

INCARNATING THE GOSPEL IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: AN IMPERATIVE FOR THE MAGUZAWA OF ZARIA DIOCESE

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is the imperative of incarnating the Gospel among the Maguzawa of Zaria Diocese. While there has been a major clamor for inculturation from different African quarters, this paper stresses the urgency of inculturation among the Maguzawa who are the indigenous Hausa Christians found in certain states of Northern Nigeria. This paper argues that unless something is done quickly in this regard, it is only a matter of time before we witness the disappearance of Christianity among the Maguzawa of the kind seen in North Africa. This paper, therefore, examines the doctrine of the Incarnation which is the primordial instance of inculturation and the theological framework of our discourse. It highlights the 'what' and 'how' of inculturation. Thereafter, the paper focuses on the Maguzawa, exposing a little of their existential situation and argues the need for inculturation. Next, it presents certain elements of the Maguzawa culture that can serve as the seedbed for the inculturation process among them. Hopefully, if efforts are made towards the incarnation of the Gospel among the Maguzawa, Christianity will take firmer roots among the people.

Keywords: Gospel, Incarnation, Inculturation, Maguzawa, Theology.

Introduction

In the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, God, in order to reveal himself, from the rich diversity of human cultures, chose for Himself a people whose original culture He penetrated, purified and made fertile. The history of God's covenant with His people is that of the rise of a culture that God, Himself, inspired in His People. From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures⁶⁸, for it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture⁶⁹. In this way, the Good News which is Christ's Gospel for all men and the whole human person, both child and parent of the culture in which they are

⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998) 70.

⁶⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) in Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987) 53.

immersed⁷⁰, reaches them in their own culture, which absorbs their manner of living the faith and is in turn gradually shaped by it. Today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation⁷¹. At the same time, some traditionally Christian cultures or cultures imbued with thousand-year-old religious traditions are being shattered. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965), in which a strong case was made for the cultural adaptation of Christianity in Africa, the concept of inculturation has been on the front burner of theological discourse not only on the African continent, but also beyond. This idea has germinated into several concepts such as incarnation, acculturation, enculturation, inter-culturation, Africanisation, and indigenization of Christianity in the African context. These concepts basically rotate around the same idea: making the Christian faith more culturally permissible and thereby more acceptable in Africa. It is this same idea that this paper seeks to express within the context of the Maguzawa of Zaria diocese.

Clarification of Major Concepts

a. Incarnation

The word 'incarnation' is derived from the Latin *caro* which means flesh. It is a term that literally connotes embodied in flesh or taking on flesh. It refers to "the conception and birth of a sentient being who is the material manifestation of an entity, god, or force whose original nature is immaterial". The Encyclopedia Britannica recognizes the Incarnation as the "central Christian doctrine that God became flesh, that God assumed a [human nature](#) and became a man in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second person of the [Trinity](#)".⁷² In theological discourse, the Incarnation is the fundamental doctrine that teaches that Jesus Christ, the Word (*Logos*) of God and Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, assumed human flesh in the womb of His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. While retaining personhood in the Godhead, He however possessed two natures: human and divine, united by virtue of the hypostatic union. In contemporary theological debates as well, incarnation is another model employed in the discourse on the dialogue between the Gospel message and African culture(s). In this work, 'incarnation' refers to the Christological doctrine of Jesus Christ taking up human flesh and living among as a man and it shall

⁷⁰ *Fides et Ratio* 71.

⁷¹ *Fides et Ratio* 72.

⁷² Web 10.11.2020

also be employed as a plausible inculturation model for the Gospel among the *Maguzawa*.

b. Inculturation

Derived from the Latin root *cultura* and the French *culture*, the Oxford Dictionary defines 'inculturation' as "the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture or group by a person, another culture, etc." or as "the adaptation of Christian liturgy to a non-Christian cultural background".⁷³ This brings the liturgical dimension of inculturation into view. This means inculturation entails the entire methodology by which the Gospel message is made acceptable to people of non-Christian cultures and how their cultures influence the Christian message. Thus, inculturation is a two way venture. In this work, inculturation shall refer to the symbiotic systematic dialogue between the Gospel message and culture that sees the Gospel purifying the culture and the culture enriching the Gospel.

c. Theology

Theology translates from the Greek *theologia*, which is derived from *theos* which means God and *logia* which connotes, sayings, utterances, statements or oracles. It passed into Latin as *theologia* and later French as *theologie*. Theology is classically defined by St Anselm of Canterbury as "*fides quaerens intellectum*" which translates "faith seeking understanding". Thus, for Anselm of Canterbury, faith is the beginning of theology, thus he coined the expression "*Credo ut intellegam*", meaning "I believe that I might understand". Karl Rahner defines theology as "the science of faith; the conscious and methodological explanation and explication of the divine revelation received and grasped in faith".⁷⁴ Theology is therefore, the study of God, based on faith and geared towards enhancing faith. Theology begins and ends with faith. The concept theology shall serve, in this work, as the generic term for the Church's teachings on matters of the faith.

