

Contextualizing the Supreme Being in Yoruba and Chinese Cultures: A Symbolic Relationship

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Abstract

This paper intends to examine the Yorùbá and the Chinese context of a Supreme Being within framework of their cultures. In Yorùbá culture, the Supreme Being is connoted as Olódùmarè, Oló-dú-ma- ré, Olú-òrun or Elédùmarè. He signifies one thing, the owner of the universe and the Supreme God. In Chinese culture, the highest deity is called Shangdi or Di. He is the high god or clan ancestor as postulated in the earliest-known religious system of the Han Chinese people. The term has different connotations, while some can perceive or translate him as the “emperor” or “sovereign above,” others see him as “lord on high,” “highest lord,” “the supreme god,” or the “celestial lord.” Data for this research were obtained through homogeneous purpose sampling and analyzed through content analysis. Supreme power, myths, uniqueness, cultural trait and cultural identity were all factors selected for this study. The theory of religion serves as the framework for this study. This research work identifies theory of evolution, belief, supreme power, tradition, myths and divinities as core factors that has created the Supreme Being in both cultures. Supreme Being in both cultures serve a purpose, they control the universe, they create man and they are in absolute control of the affairs of man. Man looks up to them for prosperity, health and decision-making processes. This work suggests that the physical world is guided and controlled by the spiritual realm and concludes that for the harmony of humanity, man must work in accordance and tenets of the spiritual realm.

Keywords: religion, supreme being, divine authority, tradition, culture

Introduction

This work is located within the precincts of religion, a concept widely discussed by scholars and perceived in different ways. Religion is derived from the three Latin words, namely *ligare* which means to bind, *relegere*, to unite or to link, and *religio* which means relationship. From these words we can infer that religion means a relationship, a link established between two persons, namely a human person and the divine (Mascionis, 1999). Arinze (1970) views religion in the subjective and the objective way. Subjectively, he views religion as the very consciousness of the dependence on a transcendent being and the very propensity or inclination to worship. Objectively, religion is a complex of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being. Ugwu (1998) asserts that religion is the irresistible urge in man to relate well with his

creator, God and his fellow human beings in order to obtain salvation in the sacred realm. Adéḃòwálé (2000) perceives religion as a way through which man communicates with or hopes to have relations with that which lies behind the world of their ordinary experience. Ìdòwú (1982) posits religion as the foundation of life and the all-governing principle for men. As far as he is concerned, the full responsibility of the affairs of life belongs to the deity, their own part in the matter is to do as they are ordered through the priests and diviners whom they believed to be the interpreter of the deity. The fact is that religion represents the interaction between the physical world and the spiritual world, the solemn belief that there is a force guiding and shaping human activities on a regular basis.

The religion of the Yorùbás can be traced before the advent of the Catholic missionaries and the Jihadist of Uthman dan Fodio. They had their faith and believe in Olódùmarè as the Supreme Being that governed the whole earth. One oral tradition from Ile-Ife said that the universe was a vacuum several million years ago and Olódùmarè asked the sea to come and manifest itself in the planet. For another several millions of years, the sea was by itself, Olódùmarè recognizing the loneliness of the sea created planet earth. He then sent Ọrúnmilà with some soil from the heavens and a five towed roaster that helped spread the soil on top of the sea. From then, the earth continue to spread. The Yorùbás believes that the spot where it first started was in Ile-Ife and accept the fact of the existence of one God but also, they have deep faith in his divine essence which is manifested in more than one person or elements. Traditional African religion believes in the existence of an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscience, Supreme God and also in a large number of subordinate Ọrìṣà and deities. The Yoruba religion which comprises the worship of Olódùmarè, the Supreme Energy of the universe and the forces of the universe as well called Ọrìṣà. In Yoruba mythology, Ọrúnmilà is seen as the teacher of the sacred words or scriptures of Olódùmarè called Ifá. The knowledge of which is taught to the people through the sacred scriptures of Ifá is called the Odus (Mbiti, 1969). The fact remains that the Yorùbás just like most Africans believe in the existence of supernatural powers which is responsible for the creation of the universe and everything that resides in it

