

On Divinities: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Yoruba and Chinese Divinities

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Traditional societies such as the Yoruba and the Chinese share a lot in common. Their values and traditions are modelled on rules and regulations set by supernatural beings or deities. Both societies have historical trajectories that reveals that certain deities have transcendental origins, unique attributes and supreme qualities that are based on an unquestionable truth. The Yoruba cosmology discloses the supremacy of Olódùmarè, who is seen as a supreme being and whose power is absolute. His uniqueness and preeminence is seen by all and acknowledged accordingly. Also from Yoruba cosmology we learn that the Orisas are divinities because they are seen as the offspring of Olódùmarè. Other Yoruba divinities include obatala (lady of mercy), Ogun (the patron of blacksmiths, metallurgists, soldiers, hunters), Sango (the divinity of vengeance) and Osun Seegesi (the elegant deity of wealth).

In Chinese cosmology, Shangdi 上帝 is the Chinese terminology for the highest deity in their classical texts. This connotation is embedded in the meaning of primordial deity or first deity in Chinese classical texts. Shangdi just like Olódùmarè has other divinities that assist it in the control of the universe. These divinities are in control of different parts of the earth and human life. Amongst others, Chinese cosmology centers on other deities such as Tiāngōng 天公 who is seen as the "Duke of Heaven" or "General of Heaven"; Tiānjūn 天君 who is connoted as the "Prince of Heaven" or "Lord of Heaven". In a nutshell, Chinese divinities can be grouped under divinities of human virtues and crafts, divinities of celestial and terrestrial phenomena and cosmic gods.

This research work intends to compare and contrast selected divinities of the Yoruba and the Chinese. It also aims to reveal how these cultures perceive and uphold their divinities.

Keywords: Supreme Being, Tradition, values, cosmology and divinities.

Introduction

What are divinities? How do people perceive them? What inherent connotation do they have? Webster (1983) defined divinities as the state of being divine, it could come in the form of a deity, godhead or godhood. A deity is a god or someone exalted or revered as supremely good or powerful to be ranked as a god because he or she has the essential nature to be qualified as a divinity. Its origin can be traced to Middle English that called it *divin*, the anglo-french, from latin it was called *divinus* and from *divus* or god. The Latin connotation of divinity can be seen as *divinus* which could be a god, a soothsayer or a *divinare*. Oxford Dictionaries inferred two connotations in the conceptualization of divinities, it could be the study of religion which is called theology or the state of being divine, a divine being, a god or goddess (Dictionary, 2008). For the purpose of this research work, divinities would be perceived through the definition offered by Webster (1983) who explained that a divinity could be a god or someone who has been exalted to the position of a god due to the fact that he or she possesses exceptional abilities and qualities.

The Chinese strongly affirm that in every area of their human life one must evoke a certain belief or practice. To them gods, spirits, ghosts, demons surround every situation in which they find themselves. Chinese culture upholds that the stars decide their fate, heaven and earth possesses them, and man has to know how to apply the rules or to protect himself against the supernatural powers or to gain their favors. To them the art of living is the art of coming to an understanding with the divine forces and neutralize the hostility of superior forces by magic practices and devices. What human existence comprises for the Chinese is not only the time between birth and death but the time after death as well. His fate after death and during his lifetime is highly influenced by his actions during his lifetime. The Chinese see themselves as existing in a boundless universe in which they have to maintain their position through surviving the unalterable principles of order. The universe has orders in which they have to comply with, although there are hostile forces, the Chinese don't believe that they have to accept them as blind fate, they can be influenced or manipulated through higher purposeful forces. Throughout the history of China till date, the Chinese expose themselves as a spiritual people firmly planted in the soil of earthly reality who believe that the supernatural provides them with the guidelines for social conduct (Eder, 1973).

Similarly, the Yoruba uphold that the foundation of their life and their governing principle is firmly rooted in their faith of supernatural gods or deities. Their faith is clearly expressed in their music, songs, myths, folktale, riddles and proverbs. They are also primarily accommodating and tolerant in their belief (Okehie-Offoha & Sadiku (Eds.) (1996). Yoruba traditional religion has a pantheon of deities called the Orisha. They honor between 400 and 700 Yoruba gods which they regard existed before the creation of the earth. Others are heroes or heroines from their ancient past that have become gods after their deaths. This tribe postulate that before we were born, we stand before God and choose our own destiny (Ayanmo). We decide before we ever arrive on earth what we would contribute to the world, where we will live, who we will love and even the day we will die. This tribe is highly traditional and their practice varies

from one community to another. A deity (god) may be male in one village and female in another. Yoruba traditional religion holds that there is one Supreme Being and hundreds of orisha, or minor deities. The worshippers of a deity are referred to as his "children" (Hetfield, 1996).

