

An overview of Niger-Delta Indigenous Religions**George Tasié and Rowland Olumati**Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
University of Port Harcourt,
Port Harcourt, Nigeria**ABSTRACT**

This essay is an outline interpretation of Niger Delta indigenous religions. It examines the structure of indigenous religions in the Niger-Delta region. Its interest is to point out the heterogeneous and diversified nature of the people of Niger Delta and those religions which are indigenous to them. The essay discovered that one culture or one religion may emphasize a belief or a value system, which is completely absent or absolutely misconceived in another religion or in another culture. However, this essay reveals that in spite of these remarkable differences in the cultures and belief systems of the people of the Niger Delta, there exists a centralized structure of rituals and beliefs system which pervades the whole of Niger Delta indigenous religions. The essay defends the central argument that after all said and done, the different beliefs and practices professed by various ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region simply indicative of the fact that their diversity is merely a divergent expression of the same religion and culture.

Key Words: Niger Delta, Indigenous, Religion and Over-view

INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta ecosystem contains one of the earth's highest concentrations of nature's biodiversity with numerous species of flora, terrestrial and aquatic fauna, living both on its land and water bodies. With such similarities between nature's diversity and the diversity found among the people of the Niger-Delta, one easily recognizes in the Niger Delta, a diversity of culture and a diversity of religions, many of which are scintillating and captivating. This local variation is most noticeable not only in the belief system of the *riverine* communities and among the upland dwellers (mutually exclusive units) it is also noticeable within the ethnic groups which make up these units. An ethnic group may emphasize a belief or an element which may be remarkably absent or indefinitely conceived in another. Yet, in spite of

this plurality in the Niger-Delta, a centralized structure of rituals and beliefs pervades the whole of the indigenous religion of the Niger Delta. The varieties of Niger Delta indigenous religion share some basic characteristics in common. Generally, they are oral rather than scriptural; they have no single founder and are not enthusiastic with regard to membership drive. At the doctrinal level, there is also a pervading unity, especially in the belief in the Supreme Being, the belief in the divinities and spirits, veneration of ancestors and practice of magic and medicine. Thus, the myriads of indigenous religions found in the Niger Delta, as we shall notice shortly, could be seen as only a differing expression of the same basic religion. In the subsequent sections of this essay, we shall be examining the component units of this belief system, drawing out the fascinating unity which pervades the indigenous religions of the Niger Delta.

The Indigenous Cultures and Religions of the Niger Delta

Among the many ethnic groups of the Niger Delta, the idea of God is fundamental. However, there is no generic name for God; rather He is addressed with unique names and attributes, according to the peculiar experiences of the various ethnic groups. Some of these names and attributes depict Him as the author of all beings, who underpins the world and the universe. Take for example, Osanobua, the name of the Supreme Being among the Edo of western Niger Delta. The name as suggested by J. O. Awolalu and P. A. Dopamu (1974:40) means "the source of all beings that carries and sustains the world or universe."

In some Niger Delta communities, especially among those ethnic groups which are matrilineal in their constitution, the Supreme Being was conceived as a 'Mother', until massive Christian presence brought radical changes in the people's world view. A critical example is the Ijaw tribe which, during the pre Christian era, addressed God as *Temearau*, the Creator of all things. This meant that She (God) creates. For the Okrika people of Rivers State, being a sub-tribe of Ijaw race, *Tamunoba* the Supreme Being was believed in pre-Christian era to be feminine by nature. She was believed to have created the world, *sekiri* and people, *tomini*. This indigenous conception of the Supreme Being as feminine, Adokiye Oforibika (1996:110) explains was a reflection of worldly affairs, where women were seen specifically as physically producing children. This image of God as mother carries with it the idea of nurturing and nursing which depicts mankind as children of God.

Sometimes, the names by which the Supreme Being is addressed are

expressive and categorical of His ingenuity and creativity. The *Ikwerre* on the North Eastern fringes of the Niger Delta region, address Him as *Chiokike*. The name is emphatic of His creative prowess as a Deity who brought all other beings into existence. This is further illustrated among the *Ibibios* of Akwa Ibom State in the Niger-Delta region that the name for God, *Abasi Ibom*, which implies that God is the God of the 'sky' and 'earth' and suggests that He is a father and overseer of all.