Chinese religion can also be traced to ancient China when the Shang 商 and Zhou 周 theology developed within a polytheistic context which included a variety of ancestral, tribal, and nature deities of, for example, storms, mountains, and the sky. During the Shang Dynasty, Di 帝 (Lord) or Shangdi 上帝 (Lord Most High), held a position above the various deities and extended the domain of the divine from the Shang tribe to the universe. During the Zhou Dynasty, Shangdi underwent a partial name change to Tian 天 (Heaven). Shangdi/Tian

is concerned for human welfare and exercises providential control over history at least partly through the raising up of conquering foreign kings. Chinese worship of Shangdi divulged that before the birth of Moses (1500 BC) in the legendary period preceding 2205 BC, the Chinese were already offering sacrifices to Shangdi at Mount Tai in Shangdong Province, at the eastern border of China (Shang Shu). Shangdi is the Supreme God of the Chinese, he is the creator of the universe and earth, and the emperors were to obey the mandate of Heaven in order to rule the Chinese people with love, compassion and justice (Legge, 1852). Shang pantheon can be divided into six groups: "(1) Di, the High God; (2) Nature Powers, like Tu, the Earth Power... He, the (Yellow) River Power, Yang...the Mountain Power... and Ri, the sun; (3) Former Lords... such as Nao and Wang Hai, whom the Shang worshippers treated differently from their ancestors; (4) Pre-dynastic ancestors.... (5) The dynastic ancestors, starting with Da Yi (the first king); and (6) the dynastic ancestresses, the consorts of the kings on the main line of descent" The hierarchy of these spiritual beings is modeled in accordance with secular political bureaucracy. The name or title of the Being at the top of this hierarchy was Di or Shangdi (Keightley, 1999). This study therefore attempts to augment the literature in the humanities by showing that different cultural societies hold the faith in a supernatural being, a force, an energy that controls the universe. Hence, it finds a meeting point between the transcendent being, supreme energy, sacred realm, physical world, divinities, spirits and the satisfaction of human needs. The aim of this research work therefore is to study the different traditions and values surrounding the cultural beliefs of the Yorùbás and the Chinese as regards the Supreme Being. It also intends to examine their differences and explore their similarities while drawing a conclusion that traditional societies had their own religion which was designed around the utmost belief of a supernatural being.

Literature Review

Scholars have postulated the notion of Gods in different culture, this research work will examine the works of scholars as they depict the Supreme Being in their own conceptualizations. Hebrew theology developed within its ancient Near Eastern polytheistic context. It initially affirms monolatry (worship of one God) or henotheism (belief that one God reigns supreme over all of the other gods) over polyamory (worship of many Gods), all the while moving toward monotheism (belief that a single, supreme God exists); the ancient Hebrews were polytheistic in the sense that they countenanced the existence of many gods (Legge, 1852).

God is a spirit (John 4:24), the heaven is not a spirit but only the loftiest creation above the visible (Augustine, 1984). He explains that God is simple, to him

the reason why he is called simple is that he cannot lose any attribute that it possesses, that is there is no difference between what it is and what it has. God is simple since God never changes. The will and power of God are the same as God himself. Aristotle (1973) sees God as a substance which represents the basic unit of being. Farthing (1988) describes the essence of God, he declares that his essence is seen in his being, intellect, will and understanding. God in Greek means *Theos* and *Elohim* in Hebrew. *Elohim* was an absolute concept for the Israelite but its meaning was mainly a creator. *Elohim* is therefore God in Hebrew and his other name is *Yahweh*, which literally means he is or he will be and often times he is also called Jehovah. In Medieval times, *Theos* was translated as *Deus* which was used to depict the Roman gods in the Latin language (Aquinas, 1981). God according to scholars can be conceptualized in different forms based on the culture of the society, some see him as being simple, understanding and the supreme creator.