1. Theological Framework: The Doctrine of the Incarnation

The doctrine of the Incarnation provides the theological framework of this discourse. The Incarnation is described as "the mystery and the dogma of the Word made Flesh".⁷⁵ It is also defined as "The union of the divine nature of the

⁷³ Web 10.11.2020

⁷⁴ Karl Rahner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, (Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2010) 1687.

⁷⁵ New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia (Web 22.03.2021).

Son of God with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ".⁷⁶ The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is a celebrated mystery which involves the Divine *Logos*, who is God the Son, taking on human nature, both body and spirit, and thus becoming our mediator and savior. As incarnated man, His divine nature remained eternal and immutable, while His human nature experienced growth and maturity. For M. Sukdaven, the Incarnation, in its simplest form is the doctrine "wherein God assumes human nature".⁷⁷

Peter van Inwagen expresses the doctrine of the Incarnation concisely by saying:

Because God pre-existed and is superior to every human being, orthodox theologians have found it natural to speak of the union of the divine nature: at a certain point in time, at the moment of the conception of Jesus, it 'took on flesh' or 'became incarnate'; in the words of the Athanasian creed, the union of the two natures was accomplished 'not by conversion of the Godhead (*divinitas*) into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God'.⁷⁸

The Incarnation is the one of the most fundamental Christian doctrines. Built on the doctrine of the Triune God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is the doctrine that teaches that Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, assumed human flesh and lived on earth as a man, as attested to by scriptures. The doctrine of the Incarnation, like the doctrine of the Triune God, is very central to the Christian faith. Consequently, they are not just doctrines, but dogmas. This makes them irrefutable and undeniable. Thus, while Catholics and Christians in general can differ in their beliefs on many other doctrines of the Church, to deny or reject any of these two doctrines (Trinity and Incarnation) is to reject the Christian faith itself.

When discussing the doctrine of the Incarnation, one prominent scholar that comes to mind is the German Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (1904 - 1984), who is considered to be one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. In his discourse on the doctrine of the Incarnation, he begins by affirming that the teaching on Jesus Christ is the central mystery of Christianity and goes on to say that "Only in him, and in the union and distinction between God and the world found in him, is the God-world relationship and, as a

⁷⁶ Catholic Dictionary (Web 22.03.2021).

⁷⁷ Maniraj Sukdaven, *The Concept of Incarnation in Philosophical and Religious Traditions Juxtaposed the Concept of Incarnation in Christianity*, (Web 22.01.2020).

⁷⁸ Peter van Inwagen, "Incarnation and Christology." in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998 (Web. 22.01.2020).

consequence, God's very essence, made clear as self-communicating love".⁷⁹ Therefore, for him, the Incarnation originates from God's love. Rahner establishes the connection between the doctrine of the Incarnation and Christian belief. He says, "Christianity is the eschatological historical event of God's self-communication".⁸⁰ He goes on to say that the Christian fundamental conception of the world and its relation to God, cannot be found in the doctrine of creation, but in the history of salvation. Simply put, it is the doctrine of Christ that gives meaning to human existence. He says "God creates the *ad extra* in order to communicate *ad intra* of his love".⁸¹ He goes on to establish that Jesus Christ as the incarnate *Logos* of God is God's supreme self-communication which takes place in the Incarnation. Next he points out that the incarnation is a mystery. This is because "...the possibility of God's self-communication to the finite is a mystery".⁸²

Karl Rahner tries to state the basic doctrine of the incarnation. Referring to the Denzinger, he expresses it as follows:

By the hypostatic union (D 148, 217) the eternal (and therefore pre-existent) Word (*Logos*), the son of the Father as the second person of the Trinity, has united as his nature with his person in a true, substantial (D 114ff.) and definitive (D 85ff., 283) union a human nature created in time with a body and spiritual soul from the Virgin Mary, his true mother. The effecting of this union is common to the three divine persons (D 284, 429), but the union of the human nature is with the Word alone (D 392). Even after the union the unmixed distinction between his divine and his human nature is not affected. Thus the Word became true man.⁸³

According to Rahner, as the only begotten and a person of Trinity, Jesus Christ is "incapable of suffering because he is true and consubstantial Son, he is not an adopted son like us. This means in as much as Christ was man and shared in our human characteristics, his divine attributes distinguish him from us. However, Jesus Christ is also true man. "He has a true body capable of suffering, not an apparent body or a heavenly one".⁸⁴ This body was united with the *Logos* from

⁷⁹ Rahner 690.