The various names which the Niger Delta people address God with cannot simply be taken as mere tags probably invented to refer to the person of the Supreme Being but rather they are meaningful and symbolic since they largely represent attestations not only of the people's experiences of the supernatural but also of their fears and expectations in an incomprehensible and mysterious universe. Generally, most of what the Niger Delta people know of God in terms of their knowledge of His nature, whether as attributes or characteristics, are encapsulated and expressed in the various names they address Him with (see G.I.K. Tasie and C.H. Ofuru, 2013:19).

Although the Supreme Being is the main focus of attention among the Niger Delta indigenous religions, there are no shrines, temples and statues, dedicated to Him. Similarly, there are no priests dedicated to His service. This suggests that no human being can avow to be the representative or emissary of God. Since the Supreme Being is not conceived of in material, tangible terms, no visual depictions, such as sculptures and paintings, are made to him. Instead, the Supreme Being is pictured as a great spirit without any physical representatives.

In spite of the prominence and power attributed to Him, the Supreme Being in Niger Delta indigenous religion is not directly approached and worshipped; rather, people put their requests and petitions before the numerous divinities that throng the pantheon of gods. These divinities are limited to defined areas of jurisdiction. Their powers or areas of competence are directly linked to the exact attributes assigned to them. Although, these gods are inferior and subordinate to the Supreme Being, they are at the centre of the culture and belief systems of the people, receiving sacrifices and petitions from devotees on behalf of the Supreme Being. On the other hand, they are the instruments through which God expresses His pleasure or displeasure towards his devotees. The divinities can simply be said to have been brought into existence by the Supreme Being and their purpose is to serve as His functionaries, especially in the specific area of life for which they have special attributes. Shrines are maintained by priests and priestesses as places where sacrifices and prayer(s) are

offered to the divinities who are believed to protect, bless and punish offenders on behalf of the Supreme Being.

Some of the divinities are manifestations of certain attributes of the Supreme Being, especially as they expressed through the features of the environment such as the ocean, the mangrove forests, lakes, etc. All of these features are typical to the Niger Delta. Other features can best be described as primordial, since their origin are not well known, and they are believed to have been residing with the Supreme Being before their time of creation. For a third category of persons, these religious and cultural forms are elevated to the status of deified ancestors. Thus, among the Niger Delta indigenous cultures and religions, the divinities are physically present and immanent realities. It is to their shrines that people resort whenever they are challenged with difficulties.

Beginning with Edo on the Western part of the Niger Delta region, Supreme Being, *Olokun*, literally means the "owner of the sea". This by implication means that *Olokun* is the divinity of the ocean and the waters. *Olokun* represents God's purity and holiness and this is exemplified in his special offerings which include white fowls, white pigeon and white clothe. Also very prominent among the Edo is *Oto*, the earth goddess, symbolized by an *Ikhimi* tree found in almost every homestead. The goddess is responsible for bountiful agricultural yield and her principal emblem is a tuber of yam. *Oto* is most active during the planting season, when sacrifices of *fufu* and snail are offered at her shrine and she is celebrated during new yam festivals. Equally notable among the Edo is *Ogiuwu*, the thunder divinity. Since it is believed among the Edo that *Ogiuwu* is the instrument of God in bringing evil men to justice, people say that God's wrath and anger are expressed in lightning and thunder. Evil men, are therefore, warmed during lightning to go into hiding.

Among the *Ijaws* on the Central flank of the Niger Delta region, *oru* as these divinities are known, are practically indispensable in the affairs, not just of the individual themselves but also in the affairs of the people. Each *Ijaw* village or group has a collection of divinities often referred to as *amoru*, the village gods. Collectively, the *amoru* protects the village associated with them against capricious evil forces and against the evil machinations of rival villages. Moreover, they symbolize strength, and promote group solidarity. Prominent among the divinities is *Amakiri*, whose symbol of authority is the sacred *ikimi* tree, noticeable in every *Ijaw* village, often planted at the inauguration of a new village. The primary responsibility of *Amakiri* is with fecundity and the promotion of peace and morality, especially sexual morality. Unethical sexual

conducts such as incest and sexual dealings on bare ground are detestable to Amakiri.