The inherent connotation here is that both the Chinese and the Yoruba have firm roots in the supernatural, over the years they have evolved one form of divinity which represents their own traditions. They also hold in esteem that their daily life and existence can be influenced through their actions, practices and rituals accordingly. Thus, every staunch believer is expected to keep up with reverence to avoid any wrath that may befall them as a result of negligence or anger of the deity. Deities or gods, supernatural beings have tremendous influence on the existence of human life. These cultural; groups, i.e. the Yoruba and the Chinese revere deities because they opine that they regulate, observe and influence human existence. Mbiti (1969) asserts that there are many divinities as there are human needs, he exclaims that one divinity is associated with wealth, rain, harvest, human fertility, death, medicine and iron. This work intends to scrutinize the worship of different deities among the Yoruba and the Chinese. It intends to explore their powers, mode of worship and level of people's consciousness about them. It also expects to reveal the importance and the roles of these deities on their cultural life and existence. Furthermore, an insight into the deities of these tribes would expose the civilization of their cultures and their traditional beliefs.

Literature Review

Chinese civilization was created within the framework of cosmogonic holism and in the words of Frederick Mote, "the genuine Chinese cosmogony is that of organismic process, meaning that all the parts of the entire cosmos belong to one organic process and they all interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating life process (Mote, 2010). This organismic process is what Tu Wei-ming amplifies as being characterized by "three basic motifs: continuity, wholeness and dynamism. All modalities of being from a rock to heaven are integral parts of a continuum. Since nothing is outside of this continuum, the chain of being is never broken. A linkage will always be found between any given pair of things in the universe (Wei-Ming, 1996). This ancient Chinese world view, sometimes referred to as correlative cosmology is surely not unique, in essence it represents the substratum of the human view of the world found widely among primitive societies that believe in gods, divinities, deities and their ancestors.

Eder (1973) claims that Chinese worship of gods were based on benevolence and whom they were sure the hostilities could be warded off. The Chinese also worshipped heroes who were embellished with legends and fables through their historic personalities. The Chinese perception of gods is very vague in its significance, they use the terminology *kuei-shen* which means the returning souls of the dead or higher beings who never had a human life. They have two different connotations to this, they could be earthly or heavenly spirits or they could be dead souls which were worshipped. Chinese gods and spirits were conceived as omnipotent, more superior than human beings who have higher intelligence and knowledge. Chinese gods and spirits can be categorized into forces of nature (Hi-ho-mother of the sun; Heng-no- the goddess of the moon, Feng-po- count of the wind, Yu-shih- the lord of thunder, Ho-po the lord of the

waters, the gods of the four oceans). Another categorization is the god of human activities (Tazhu-ming-the god of fate, Kiao-mei- the god over marriages, Tsao-kung- the Prince Hearth, Chung-liu- the god of impluvium, Tsing-the god of the well and Hing- the god of access).

Tomoyasu & Keliher (2010) offers a historical perspective into the study of deities and gods in China. He affirms that Chinese gods and deities were worshipped according to the characteristic and tradition of the particular locality. In Lingquan temple of the Northern Song, the deity was Douniu, a vassal of Zhao Jianzi of the spring and autumn period. This deity was also commonly referred to as the Arranging-Rocks deity (lieshi shen). This deity was efficacious during times of drought and famine. During the Zhou dynasty, the deity here enshrined was commonly referred to as the Heishui shen (Blackwater deity). He was also responsible for drought and rain within these areas. In the Tang era, the deity was Pei Yue who was in charge of defending the King in a battle. In Beijing, the deity enshrined here was Ma Sui who was responsible for all sorts of miracles. The local villagers worshipped the deity all year round, tirelessly and without fail.