⁸⁰ Rahner 690.

⁸¹ Rahner 690.

⁸² Rahner 691.

⁸³ Rahner 693-694.

⁸⁴ Rahner 694.

conception and possesses a rational spirit. Even in his humanity, worship is due to Christ and he is impeccable. Rahner notes that there are few official pronouncements by the Church's magisterium on the person and work of Jesus Christ, except with regard to his redemptive work.

Christ's Humanity

One of the most controversial topics of Christology is the problem of the two-natures of Jesus Christ. This is technically called "the problem of the one and many". The danger is often to over-emphasize one at the expense of the other, thereby demeaning the essence of the incarnation and redemptive work of Christ. This was the cause of many heresies in the early centuries of Christian history. One of St. Augustine's principles of doing theology is to do it with a profound sense of mystery. Thus, he repeatedly taught that "Trusting ignorance is better than reckless wisdom".⁸⁵ Faith is indispensable in theology. That is why Rahner emphasizes that the Incarnation is a mystery of faith. Discussing the humanity of Jesus Christ, he warns that in expressing this mystery, we avoid giving it a 'mythological flavor'. According to him,

This always happens if Christ's human nature is made to look like God's livery, which the *Logos* puts on to make himself known, or if it seems to be a sort of passive marionette manipulated from outside and used by God like a mere thing or instrument to attract attention on the stage of world history.⁸⁶

Rahner was simply expressing the fact that the Incarnation and life of Jesus Christ was not a mere divine drama or satire for the benefit of man, but a truly divine endeavor for the salvation of humanity.

On the human nature of Christ, Rahner explains that it must be understood in such a way that "Christ in all reality and in all truth is a man with all that this involves" (695). Rahner believes that modern day Christology (preaching or theological reflection), must speak of the Incarnation in such a way that "the experience of the actual historical Jesus is so profound and radical that it becomes the experience of that absolute and definitive presence of God to the world and to our human reality in Jesus".⁸⁷ Thus, he expects that our modern reflections on the person of Jesus Christ must address the existential situations of the people to whom the Gospel message is preached. Only then will the formulas

⁸⁵ St. Augustine *Sermon 27*.

⁸⁶ Rahner 695.

⁸⁷ Rahner 695.

of Christology remain valid and concrete. He puts it thus, "It is therefore possible to know and regard Jesus as a human 'prophet', who in a creative new way was moved by the mystery of God and at the same time lived as a matter of course with his roots in the history of his own world".⁸⁸

On his part, while discussing the person of Jesus Christ, Charles Hodge states that Christ had a true body. This true body meant a material body composed of flesh and blood. This also implied that this body possessed the essential qualities of the bodies of ordinary men. "It is not a phantasm, or a mere semblance of a body. Nor was it fashioned out of any heavenly or ethereal substance".⁸⁹ He says this was as a result of being born of a woman, the Virgin Mary. Hodge goes on to submit that this human body of Christ passed through all the ordinary stages of development, from infancy to adulthood (this point would be a very important reference in our fifth chapter). It was subject to "pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, fatigue, suffering, and death. It could be seen, felt, and handled".⁹⁰ Referring to the Old Testament, that foretold Jesus Christ as "the seed of the woman; the seed of Abraham; the Son of David", Hodge concludes by saying "Nothing, therefore, is revealed concerning Christ more distinctly than that he had a true body".⁹¹

The doctrine of the Incarnation is not complete without the proper understanding of the two natures in Christ, divine and human. Understanding his human nature is very important in this work. This is because the human nature of Jesus Christ, this human body possessing human characteristics, made it possible for him to live, suffer and die as man. They are also his meeting point with the Jewish culture into which he was born, and, by extension, his point of contact with all human cultures. This is the main thrust of incarnational theology.

2. Incarnation as a Model for Inculturation

The concept 'incarnation' is one of the modern theological terms used to refer to the attempt at inculturating the good news of Jesus Christ in African cultural traditions. A proper understanding of the incarnated Son of God as man, living and working in a human environment and culture provides good insights into the incarnation of the gospel message in African cultures. In this vein,

⁸⁸ Rahner 695.

⁸⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*. Volume II, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2011) 381.

⁹⁰ Hodge 381.