The most important deity among the Central Ijaws is *Egbesu*. As the arch divinity, *Egbesu* is found among the prominent clans of Central Ijaw and it appears that each of the clan has adopted it to suit its own peculiarities. Thus we have Olodiana *Egbesu*, Arogbo *Egbesu*, Gbaran *Egbesu*, Oporoma *Egbesu*, etc. In any case, *Egbesu*'s primary role is that of war. In pre colonial times, the Ijaw employed it in their wars against neighboring clans within and outside of the Niger Delta. Even in modern times, this role of *Egbesu* seemed not to have diminished. There were strong indications that some Niger Delta agitators of Ijaw extraction employed *Egbesu* in their armed struggle against the Federal Government of Nigeria over resource control.

To ensure a successful outing, warriors undergo purificatory rites and the emblems of *Egbesu* are placed in the canoes, and the commander of the warriors himself handles a horse tail, which is one of the emblems of the deity. More than this, the horse tail symbolizes the presence of *Egbesu*. As a rule, *Egbesu* only fights what is right. He champions the cause of the oppressed. This special attribute of *Egbesu* is noticeable in His dislike for sorcerers, witches and His dislike for people who engage in evil-doing.

The Ijaw habitat is synonymous with rivers and creeks. This largely explains the prevalence of the people's belief in water spirits. *Bin'abu* which is believed to be the exact translation of *Egbesu* means 'water people', symbolically denoted 'water spirits', inhabits the many rivers and creeks that surrounds the Niger Delta area. There are many beliefs surrounding the nature and place of abode of these 'water people' called Ijaw. Some believe that the physical features of *Bin'abu* or the god of the 'water people', especially hand and trunk are similar to those of humans; whereas, their waists and legs are similar to the tails of fishes. Others describe them (*Bin'abu* and *Egbesu*) as diminutive beings with hair thinly scattered on their bodies. With regard to the sexes of these dieties, the general believe has been that the majority of them are female, which has given rise to the popular phrase *mamiwata* used in describing this class of spirit beings not only in the Niger Delta but in many parts of West Africa. However, recent studies are beginning to prove otherwise. W. Wotogbe-Weneka (1990) tends to suggest that the impression that the majority of water spirits are female is erroneous. His findings, among others, reveal that the water spirits are largely male.

With regards to their place of abode, many people believe that they dwell in seas and rivers, where they have established fabulous kingdoms. Yet their devotees set up shrines for them in their private homes. It is remarkable to see among these water spirits the spirit of *Adumu* who sometimes manifests itself as an ancient python. As a result, in parts of the Niger Delta, the python is revered since it must be treated with respect and dignity. Should it be killed inadvertently, it is reverently buried with full rites like those accorded nobles. Water spirits generally are believed to be very benevolent and lavish material wealth on their devotees.

In the pre colonial Okrika of the Eastern Niger Delta many deities held sway. Prominent among them were Fenibeso (who was synonymous with thunder and lightning and which has been described as the head god of Okrika confederation (see AdokiyeOforibika, 2007), *Okuna* (god of fire), Berepeleowu (the great judge), Iku (rock in the water), etc. Fenibeso among the Okrika manifested in form of thunder and lightning to carry out his acts. He was represented by symbols of a lion and eagle at his shrine. His main functions included those of being used in warfare and by his votaries as agent of protection against malevolent forces. He also was used to carry out healing of sick people at his shrine after certain rituals and incantations. Moreover, he was believed to be the source of acquisition of wealth, fame, position and oratorical prowess (see Oforibika, 2007:17). On the other hand, *Okuna* as earlier stated, was a deity who carried out his actions with fire. *Okuna*'s primary functions included the enforcement of moral probity and participation in warfare, mainly against the enemies of *Okrika*, by setting their houses ablaze mysteriously in the course of war. For the *Iku* deity, the ensured that justice prevailed in cases brought before him. Also he aided fishermen in their search for fish.

