of Gunnu (unmasked divinity with palm fronds in hands). Although he said that his fellow Muslims ridiculed him, he believed that since he met Gunnu in his family, he had to continue the religious practice. According to him, all his children were initiated into the Gunnu confraternity even though they were Muslims. Gbaguta told the researcher that whenever he performed the sacrifice and carried it to the place where it should be, he got answers to his prayers.<sup>40</sup> Tsado and his family constitute a testimony to the secured future of ATR in Gbaguta, Nupeland, for instance.

Moreover, there is no doubt that ATR has a future in Léma because some youths were involved in it. During the Islamic festival in August 2018, a young man, Saliu Audu, told the researcher that although the youths have embraced Islam, they still practised Ndakogboya for entertainment. The informant believed that ATR has a future in Lema and that the youths adamantly practised Kuti Ndayatsu (the divinity whose emblem women must not see).<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding the influences of Islam and Christianity, as the researcher observed with Alfa Musa Idris, the researcher witnessed a young woman at Lema who consulted the ATR diviner. Through interaction with some ATR diviners in Lafiagi, Lema, Patidzuru, and Kpankorogi, the researcher learnt that the diviners were willing to bequeath *eba* (ATR divination) to their children. This is another pointer to the future of ATR in Nupeland.

Matokun, a purely Islamic community, is about 8 km from Patigi town. During an interaction with the village head, Ndazhitsu Abubakar Usman, it was discovered that Matokun celebrates Kuti Eyagi festival at the end of raining season (September/October). The people celebrate the

festival as a heritage that they cherish and must not die, and they celebrate it sometimes to appeal for rain and welfare of the community. They did not see any conflict between their Islamic faith and the celebration. There is hope that ATR would survive in Matokun since the people have integrated it with their Islamic faith, similar to what obtains in some other towns and villages in Nupeland.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the challenges facing ATR as a minority religion in Nupeland. It discovered that because of the Islamic environment, which is ordinarily hostile to ATR, the adherents adopted strategies such as syncretism, adaptation, and entertainment to neutralise some of the challenges. Most of the adherents, with whom this researcher interacted, adopted Islam for societal acceptance. This made the religion hidden in the land, in the sense that its symbols such as shrines are difficult to locate by a visitor to the land. Moreover, ATR divination is still popular in Nupeland and ATR diviners provide spiritual and health services to their clients. They operate through throwing of strings of shells resembling the *ifá* divination of the Yorùbá. The resistance and persistence of the Nupe adherents of ATR had resulted in Muslims adopting some aspects of ATR, especially the Ndakogboya and Gugu Eyagi as means of entertaining Muslims during their festivals. The celebration of the Gunnu, Gugu Eyagi and Ndakogboya festivals attracted massive crowds and they generated revenues for the custodians during Muslim festivals (Eid-el-Kabir).

Some Nupe Muslims who could not hide their hostility towards ATR were encountered in the course of the study. Nevertheless, the presence of ATR in Nupeland is fairly substantial, and the study cannot but conclude that the presence of ATR in Nupeland enriches Nupe culture, in terms of religious diversity, making Nupeland a religiously interesting society. The utilisation of masquerades to entertain Muslims during their festivals contributed to relative harmony and peace in the land. The Kwara state government and the local governments concerned should, therefore, exploit the tourism potentials of the entertainment industry, which the Masquerades afford as a means of generating revenue for societal development.

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- 3 Researcher's personal interaction discovered that *Soko* means literally God-the sky, as something big or great from the suffix, *kó*.
- 4 Researcher's personal interaction discovered that *Tsóci* means 'Our Lord'. Analysis of the name shows that *-ci* means our, while *tsó* means 'owner of' or 'master of'.
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- 8 S. F. Nadel, *Black Byzantium*, 72, 73.
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