⁹¹ Hodge 381.

incarnation as a theological model for inculturation could be described in two senses: in the first sense, it refers to the event of Bethlehem, when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Accordingly, this is the primordial inculturation of the Word of God in human flesh and consequently, human history, and therefore it is the foundation and model for all subsequent inculturation. In the second sense, it means the process of mutual penetration of the Christian Gospel and human cultures in order that Jesus Christ may be made present today in every culture.

For John Paul II, the Church herself and situating of the Word of God within a particular cultural context (inculturation) should be conceived theologically in methods that are analogous to the Incarnation. This was his reason for favoring the term inculturation. John Paul II developed his approaches to evangelization which he says occurs in three phases: initial evangelization, pastoral care, and re-evangelization.⁹² It is important to note that each of these phases involves reciprocity, which on the other hand does not imply a simple bi-lateral exchange. In a speech in Nairobi, John Paul II expresses it as follows: “Inculturation, which you rightly promote, will truly be a reflection of the incarnation of the word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life.”⁹³ Simply put, in John Paul II’s opinion, “...the reception of the gifts of any particular culture by the church universal takes place after specific elements of the culture have been lifted up and transformed by the purifying penetration of the Gospel, understood as the Word that needs to become enfleshed”.⁹⁴

On his part, Pope John Paul II observes that the African continent: “is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the Churches and to humanity as a whole”.⁹⁵ He clarifies that “Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand, the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration into Christianity and on the other, the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures”.⁹⁶ Inculturation was a preferred term for John Paul II, because of its likeness to the

⁹² Iniobong S. Udoidem, *Pope John Paul II on Inculturation: Theory and Practice*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996) 70.

⁹³ Dennis M. Doyle, *The Concept of Inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration*, (Dayton: University of Dayton, 2012) 8.

⁹⁴ Doyle 8.

⁹⁵ Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995) 42.

⁹⁶ *Ecclesia in Africa* 79

word “incarnation” and the fact that it was an apparent theological parallel. Inculturation should be understood as the very attempt at the Incarnation of the Gospel within a particular cultural context. While the context in which the Gospel message is preached is very important, there is however an integrity of the Gospel as the Word of God that cannot be compromised or adulterated even as it becomes immersed within a particular context.

The ‘what’ and ‘how’ of Inculturation

Inculturation, from the root word ‘culture’, is defined by Pedro Arrupe, in his 1978 letter to his Jesuit brothers, as”

...the incarnation of the Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about “a new creation”.⁹⁷

Arrupe, thus, points out the primary concern of inculturation which is to become a principle that animates a culture; directs a culture; unifies a culture; and transforms a culture, thus remaking it and bringing about a new creation. Arrupe even emphasizes the ends of inculturation as “a new creation”. Inculturation therefore seeks to bring renewal to a culture; a renewal animated by the Spirit of Christ himself “Behold, I make all things new.” (Rev. 21:5). A. R. Crollius gives a captivating definition of inculturation thus:

The inculturation of the Church is the integration of the Christian experience of the local Church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.⁹⁸

For Alyward Shorter, inculturation is “the on-going dialogue between (Christian) faith and culture or cultures ... the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures”.⁹⁹ He submits that there are three essential points to be noted about inculturation: First of all, we must note

⁹⁷ Pedro Arrupe, *On Inculturation, to the Whole Society*. The Portal to Jesuit Studies, Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies. 1978, (Web 11.01.2020).

⁹⁸ Arji R. Crollius, (S.J). “What is so New about Inculturation?” in *Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures V*, (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1991) 5.

⁹⁹ Alyward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006) 11.

we are not just talking about the insertion of the Christian message into a hitherto non-Christian culture or cultures, but also talking about a consistent dialogue between Faith and culture. This is because culture is not static, but dynamic. Secondly, it is also important to note that the Christian Faith cannot exist outside a cultural form. This is because the Christian faith or the Christian life is a cultural phenomenon itself. Thirdly, we must also remember that when we speak of inculturation, we refer to a phenomenon transcending mere acculturation, but one that becomes a stage when the human culture is vivified by the Gospel from within. This presupposes a measure of reformulation or reinterpretation.¹⁰⁰ Simply put, inculturation means a dialogue between faith and culture, with the aim of transforming the culture through the Gospel message. Therefore, for inculturation to be authentic, it must have the Gospel at its roots, without prejudice to the fact that no proper contextualization of the Gospel can be realized devoid of culture.