For the Ikwerre, the deity most closely associated with the existence and fortune of the individual was *Chi*. Or as it was sometimes known, *ChinuOwa*. *Chi*, the commonest appellation, refers to its general control of the individual's life. *Owa* refers more specifically to its control of his life-course or destiny. Although each individual had his or her *Chi* deity, a person is supposed to attain a degree of maturity before he or she sets up its shrine. This may mean that the head of a family appeals and makes offerings to his *Chi* on behalf of his less mature dependents. The individual depends primarily on his *Chi* for protection, good health, favour and good fortune. He thanks his *Chi* for achievements and successes, and it is equally his *Chi* he blames for his failures (see Tasie, 2007:21). If *Chi* is the most important divinity for the individual, Ali, the

earth goddess, is perhaps the most important divinity for the Ikwerre village groups. Ali is the sustainer of social groups at all levels, and is angered by anything that threatens the unity and harmony of social groups. Hence she is seen as the ultimate guardian of Ikwerre moral code. Other notable deities among the Ikwerre nation include: *Ojukwu*, who is often identified with small pox, *Amdioha*, associated with thunder and lightning, *Ikenga*, concerned with male achievement, *Agwumagwu*, the patron deity of diviners and medicine men and *Ekwu* who is concerned with female prowess in cooking and matrimonial arts in general.

Among the Ogbas, who are neighbours of the Ikwerre, three categories of divinities exist, namely divinities of the forest, divinities of the air and water divinities. A notable divinity of the air is *Ihegroku*, responsible for crop yields. The *Ogba* tries as much as possible to curry in favour of *Ihegroku* because their livelihood depends on his benevolence. In appreciation, a feast is annually hosted in his honour. Among the *Ogba*, deities which make their homes in the water and underpin and control activities within and around the water ways are classified as water deities. *Ogba* society is made up of two distinct groups: the upland and riverine communities. The water divinities perform the same function as the forest divinities for the riverine inhabitants. It is reported, for example, that *Iheklegbu* deity at *Idu-Osobile* is remarkable for averting all forms of mishaps within its vicinity. According to the *Idu* of *Ogba*, no form of water mishap ever takes place within *Iheklegbu* shrine. However, they are warned by its priest not to tremble even when danger stares them in the face. Similarly, anyone who attempts to bale out water from the canoe within the precincts of *Iheklegbu* shrine may not survive a mishap because by this act he would be seen to have doubted the power of *Iheklegbu*. Consequently, he self-manifestly excludes himself from the deity's protection. *Ahua* deity typifies the divinities of the air. It is believed to reside in the air and therefore, no shrine is dedicated to its worship. Its presence among the people is recognized through the affliction of small pox, chicken pox and measles (see Agi Otto, *Obodoegbulem*, 2007:49).

On the Eastern fringes of the Niger Delta, are the *Ibibios*, whose principal deities are *Isong* and *Obumo*. *Isong* is the earth goddess whose principal function is to ensure the fertility of crops. *Isong* is loved by farmers who rely on her benevolence for bountiful harvest. As a show of appreciation, *Isong* is celebrated with a great festival during harvest. On the hand, *Obumo* is the thunder divinity, often

referred to as the “owner of rain”. Because *Obumo* provides rain farmers accord it great sacrifice during seed time and at harvest. *Votaries* observe the worship of *Obumo* on every eighth day. *Obumo* is so remarkable in the life of the *Ibibio* traditionalists that his worship receives greater prominence than that of the Supreme Being known as *Abasi Ibom* (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979:100).

The supersensible world of the Niger Delta is very densely populated with divinities, that it becomes practically impossible to exhaust it in this study. We must be appreciative of the unique place of the divinities in the traditional religious life of the Niger Delta people. For it is through them as functionaries that the Supreme Being effectively administers the divine government of the universe.

One very significant element in the structure of Niger Delta indigenous religion is the belief in spirits. It is very difficult in some cases to make a clear cut distinction between spirits and divinities. However, divinities are of different category, since they are higher in status than spirits. It is also difficult to describe spirits in physical terms since they are often invisible to the ordinary man. But by and large, they can be described as entities which are almost abstract, as shades or vapours which can assume any shape at anytime. Generally, spirits are immaterial beings but when they wish, they make themselves visible to man, most often assuming very abnormal shape. Spirits are ubiquitous and Niger Delta people believe that there is no area of the earth that is not inhabited by spirits. They are found in the forests, mountains, hills, rivers, lakes, etc. Though, they are ubiquitous, people still designate certain areas as belonging to the world of spirits. Where this spirit world exists remains a mystery. Yet, Niger Delta people believe that the spirit world is a replica of the physical, tangible world and it is geographically near that it is only separated by a thin wall. In spite of the resemblance, the spirit world is profoundly at variance with the human world. It can not be seen physically by men, yet people believe that it exists.