The Yorùbás believe in a self-existent being who is responsible for the creation and maintenance of heaven and earth, of men and women, and who also brought into being divinities and spirits who are believed to be his functionaries in the theocratic world as well as intermediaries between mankind and the self-existent Being. To them God is seen as Olódùmarè and Ọlọrun, this culture is a divine journey to the inner self and to God-consciousness. To them the notion of God includes the belief that there exists variants and strata of substantial recognition of insubstantial forms of feelings, thought processes, supernatural beings, transcendental worlds, and forces that direct the creation and destruction of all things (Karade, 1994). Olódùmarè or Ọlọrun is also perceived as the sustainer of life, ruler of the sky, the perfect arbiter and the final judge. He is sometimes too passive and remote to satisfy man's immediate needs (Gleason, 1973). Lucas (1984) claims that the absence of organized worship of Ọlọrun by means of which full and uninterrupted allegiance to him could be secured has led to the worship of multitudinous gods from major gods to minor ones.

Olódùmarè can manifest himself in different forms, when he does so in nature, it is seen as his essence through degrees of material substance. That essence is often translated as Ashe, this is the inherent force of all creation. The emphasis if such worship is not centered on physical object or tangible, but on the life-force energy that brings about its form. The tangible object is but a symbol of the external existence that bore it. Olódùmarè is in all things as the ashe is the primordial essence of all things, he is the deep energy that brought about the beings of many other things. Olódùmarè doesn't exist alone, he exists with his angelic forces that are known as òrìshàs. They are comprised of greater heavenly properties and are closer to the divine source of existence. Their ability to act on behalf of human beings is generally seen as divine intervention.

This is usually brought about by divination, belief, faith, prayer, song and praise, dance, ritual and sacrifice inclusive (Karade, 1994).

To approach God in Yorùbá culture, we can do it through prayer. Prayer (àdùrà) is used to make supplications to ones orí, ancestors, òrìshà, Ọ̀rúnmìlà and Olódùmarè. Olódùmarè himself is seen as the essential aspect of Yorùbá worship. It is understood that prayers to the divinities are for the purification and elevation of human qualities. The highest form of prayer is that of the devotee asking for nothing except transcendence and protection from negating forces. By means of sincere prayer, the devotee is better able to pass through the lower realms and attain the heavenly states (Karade, 1994).

Forces from heaven in China took the form of an astonishing variety of gods, spirits or demons. Some of these were troublesome, others were neutral or benign, such as the gods of mountains, rivers, and earth gods *tu shen*. Shangdi the Supreme God in China is worshipped by ordinary people. Shangdi is immortal, he is to be worshipped by the commoners with sacrifices in exchange for favors *do ut des*, I give so that you give. Sacrifices and divination are standard rituals in the worship of Shangdi (Poo, 1988).

Gods are formless, when you call them, they will come, they have no shadows and they leave no trace and they are three feet above your head. Everybody respects and prays to gods; some people carve out statues to make the gods settle down where they want them. That means to contain them inside the statues. People worship the statues so that a special bond grows between gods and the worshippers. God statues make the formless omnipresent gods to settle down and build a connection with the people, who worship them in return for protection. This creates a strong reciprocal bond between the people and the gods (Stevens, 1997). Chau (2006) uses a Chinese terminology to describe gods, saying *ren ping shen*, *shen ping ren* (people depend on gods and the gods depend on the people). A god to him is *ling*, efficacious, when the god responds effectively to his worshipper's prayers, it leads to the *hong huo* (red heat) of ritual celebration, which enhances the gods' reputation and makes the god appear more *ling*. Gods are supreme in their pantheon, it is generally believed they have supreme powers. Over the years, we know gods came down to earth to investigate the conditions there, they were appalled by the human misbehavior and they can punish humanity with devastating disasters and plagues (Shahar & Ropert, 1996). Interaction with gods involves mutual obligations, humans are obliged to worship them and sustain them with sacrificial offerings, usually food. The gods are obliged to do what they could do to benefit human life, e.g., by providing timely rain and sun for crops, or producing sons, or not causing illnesses. The relationship between humans and gods were governed by mutual obligations (Miller, 1998).