The concept of inculturation is one that has metamorphosed over the ages. The Church has always been preoccupied with the task of bridging the lacuna between faith and life. Beginning with the *pedagogy* of the apostolic era, when it was believed that the nexus between faith and life comes through teaching, to the theology of *imposition* which was adopted by missionary movements in which the faith was forced upon beneficiaries, with or without understanding and, as a result, the catechumens memorized without understanding the contents of the faith. This was succeeded by the theology of *translation*, which entailed interpreting concepts from one language in another. The translation phase gained ground in areas like Igboland, with special credit to the efforts of indigenous priests like Mark Unegbu and Joseph Nwanegbo. It was replaced by the theology of *adaptation*. *Adaptation* was overtaken by the theology of *indigenization* and after that was found wanting, was replaced by *Africanisation*. However, because *Africanisation* appeared to have racial undertones, it was quickly overtaken by *contextualization* and finally the theology and theory of *inculturation* was born, which connotes discourse and intercourse between the Gospel message and human cultures.¹⁰¹ It is important to note the two terms often associated with inculturation. They are enculturation and acculturation.

Emefiena Ezeani, who prefers the term enculturation to inculturation, defines enculturation as “a conscious process of Christian assimilation or adaptation of a

¹⁰⁰ Shorter 11-12

¹⁰¹ Gwimi 75

people's certain cultural and religious values, practices, and ritual symbols, and the hosts' cultural assimilation of Christian values, practices and principles of morality.¹⁰² It is also seen as "being socialized into the language, behaviours, identity, socio-political historical knowledge, and values of one's ethnic group".¹⁰³ Thus, we can say enculturation is quite similar to the idea of inculturation. Little wonder some authors use the word enculturation in place of inculturation. Acculturation, on the other hand, as defined by Julie Hakim-Larson and Rosanne Menna, "refers to the process of adapting to a host culture that is different from one's ethnic or heritage culture".¹⁰⁴

It may not be presumable to note, as a matter of speaking, that the major problem among African theologians is not whether there is a need for an inculturation theology or not, but rather what should constitute inculturation theology or how inculturation theology should be done. This is termed the 'how' of inculturation. While many theologians have proposed different approaches to inculturation, one resonant fact is that inculturation, and indeed any localized theology, must be in consonance with the Church's teachings. In this regard, Pope John Paul II laid down guidelines for inculturation. This was to avoid any form of extremism in a bid to solve the problem. In *Redemptoris Missio*, the Supreme Pontiff declared as follows:

Inculturation must be guided by two principles: "compatibility with the gospel, and communion with the universal Church." ... in fact there is a risk of passing uncritically from a form of alienation from culture to an overestimation of culture. Since culture is a human creation and is therefore marked by sin, it too needs to be healed, ennobled and perfected.¹⁰⁵

Who are the Maguzawa?

Traditionally, the *Maguzawa* (sing. *Bamaguje*) are a Hausa speaking people. In fact, they are the original Hausa speaking people, found in countries like Cameroon, Chad, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Niger, Sudan and, due to their economic

¹⁰² Emefiana Ezeani "Enculturation - The African Dilemma: Theory and Problems of Inaction" in Jude U. Njoku and Simon Anyanwu (eds.), *Shepherd and Teacher: Celebrating Lucius Ugorji's Episcopal Silver Anniversary*, (Owerri: APT, 2015) 506.

¹⁰³ Julie Hakim-Larson and Rosanne Menna, "Acculturation and Enculturation: Ethnic Identity Socialisation Processes." in *Handbook of Arab American Psychology*, (Windsor: University of Windsor, 2016) 39.

¹⁰⁴ Hakim-Larson and Menna 36

¹⁰⁵ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990)

activity which included trading, some other parts of the world like Saudi Arabia. Historical Hausa kingdoms were Adar, Arewa, Daura, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Konni, Sokoto, Tsotsebaki, Yawuri, Zamfara and Zazzau. All these were later federated by the Sokoto Caliphate in the beginning of the 19th century. In Nigeria, the Maguzawa are mainly found in such northern states such as Kano and Katsina. However, a good number of them are also found in Kaduna state, predominantly in the outskirts of Zaria.¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that they are the major target of the *missio ad gentes* in Zaria diocese.