Spirits, generally in the conception of Niger Delta people, are malevolent. They are said to possess vital influence and force with which they can possess humans, animals, birds or even insects and molest people or destroy things. However, there are a handful of them that are benevolent and can be manipulated for goodluck, wealth and health.

Another important aspect of the cosmology of the Niger Delta people is the belief in ancestors. Ancestors constitute the spiritual nucleus of their families and are the closest spiritual link between their living off spring and the ethereal world of God, the divinities and other

of sickness and old age, the latter needs care and support; but also and more importantly, children play roles in according their deceased parents proper mortuary rites. Moreover, a person must be a progenitor because ancestor cult is composed of one's descendants. In addition to leaving behind descendants, the deceased must have lived an exemplary life and kept the moral code of his community. Among the Niger Delta people such life of moral uprightness is believed to be rewarded with old age. So the deceased must have died at a ripe old age and of natural causes. People attribute some types of death to the deities, ancestral anger, vengeful ghost spirits and the activities of witches and sorcery. Deaths emanating from these agents are considered a curse and they nullify the chances of their victims becoming ancestors. A good death is followed with proper mortuary rites befitting the status of the deceased. Should the descendants of the deceased neglect to accord the deceased the necessary rites, it becomes a wandering and hostile spirit and haunts the living. The rites are as necessary to the peace and well-being of the living as they are to the salvation of the deceased.

Finally, one other important element in the structure of Niger Delta indigenous religion bothers on the belief in magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Magic as practiced by Niger Delta people, involves the human use of spell and rite to harness and control power and influence nature for his own benefit. Magic can be employed for good or for evil. People who apply magic for protection, defense, healing and promotion of a good fortune, are referred to as medicinemen. Generally, all over Niger Delta, some specialists use their privileged knowledge of the supersensible world to counteract the spells of the sorcerers and the activities of evil spirits and witches. They also use such powers to make rain or keep it away when necessary; to increase bountiful yield for farmers, and to enhance catch for fishermen and hunters; and warn of impending danger. By contrast is the activity of the sorcerer. Sorcery is any act of magic motivated by a desire to do harm to another person or to enrich oneself at the expense of another. Sorcerers are feared and hated because their activities impact negatively on individuals and on society. Sorcery is anti social and illegal and is, therefore, secretive and performed clandestinely. Among the people of Niger Delta, the belief in sorcery is completely palpable. When an adult is unable to find a spouse; when a pregnant woman miscarries or delivers a still birth; when there is incessant death in the community; when there is massive crop failure, etc., the sorcerer is often fingered as responsible. People, however, have fairly clear ideas on how to counteract the activities of sorcerers. They do this by fortifying themselves by wearing charms and

spirit forces. They function as a go-between their living descendants and their spirit world thereby facilitation their welfare and promoting the well-being of their living descendants. A variety of petitions are therefore presented to them by their living offspring such as request for children, good health, wealth, bountiful harvest, good fortune, etc. The ancestors solicit for these benefits for their living descendants from higher spirit forces. But of far greater interest to the ancestors is the desire to increase the size of their family, ensuring the continuity of the family line. Thus the ancestors promote fertility, since it is a means through which they can physically re enter the human world as new born to perpetuate their kin group. As a result, the belief in reincarnation is prevalent among the Niger Delta indigenous cultures and religions.

In addition to promoting fertility and granting wealth and good fortune, the ancestors also protect their descendants from adverse spirit forces. They watch over their families and with their special powers avert negative evil influences from impacting on them. Similarly, they also watch over the moral conducts of family members, detecting and punishing those who infringe on family taboos and ethics. Breaches of moral conducts frequently arouse the wrath of the ancestors who punish such acts with sickness and epidemics. Such punishment is not borne out of wickedness but out of fatherly love and responsibility to correct their erring child.

The abode of the good departed, the ancestors, serves as the symbol of an ideal after-life, for which the living strive to attain when they too pass on to the hereafter. In the blessed land of the ancestors, therefore, they enjoy a social and political life, which in many respects are replicas of that which they enjoyed in the land of the living (Tasie, 2013:15). This is the ideal after-life scenario, in which one finds peace in being reunited with the family. It affirms the sense of community that forms the basis for the entire cult of the ancestors (Philip M. Peek and Kwesi Yakubu, 2004:2). Given this sense of brotherhood, comradeship and communal life, one can appreciate the misery of the individual who is not admitted into the spirit land of the ancestors to partake of this communion. One who is excommunicated from this company of the deceased ancestors becomes a wandering ghost and lives an aimless haunting existence.