From the above, we can depict and agree that scholars see God as a Supreme Being that is to be revered and worshipped. His conceptualization across cultures differs though but he is seen as the creator of the universe and the sustainer of human life. Traditions and cultures have designed a way to approach him or consult him, either through worship or ritual, communicating with him remains one of the essences of human life.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of religion has been postulated by many scholars; however, this research work will consider the theory put forward by Loyal Rue (2005) in the book *Religion is not about God*. This book considers all aspects of former theories which had been philosophical, theological and natural-scientific faction. Pascal Boyer's theory of religion considers religion as a natural phenomenon that is a by-product of the evolution of the human brain without adaptive functions (Boyer, 1994). David Wilson sees religion as a product of biological and cultural evolution with immense adaptive value for group survival (Wilson, 2002). Rue (2005) presents the theory of religion with a narrative account of evolution that begins with the creation of matter from energy. It reviews the emergence of life and continues with the evolution of behavior. Humans are part of this natural process and at the same time unique in the combination of their traits, which evolved for doing what every life form must do, that is to endure and to reproduce. Rue further explains that with human nature we have spiritual traditions which seems to be the core of the conventional meaning inherent in cultural systems. She asserts that myths, symbols and practices in a religious tradition will have a decisive influence on the mental objects featured in the working memory of individuals. She further goes on to develop a structural model of religion that describes all particular religions as narrative traditions or myths, which are formulated and revitalized by a set of ancillary strategies. These strategies (intellectual, experimental, ritual, aesthetic, institutional) may be seen as overlapping dimensions that collectively shape the religious life. The core of every cultural tradition is a story, a myth, which is a narrative integrating ideas about how things ultimately are and which things ultimately matter, that is cosmology and morality.

This theory is applicable to this research work because it explains the mythical stories of evolution as depicted in Yorùbá and Chinese cultures. It conceptualizes the evolutionary story of both cultures from the creation of matter from energy. It's a theory that discusses how cultural narratives have been the core fabric holding different societies together. It also stresses the importance of symbols and specific practices as a fundamental trait of religion belief in both societies. Lastly, it provides a framework for the evolutionary process, cul-

tural narratives, symbols and practices that are imminent in the Yoruba belief of Olódùmarè and the Chinese belief of Shangdi.

Methodology

Data were collected from two major sources Shangdi and Olódùmarè as depicted in the Chinese and Yorùbá cultures were downloaded from Chinese and Nigerian databases through the internet. Relevant information as related to the subject matter were selected through the purposive random sampling method. The perception, role and influence of Shangdi and Olódùmarè were downloaded from the internet, specifically on how they govern, exist, originated and sustain the universe within their cultural beliefs. Hence, the data for this work were considered representative of how Shangdi and Olódùmarè represent a God within the central notion of religion. The data used for this work were analyzed through content analysis that aims to compare two primordial gods embedded in the two different cultural belief, values and traditions.

Discussion

Shangdi and Olódùmarè as depicted by the Chinese or Yoruba culture means the Supreme Being and this research work intends to investigate discourses about their inherent characteristics, nature and attributes.

Shangdi (The supreme being in Chinese context)

Shangdi or the God of heaven in Chinese cosmology is the person who rules the land, the empire and the royal ancestors. The God of heaven excels all over other gods in Chinese cosmology and he is Lord over all Gods and Spirits while being a master of mankind. The God of Heaven, Shangdi is the central concept of Chinese religion, all other elements are subordinate to him in such a way that the entire world of higher beings is combined into a firmly structured hierarchic system, a parallel to the system of feudal states on earth. As each of the other gods and spirits was considered with freedom of will and action, so also Shangdi has his own personality. Perhaps his personality can be perceived from his name which is seen in the oldest expression for the God of Heaven, Shangdi, the original meaning of which might be somewhat obscure, Shang means above or on top. The written symbol for *tien* or heaven comes close to a human form, perhaps implying an anthropomorphic concept of Heaven. In Chinese language, the corresponding word to *tien* is signifying the heavenly gods, whereas the physical heaven or sky is called *fa*. The *di* in Shangdi is a title used for the emperor, seems to have been a denomination for the heavenly gods. *Di* as the official title given to an emperor after death, and then as a title for em-

peror in general is explained as derivative from the first meaning of *di*, a heavenly god. Nevertheless, the denomination *di* was used exclusively as a special distinction reserved only for a higher being without equals (Feuchtwang, 2006).