Strictly speaking, there is no concrete dissimilarity between the Hausawa (Hausa) and the Maguzawa. The name Maguzawa is believed to have been derived from the Arabic '*majus*', a word used to describe non-Muslims living peacefully among Muslims and under the protection of the Muslim state.¹⁰⁷ Maguzawa was a sardonic name given to a certain group of Hausa people who declined to accept the Islamic faith brought by the jihad of Shehu Usman dan Fodio, who spread the Islamic religion in some northern parts of the country.¹⁰⁸ This group of Hausa were named Maguzawa, which means "those that run away from Islam", by their fellow Hausa because they chose to continue with the ancient known Hausa tradition which includes idolatry in their worship of their gods. Thus, they worshipped the gods of stones, trees, rivers, animals and others. However, all Hausa were known to worship these gods before the advent of Islam. Culturally, there are only two major differences between the Muslim Hausa and the Maguzawa: religion and social organization. The Maguzawa, even before the advent of Christianity and Islam, had a strong concept of the divine. They had always been a religious people. The Maguzawa used such names as *Mahallici* - Creator, *Ubangiji* - Lord, *Maisama* - the One above, and *Maikowa* - Owner of All, to refer to the Supreme God. The original religion of the Maguzawa was based on the *Kangida* which is the clan's deity. This deity was in charge of the clan's affairs. It did not tolerate wrongdoing of any kind and was believed to strike thieves, adulterers and murderers and other evil doers. With the advent of Islam, the Arabic name Allah replaced the *Kangida*. Many Arabic

¹⁰⁶ Web 15.06.2020

¹⁰⁷ Philip M. Gaiya, *Religion and Justice: The Nigerian Predicament* (Kaduna: Espee, 2004) 44.

¹⁰⁸ Ibrahim Wangida, *Who are the Maguzawas amongst the Hausa People* (Kano: Catholic Diocese of Kano Social Communication Department, 2009) 20.

and Islamic religious concepts were incorporated and synchronized into Maguzawa culture, even though the Maguzawa are not Muslims.¹⁰⁹

The tolerance the Hausa Muslims had for their traditionalist Maguzawa brethren took a downward turn with the advent of Christianity. This is because while some of the Maguzawa population had converted to Islam, the majority had opted for Christianity embracing three major Christian denominations namely Anglican, Catholic and the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), formerly called the Sudan Interior Mission. This angered the Muslim Hausa who have, since then, run a campaign of oppression and discrimination against the Maguzawa. This has yielded little or no results as the Christian Maguzawa have continued to increase in numbers. There are many Catholic priests and pastors of Maguzawa extract and it is only a matter of time before there are bishops as well. Some priests of Maguzawa descent are found in the dioceses of Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto and Zaria. Today the Christian Maguzawa opt for the name *Masihiyawa*, which means “the godly” or “those who have a God”. It is important to note that the name Maguzawa is often used by Muslims to refer to both Christian and Traditional Maguzawa, while it is used by the Christian Maguzawa to refer mainly to their traditionalist brethren.

Incarnating the Gospel in the Maguzawa Context

Most of the discourse on inculturation in Africa traces its necessity to European missionary approaches to evangelization in Africa. Many African theologians fault the European missionaries for being too critical of African cultures, such that they regarded as fetish anything that was African. The result was an evangelical approach that saw the need to separate the African from his cultural worldview if he was to become an authentic Christian. However, while this may have been the situation in the southern parts of Nigeria, the challenges were a bit different in the northern parts. What European missionary efforts unintentionally did to indigenous cultures in the Southern part of Nigeria, Islam did to the Maguzawa culture, albeit deliberately and in a more violent manner. The advent of Islam propagated by the jihad of Usman dan Fodio, which brought Islam to sub-Saharan Africa, all but abrogated in entirety, the Maguzawa culture.

Due to their non-violent stance towards the Muslim brethren, who have tried unsuccessfully to convert them to Islam, the Maguzawa have always avoided

¹⁰⁹ Linus Ubale, *Marriage: A Case Study among the Maguzawa People*, unpublished project, (Jos: St. Augustine’s Major Seminary, 1999) 20.

unnecessary confrontations and always preferred to migrate to the geographical fringes of Hausaland in the interest of peace. They dwell at the bottom rungs of the social ladder and benefit from little or nothing of the basic social amenities of the region. They are treated with contempt and they experience, in its crudest forms, religious, social, economic and political oppression. They are often forced to adopt Islamic names in order to gain admission and employment in government institutions and establishments. They are in every sense of the word, second class citizens even in their own homeland. The synchronization and synthesization of Islam and the Hausa Culture, just as it did with Arabic culture, made matters worse, by giving the popular but false impression that everyone that is Hausa is Muslim. Thus, unlike Christianity that has succeeded in separating religion from culture and consequently religion from politics, Islam has no such distinction. The result is the undue influence of Islam over culture and politics, which unfortunately, the Maguzawa have become victims of over the years. Thus, the Maguzawa are not only religiously and culturally oppressed by their Muslim brethren, but also politically, socially and economically suppressed.