To qualify as an ancestor, the individual must have left behind children, both male and female. In the Niger Delta, children are considered as a necessary component of the family structure not just because of their filial responsibility to their parents, especially in times

amulets prepared by medicinemen. Many homes are adorned with magical preparations which are hung at strategic locations such as: at the door post, beside the bed or at some points at the roof-tops, to protect occupants from untoward events and from death through sorcery.

One other belief is the belief in the point that the Niger Delta people are created by circumstances to cope with disastrous incidence of witchcraft. Among the Niger Delta people, witchcraft is considered to be more pervasive and destructive than sorcery, though apart from these groups, witchcraft has destructive effects on society as a whole. Generally, witchcraft is the belief that the spirits of living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands of doing havoc to other persons in body, mind or estate (Idowu, 1973:175). Beliefs surrounding witchcraft are obviously complicated and largely unsubstantiated; and because the activities of witches are shrouded in secrets, most of what we know of witchcraft is sourced mainly from voluntary confessions of witches in their attempt at denouncing membership of their cult. Meanwhile, these confessions are made through trials by ordeal. According to the Niger Delta belief, witchcraft can be acquired in a variety of ways. Some are bequeathed with this it by their mothers. Others buy it with little amount of money. A third means is hat it can also be passed on through food. Witchcraft powers may operate independently of its bearer's will or even knowledge. This probably may explain why some, even when they acquire witchcraft may not immediately know that they are witches. Some people find it difficult, if not impossible, to free themselves from it.

Witches generally are believed to be women, especially poor, haggard old women. The witch is mostly nocturnal. At night, while people are asleep, the witch is believed to leave her body asleep in her house, while her soul flies off to a meeting. This is a meeting of souls, and their activities are purely spiritual. During such meetings they feast on their victims. Usually, new initiates donate close relatives and the witches feast on them. When they feast on a vital organ of the victim, the victim immediately falls sick and may die if spiritual help is not sought. The whole activity of the witch is spiritual. The victim is physically at home, yet spiritually, he has been donated to the witchcraft guild and eaten by the witches. Status and growth in the guild are reckoned with not just on the number of victims one has donated for the cannibalistic feasts of the witches but on the quality of the victims who most be close relations or children of the donor. The general effect of the believe in witchcraft among the peoples of the Niger Delta is not

only that it has reduced the respect, love and care for the aged, since old people seem to be associated with witchcraft; but also has created hostility and hatred, and pitched individuals against each other through witchcraft accusations and counter accusations.

From our description of the Niger Delta indigenous cultures and religions, it is obvious that the different beliefs and practices professed by a diversity of ethnic groups in the Niger Delta area, are only a divergent expression of the same basic religion which cuts across its numerous people and groups in different proportion. Thus, in spite of obvious differences, a centralized structure of beliefs runs through the entirety of the Niger Delta people, therefore, the group may be described as a homologous (monoreligious) people.

CONCLUSION

The Niger Delta, as we have noticed from a variety of our discussions above, have a well articulated cosmology (worldview) stemming from its pre-Christianity cultures and religious practices. This is said with particular reference to their spiritual life, their socio-economic life, their political and military lifestyle. The people have continued to conceive every facet of human activity and the environment in which they live, as a worldview controlled invisibly by one spiritual agent or another. Different zones of the environment are seen as controlled by different categories of spirits having different characteristics and functions. The Supreme Being called by different names by the Niger Delta people was regarded as the most powerful of these spiritual agents and responsible for the creation and sustenance of the universe and all that dwell in it. The divinities, though responsible to the Supreme Being, were seen as in charge of different aspects of life and under their various names form the pantheon in each locality. The spirits were conceived as predominantly malevolent and the ancestors as strict enforcers of the people's moral codes. It is to such a very religious people that the missionaries attempted in the 16th century to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ and eventually succeeded in the 19th century. It seems that the indigenous religion with its clear idea of the Supreme Being might have prepared the ground for easy penetration and understanding of the gospel message.

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