The myth of Shangdi is seen as a giant in human form who ordinarily resides in heaven. Sometimes he comes down to earth for a walk, leaving behind here his giant footprints. On earth, he has some temporary residences. Certain cliffs are the terraces where he entertains invited guests as banquets, serving his guests fresh water from the sources of the great rivers. His residential place is located in the constellation of the great bear (*Ursus major*) on the highest of the heavenly stairs. The entrance to it is guarded by the heavenly wolf, Tien-lang, the star Sirius. There he lives with his family. His wife stays completely in the background, playing no special role. His daughters, however are important figures, for they are goddesses who have descended into earth. The most outstanding among them is Hsiwang-mu, the Queen of the West. She has tiger teeth and a panther tail, and resides in places where the sun sets. She presides over epidemics. Another daughter of Shangdi is the sorceress Yang, the Wu Yang. A younger daughter was Yao-ki, who died on Mount Wu and became a supernatural plant. The two daughters are the goddess of the Hsiang River in Honan. A younger daughter was Yao-ki who died on Mount Wu and became a supernatural plant. Two daughters are the goddess of Hsiang River in Honan (Lin Wei-Ping, 2008).

Shangdi lives a glamorous life, he isn't removed from earthly affairs, he is no *deus otiosus* who has resigned himself to be the Lord of Heaven and the King of the dead, enjoying his life of beatitude within his palace. From his heavenly heights, Shangdi rules with consummate sovereignty over all earthly and human affairs. He sees everything in the four directions. He creates states, install kings, and invest royal families with kingdoms. He gives capable ministers to princes; he supervises from above the entire human world as its ruler. When a very solemn covenant is to be concluded, the parties to it swear by the name of Shangdi, raising their heads up to heaven, Shangdi's residence, after having offered a sacrifice to the supreme guarantor of their oaths. Shangdi punishes culprits regardless of high position. Shangdi also inflicts punishments upon a ruler, but before punishing him he usually chastises him with natural calamities such as fire in his buildings or by having a comet appear in the sky. If the ruler still doesn't mend his evil ways of life and remained obdurate, Shangdi will strike him with personal punishment. When the virtue of a dynasty was found wanting, Shangdi withdrew his mandate (*Tian-ming*) from it and transferred it to a worthy prince (McCreery, 2008). Literature from scholars have shown that Shangdi controls the universe with the aid of different other deities, they are Hsiwang-mu, the Queen of the West which is a female deity who has the complete control over life, death, creation and destruction. Likewise, Tu is another

deity who is seen as the spirit of the earth and identified with the dual patron of the soil and the harvest. He deity also known as the lord of the river or Hebo is a river god who is seen as benevolent, greedy, unpredictable and dangerously destructive. Furthermore, Ri deity is a solar deity that represents the suns power and strength (Lin, 2008).

Shangdi is seen as the owner, controller and the ruler of the universe with other lesser gods and spirits in administration of the world and mankind. The evolution of Shangdi revolves around myths and was seen to have taken on the form of human with his own family. Shangdi is seen to be in control of the affairs of the world through covenants, sacrifices, rituals, punishments and calamities.