While for many African Christians, including the ones in Southern Nigeria, the goal of inculturation is how to find a balance between traditional cultural values and the Christian faith, for many in the North, especially the Maguzawa, the battle is much stronger. In the case of the Maguzawa, we see a calculated attempt at suppressing and oppressing an indigenous people, simply because they would not embrace the Islamic religion. Due to the fact that Islam has no clear line between religion and politics, this has led to the partial or total exclusion of the indigenous Maguzawa people from dividends of governance. With this, they face alienation at every stratum of society. The Church has no way of determining government's recognition and fair treatment of the Maguzawa, especially in a Muslim dominated and Christian intolerant environment. What the Church can do is to make the Gospel take a firm root among the Maguzawa. In this way, Christianity will become synonymous with Maguzawa in Nigeria. The fear is that, in the event that this is not done, it is only a matter of time before Christianity disappears among the Maguzawa, just as it did in the sad case of North Africa, a once Christian dominated area, that produced great theological minds in the likes of Clement of Antioch, Athanasius of Alexandria and Origen in the Greek tradition; and Augustine of Hippo, Cyprian of Carthage and Tertullian in the Latin tradition. To think that North Africa, from where such great Fathers of the Church arose, is now a Muslim dominated territory, is a

heartbreaking reality. It remains, for all time, the documented failure of the Church in North Africa. The Church needs to learn from the mistakes of history in order to avoid a repeat in Maguzawa land.

Some Possible Points of Inculturation in Maguzawa Culture

The aim, at this point of our discourse, is not to map out modalities for inculturation among the Maguzawa, but to identify those cultural practices and elements that are in consonance with the Christian faith. Thus, without prejudice to the contrasts between Christianity and Maguzawa culture, there are still some similarities between them. These form points of contact and convergence between Christianity and Maguzawa culture. Our goal here is to identify such similarities, often called dynamic equivalents. They are to constitute the seedbed for the inculturation process among the Maguzawa. Some of these points are:

a. Initiation Rites: Circumcision/Baptism

Although the culture is fading out, the practice of circumcising the male child at the age of ten (10) served as a form of initiation. From that moment henceforth, he will act responsibly and make his family proud wherever needed. The rite of circumcision is carried out by a specialist (*Wanzan*), who makes a hole into the ground into which the blood of the circumcised will flow. The drop of blood links the circumcised with his ancestors and ushers him into the heroic position enjoyed by his ancestors. The exercise is done in public, to be witnessed by his family members and relatives. The process of healing takes two to three weeks after which relatives, neighbors, and well-wishers may be invited to witness the clothe-wearing ceremony (*daurin bantē*). Thereafter, the young man will strive to build an image for himself, and to impact positively on his family members and the community at large. The reception of the Catholic Baptism in my opinion may share some similarities with the Maguzawa circumcision rites of initiation.

b. Traditional Education: Oral Traditional/Books

Among the Maguzawa, values, rites, and practices are passed through oral traditions: folktales, proverbs, sages, and ceremonies. Therefore, it serves as a continuous process of formation, as the whole community puts its attention on its new comer(s) to the community. For the child to have a balanced growth, the history of his/her people should readily be made available, so as to appreciate their worldview. The activities of the Maguzawa communities were directed by the elders for every generation. They determined good (nobility) from bad

(taboo); right (dignifying) from wrong (criminal). Similarly, the traditions of the Catholic Church are documented for administrative and ritual references.

c. Preoccupation: Agrarian (Community Farming)/Discipleship

The major preoccupation of the Maguzawa is farming which is mostly done manually. They supposedly process enough food for the following year, and also cash crops to enable them attend to other pressing needs. However, individuals may not be able to generate the required quantity with few bare hands. Therefore, the possibility of having the whole community members (*gaiya*) coming to farm for a member could be explored. In this case, everybody is expected to participate actively: young, old, male, female, rich or poor. The concept of discipleship in the Catholic Church expects members to participate actively. There is need to harness the idea of *gaiya* for the common good of the whole, in a way that it raises the standard of the low class, just like the *Koinonia* of the early Church.

d. Morality and Discipline/Code of Canon Law

The moral Up-bringing of the community members lay emphasis on individual families, and therefore, the all members of the community are expected to act and relate responsibly, otherwise some disciplinary measures may be taken accordingly. The Maguzawa cultural setting was able to facilitate good conduct, attitudes, and activities because members have the responsibility of monitoring others. The Church has the code of canon law to direct activities among members.

e. Communal/Individual

The culture of the Maguzawa did things collectively in terms of feeding, farming, ceremonies, and marketing. This style of life encourages sharing and participation in the basic things of life. Among the Maguzawa people, whatever happens to one person happens to all. If a child is born, or a member dies, or someone records an achievement, the whole community is affected by those events either positively or negatively. On the other hand, the Church is affected by the Western culture of individualism that promotes isolation, complacency, and self-sufficiency. The Maguzawa communal culture can serve as a way of life for modern Christians. Just like the early Church practiced *Koinonia* (communal living), in which everyone provided for the needs of everyone (cf. Acts 4:32-37), so should the welfare of others be paramount today. In this way, nobody will have too little and nobody will have too much. This will help bridge the gulf

between the rich and poor, and even reduce the rate of such crimes as theft and kidnapping for ransom.