Irwin (1990) comprehends Chinese mythology and religion to be dominated by male and female gods and divinities. He further offers insights into female divinities whom he portrays to be a part of Chinese folk belief. These divinities are identified with the feminine principles of moist, dark receptive nature which constitute an obscure pantheon of water spirits, dragon ladies, snake queens, moon-goddesses, and rulers of heaven and earth. From ancient times to the present, four divinities that have collective popularity are Nugua-the ancient Zhou dynasty creatress; Xiwangmu-the Queen Mother of the West; Guanyin- the Goddess of Mercy; and Tianhou-the Empress of Heaven.

Bodde (1961) perceives Nugua as a powerful figure in Chinese customs and tradition because she was seen as the deity of creation. He says that she created men by putting yellow earth together. However, the work tasked her strength and as such she had no free time. So she dragged a cord through the mud, thus heaping it to make men. It is Chinese belief that the rich and noble are the men of Yellow earth, the poor and lowly cord made other men. Dore (1966) traces Xiwangmu from its Taoist tradition and discovered that she was also called Jinmu-Golden Mother or Golden Mother of the Tortoise. She was believed to be the embodiment of the pure yin which is the essence of the western female qi-air. To him, Xiwangmu is associated with the Kunlun Mountain. But according to the Classic of the Mountains and Rivers, she dwells in a mountain of jade to the north of Kunlun, in a rocky cave, where she sits on a stool with disheveled hair, wearing the dreaded sheng ornament on her head. She is depicted as having a human form with a leopard's tail and a tiger's teeth. Three green birds go to fetch her food. She is also the controller of the spirits of plague and disaster.

Paul (1985) sheds discernments into Guanyin which is a Buddhist divinity of mercy and compassion. She became popular during the Tang dynasty and she receives the prayers of all those who are suffering or in danger. She is also believed to overcome any form of calamity or misfortune that might threaten any believer. She is also a patroness of childbirth who watched over women in their confinement and cares for them during childbirth. Boltz (1986) introduces Tianhou to us as popularly called Mazu who is a deity of Taoist and Buddhist antecedents who is seen as the Empress of Heaven and a patroness of the sea that protects all her devotees in ocean

voyages and always respond to those in distress. She is also seen as a goddess of procreation to whom prayers are addressed to for conception. Werner (1961) tells us that Tianhou was a high popular folk celestial figure who seated upon waves or clouds, or often on a throne, clad in a long robe with an official girdle, wearing an imperial headdress. She holds an official tablet or a scepter, as symbols of her imperial status. In rank, she is equal to all male emperors and subordinate only to the supreme (male) god. She usually has two accompanying personages: Ear of a Thousand Li and Eye of a Thousand Li, by which her observant and attentive powers are symbolized. She sees and hears all those in distress who petition her for assistance and protection.

Chinese deities and gods were largely influenced by Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Most Chinese that worship in a Taoist temple, do so to worship three deities, popularly called San Ching (the three pure or holy ones, the perfect holy one, the highest holy one and the greatest holy one). These deities are also embellished with the title of Tien Tsun which means the heavenly and the honored. These deities conceive that this universe was fashioned out of chaos and the heavens existed to regulate the chaos. They are seen as sovereign, exercising a control of the physical world and have the power of the public mind (Legge, 1881). The Chinese worship the Mahayana Bodhisattvas who they believe offers salvation to them, offers them hope and provides them with a noble goal. This deity of Buddhist origins teaches the Chinese about the act of worship, charity, reading and printing of scriptures, wishing for the good of others and other good deeds which would infallibly cause good results. Those who worship this deity are admonished to refrain from the ten non-virtuous actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, malicious speech, idle speech, covetousness, malevolence and erroneous views (Shih, 1985).

Literatures on Chinese divinities and gods have an enormous view and position of this culture on their inherent belief and practices. Chinese cosmology has revealed that there is a strong, unbroken, unfettered, reinforced and dynamic relationship between the spiritual and the physical. These literature also exposed the different divinities whom the Chinese are associated with. The Chinese worshipped traditional and influential heroes, they worshipped their ancestors, they worshipped forces of nature and gods whom they strongly believed had control over human activities.