Olódùmarè (supreme being in Yorùbá context)

Olódùmarè also known as Ọlórún, Elédùmarè, Èlẹ̀mí, Èlẹ̀dàá in Yorùbá cosmology is the person who created the universe and all that dwelt in it. Yorùbá history reveals that once the universe was a marsh, watery and void place of men, however Olódùmarè created all that resides in it today. Olódùmarè himself has no human form, nor an animal shaped body but he often took the shape of a human. Olódùmarè ordered the chiefs of the lesser gods, Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá to go and create earth over the watery substance that dwelt in the universe. Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá left with the god of storm, the god of iron, the god of thunder to create the universe that we reside in today (Trieber, 1974).

Olódùmarè charged Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá (one of the primordial divinities in Yorùbá pantheon) to mold the human body and its organs *Ara*. Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá indeed molded the *Ara* out of clay after which the lifeless body was taken over by Olódùmarè and he breathed *Èmí* into the human form thus we have life today. *Èniyàn* human is made by the combined efforts of Olódùmarè, the supreme deity and some of his subordinates. The body was constructed by Ọ̀rìṣà-ńlá the arch-divinity. *Èmí* has given by Olódùmarè is the vital principle of life, *Èmí* is life and Olódùmarè is the giver of this life. Hence Olódùmarè has many names such as the Èlẹ̀mí (Ìdòwú, 1962).

Ìdòwú therefore claims that Olódùmarè is the founder of all benefits, he is the author and giver of all good things that man can possess such as wealth, possessions, good living, good character and everything that exists for the benefit of man. He is recognized as the life force in all of creation, he resides in ọ̀run which is also the abode of the Ọ̀rìṣàs and other spiritual beings. When Olódùmarè created heaven and earth, he accomplished it with *àṣẹ*, he gave a copy of the original *àṣẹ* to the divinities. These divinities are called Ọ̀rìṣàs who obviously are also the ministers of Olódùmarè. The Yorùbás believe that one cannot approach Olódùmarè directly but he has to go through an Ọ̀rìṣà who is

seen as the mediator of special beings. The *Àṣẹ* given to the *Òrìṣàṣ* by *Olódùmarè* is a command system from the supreme one and the divinities to the human beings (*Òpéfèyítímí*, 1988). *Òrìṣà* means selected head or consciousness, a particular *Òrìṣà* is a specialized form of the consciousness of *Olódùmarè*. For example, *Èṣù Èlégbára*, the messenger *Òrìṣà* is the one who opens the way between the world of the spirits and that of everyday experience. There are many other *Òrìṣàṣ* such as *Ọṣun*, *Yemoja*, *Şàngó*, *Ọbàtálá*, *Ọgún* and *Ọya*, each represents a different aspect of the creative spirit and force of nature. Moreover, each is a conveyer of a specific expression of *Àṣẹ* (Coleman, 2002).

Literature from scholars have affirmed that *Olódùmarè* rules the universe with the assistance of different deities or *Òrìṣàṣ*, they are *Ọrúnmilà* who is seen as the grand priest and the grand custodian of *Olódùmarè*'s knowledge. *Èṣù* which is seen as the *Òrìṣà* of chance, accident and unpredictability. *Ọgún* the *Òrìṣà* of iron and metallurgy. *Yemoja* the protective energy of the feminine force and nurturer of water resources. *Şàngó* the *Òrìṣà* of the thunderbolt, virility and the protective energy of masculinity. *Ọṣun* the *Òrìṣà* with healing powers, induction of fertility and the one that controls the feminine essence. *Ọya* the *Òrìṣà* which is described as the guardian of the cemetery, the tempest, winds of change, storms and progression (*Ìdòwú*, 1962).

Olódùmarè is the creator of the universe with lesser gods assisting in its administration. He is consulted through worships or rituals and seek total allegiance from human beings. He rewards and punishes as well. He is seen to influence all activities of human-kind.

Findings

The first obvious finding from this research work is that both Shangdi and *Olódùmarè* are attributed with different names. Shangdi is perceived as the “Emperor or Sovereign Above,” “Lord On High,” “Highest Lord,” “the Supreme God,” or the “Celestial Lord.” *Olódùmarè* is perceived as *Oló-dú-ma- ré*, *Olú-òrun*, *Elédùmarè*, *Èlèémí* and *Èlédàá* in this culture context.