f. Feeding/Eucharist

The entire food served on a given day in the community is assembled in a central square, where every male child will participate from the youngest to the oldest: sons, fathers, grand-fathers, brothers, uncles and friends. They will not only feed together, but it served as an opportunity to learn manners and attitudes, as stories and current affairs are discussed to teach moral lessons. The girls, ladies, mothers, and elderly women ate together in order to inculcate cultural values into ladies that may eventually be married into other communities. The first Eucharistic celebration had similar connotation, as Jesus Christ used it to instruct and strengthen his disciples on observing good things in life.

g. Traditional Healing/Anointing of the Sick

This is another area for serious consideration in the area of inculturation. Traditional healing methods, that do not profane the Church's teachings, should be encouraged as another means of meeting the people's needs. Just like in the African Independent Churches (AICs), traditional healing methods should be reviewed and refined. This will go a long way in harnessing the gifts of nature in terms of herbs, roots and other natural sources of medicine. This can be merged with the Church's sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to better address Africans needs.

h. Ancestor Worship/Cult of the Saints

The Maguzawa practice ancestor worship. This was revealed in their celebration of the *zubar da ruwa* ceremony. This is a ritual practiced in times of epidemic and pandemic. It is done to call upon the ancestors to intercede and intervene in the life of the community and put an end to untimely deaths. As discussed earlier, the ceremony involves producing a local drink, *kunu*, in large quantity which is taken to a sacred ground where the ancestors are buried and poured on the ground while making invocations and prayers. The Maguzawa ancestor worship can be compared to the Catholic cult of the Saints, in which those canonized, beatified or venerated by the Church are invoked for different purposes. Just like not everybody qualifies to be in the cult of the Saints in the Church, so too, not everybody qualifies to be an ancestor. Like other African societies, there are criteria for being considered an ancestor in Maguzawa land. This depends, to a large extent, on the manner of life the deceased member of the community led

while alive. This is another meeting point between Catholic theology and Maguzawa culture.

Having identified these points of contact, a framework for the incarnation of the Gospel among the Maguzawa can now be developed. My recommendation here is an application of Obilor's principle of inculturation¹¹⁰, which will aid in the revolution of some of these practices. Thereafter, they can be adopted into Christianity for the sake of the Maguzawa.

Conclusion

Over the years, a lot has been written on the development of an African theology. While theology *per se* has no colour, the idea of an African theology is simply the remodeling of a framework that meets the needs of the common African. That is why such concepts as Black theology, third world theology, and inculturation were birthed. Generally, the debate among theologians is not whether there is a need for an African theology, but what that theology should look like. In the existential context of the Maguzawa of Zaria Diocese, we see a tribe that is facing not only the steady decline of their culture due to the challenges of modernism and secularism, but a calculated attempt at oppressing a people and their culture for religious reasons. Oppressed in every sphere of society, many Maguzawa children have been forced to either convert to Islam or adopt Islamic names in order to get what is rightfully theirs. Unfortunately, as witnessed many times during religious crises in Northern Nigeria, most non-indigenous settlers relocate, temporarily or permanently, leaving the indigenes to their fate. This is a very unhealthy trend for the growth and sustenance of Christianity in Zaria diocese. The Maguzawa culture is blessed with so many charisms which can be harnessed by the Church for the purpose of evangelization, thereby making Christianity more sustainable among the Maguzawa. The case of North Africa, the one-time major hub of Christianity in Africa, remains as a living example of the dangerous consequences of not incarnating the faith in a people's culture. Indeed, a people cannot really be said to be evangelized until their culture is evangelized. The aim of inculturation in Zaria Diocese, therefore, should be the evangelization of the Maguzawa culture as a means of sustaining the faith.

¹¹⁰ Obilor proposed three principles of inculturation: assimilation, which refers to those elements in African cultures that can be adopted into the Christian life; purification, which refers to those elements which require some form of refining before being adopted into Christianity; and elimination, which refers to those elements that should be totally rejected within the Church's life. Cf. John I. Obilor, "The Practice of Inculturation as the Vehicle to Right the Wrongs of Colonial Evangelization in Igboland" in *Many Religions, One God: Selected Essays, Silver Jubilee Edition*, (Owerri: Matts Books, 2010) 276 - 293.

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