Secondly, both Gods in their cosmology are seen as the creator of the universe. The *Yorùbás* and the Chinese both have mythical stories in which they believe in about the creation of the world although their stories are different.

Thirdly, Shangdi and *Olódùmarè* are seen as the Supreme Being, Supreme God, sustainer of life, the arbiter and the final judge who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscience. They both believe that he rules and controls the whole universe.

Fourthly, Shangdi and *Olódùmarè* both reside in the same place, heaven or above the sky as depicted in the cultural beliefs of their traditions. Tian, heaven or sky in Chinese while *òrun* in *Yorùbá* connotation.

Fifthly, Shangdi and Olódùmarè both have their own unique characters and traits. Both Gods are benevolent and merciful, however Shangdi gives the mandate of heaven (authority to rule and govern the people to the right kings who show love, compassion and justice to its people. Although benevolent, Shangdi can be ruthless with a ruler that doesn't heed his words or that becomes too despotic, authoritarian or uncompassionate with the people. Olódùmarè has the traits of a supreme leader who passes down his teachings to one of his subordinate gods to teach the people his instructions and his knowledge. He is sometimes calm, restful and a passive being who desires total allegiance from the people. He possesses the different needs of man and he gives it to whoever he desires.

Sixthly, both Gods rule in a firmly structured hierarchical system in their different cosmology however they are unique in their own cosmology. In Chinese culture, Shangdi also controls the universe with other lesser divinities, they are Tu, He, Ri, Nao and Wang Hai. In Yorùbá culture, Olódùmarè cannot be approached directly, he has a number of divinities that govern the universe with him. He created Òrìṣàs to mediate for humans and there are many of them. They include, Òrúnmilà, Òṣun, Yemoja, Ṣàngó, Ọbàtálá, Ògún and Ọya. Òrúnmilà is seen as the second primordial being to Olódùmarè who assists Olódùmarè in the governing of the universe, he teaches the people and impacts the knowledge about Olódùmarè to them.

Seventhly, both Shangdi and Olódùmarè desire certain obligations from the people, they have to be highly respected, prayed to, offered sacrifices and revered with utmost importance. When these things are done, a bond is created between god and man. Humans are expected to worship them and offer sacrifices to them, the form of worship and sacrifices different in both cultures. The above reveals the different findings from these work as demonstrated in the literatures adopted for the research.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion above, we can infer some meanings and concepts from the literatures examined in this research work. It is pertinent to say that the Yorùbás and the Chinese are traditional societies of longstanding culture, values and customs. These traditions have held their societies' together, they have regulated the human form and action and most importantly they have transferred a belief in a supernatural being and force. These respective cultural groups have adopted their own form of religion, created mythical stories and they have formed a process in which human beings have a link, bond and relationship with a supernatural being. The presence of a supernatural being have facilitated the formation of certain laws, standards and ethics in these societies', the aim is to regulate, control and direct the affairs of man accordingly. They have created a hope in a Supreme Being with a supernatural power that has the firm control of the universe.

Shangdi or Olódùmarè connotes one and the same supernatural being but in a different cultural context and knowledge. It is observed that this supernatural force has been manifested in different ways, he is seen as the creator of the world, the sustainer of the universe, the alpha and the omega who is supposed to be respected, worshipped and offered sacrifices. They share the same characteristics of being the omniscient-all knowing, omnipotent-all powerful, omnipresent- all present with a transcendence and immanence nature. These cultures have also conceptualized Shangdi or Olódùmarè as a spirit that is infinite, with an eternal and unchangeable being with wisdom, justice and truth. He possesses a wealth of knowledge that humans must learn in order to live in accordance with his will in the universe. We also inferred that these gods do not act alone in the universe, in fact they have a number of deities, lesser gods and officials working for them. Lastly, Gods either in the conceptualization of the Chinese or the Yorùbás represents a substance, a force and a being in which different cultures have to associate, have a relationship and bond with achieve their life desires and aspirations.

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