Yoruba divinities

African civilization cannot be divorced from their deep religious beliefs in supernatural forces that they perceive as the architect of their destiny and the force majeure in controlling their natural existence. Arinze (1970) explains African religion through subjective and objective connotations. He iterates thus; subjective religion in Africa is the very consciousness of the dependence on a transcendent being and the very propensity or inclination to worship. Objective religion in Yoruba context is a complex of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being. Africans are a group of religious people and their bond with supernatural forces motivates them to seek a better life in the world of the next dominion. Ugwu (1999) asserts that Africans have the irresistible urge through their religion to relate well with his creator-God and his fellow human beings in order to obtain salvation in the sacred realm.

Salvation for Africans is a drive that keeps them continuously transferring the belief they have in these forces from generations to generations, never to be broken but only to be revered and worshipped clearly. Awolalu (1976) elaborately stated that the indigenous religion of the Africans is a religion that has been handed down from generation to generation by the forebears of the present generation of Africans. It is not a fossil religion (a thing of the past) but a religion that Africans today have made theirs by living it and practicing it. This is a religion that has no written literature, yet it is “written” everywhere for those who care to see and read. It is largely written in the people’s myths and folklores, in their songs and dances, in their liturgies and shrines and in their proverbs and pith sayings. It is a religion whose historical founder is neither known nor worshipped, it is a religion that has no zeal for membership drive, yet it offers persistent fascination for Africans, young or old.

The Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria number more than 30 million people and inhabit the South-Western part of the country. Their ethnic group can also be found in Togo and Benin, they are one of the three major ethnic of Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation. They are a unique ethnic group whose religious beliefs clearly illustrates traditional African religious concepts. They are a group that maintain a strong relationship with the Supreme Being and their myriad of Orisa (deities). It was on this basis that Clarke (1972) characterized them as “peculiar refined heathens” because they adherently believe that the Supreme Being should be approached through a number of inferior deities who act as a mediator between God and them. Understanding divinities or deities in Yoruba conceptualization has to be approached from the angle of their cosmological view. It is only when we do this that we would understand their attitudes and thoughts about the world.

To investigate Yoruba cosmological view, we invoke the work of Abimbola (1994). His work revealed that their religious system is enshrined in the Ifa literary corpus, myths, praise songs, symbolic utterances and sayings. Their world is divided into two worldviews, they have Orun and Aye. To them Orun refers to the abode of spiritual entities in the heavens while Aye connotes the dwelling of humans on earth. Aye is defined as a space occupied by two 'pantheons' of supernatural powers, Orisa and ajogun, which are involved in a timeless and sustained competition for its domination. The Orisa, also known as *irinwo* 'mole ojukotun (four hundred supernatural powers of the right), are by their nature benevolent to human beings so long as their precepts are jealously guarded and kept. Some of the major Orisa are Orisa nla, Orunmila, Ogun, Shango, Osun, Oya, Yemoja, Ori, and Esu. They are interested in blessing human beings with all the 'good things of life'. The Yoruba believe that their universe is thus created through the power of Supreme Being called *Olódùmarè/Olorun*. He is perceived as an intrinsic and superior force that created the lesser spiritual powers revealed above and compelled them to perform specific functions in his world (Hallgren, 1988). The Yoruba believe that staunch obedience to the Supreme Being and its deities is the core of their existence. They are confident that disobedience to these divine powers brings wrath to be incurred, thus their precepts must be adhered to and must be appropriated adequately (Abimbola, 1994).

Delegation of divine power and authority is given to the deities of the Supreme Being and some of it would be illustrated further. In the creation of the world, the Yoruba asserted that the Supreme Being (*Olódùmarè*) delegated some powers to *Irunmole* (primordial divinities) in the process of making the earth livable. It is said that *Olódùmarè* delegated the power to create the landscape and the physical figures of humans to *Orisanla*, who is the most senior divinity of Yoruba pantheon. To achieve this, *Olódùmarè* gave earthen mud in a snail shell, a bird, and a hen to *Orisanla* to achieve this magnanimous duty (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1979). *Olódùmarè*

asked Oduduwa (sometimes seen as a divinity and ancestor) to go together with Orisanla on this significant task. Shortly after they embarked on this journey, Orisanla got intoxicated and could not carry out the assignment bequeathed to him by Olódùmarè, this Oduduwa continued the task by carrying the items given to them onwards and created earth with the lands, valleys, and mountains. As Orisanla recovered from his drunkenness, he joined Oduduwa and created the physical features of humans (the beautiful, ugly, disabled, albinos, hunchbacks) as instructed by Olódùmarè (Olomola, 1992).

Another version of the Yoruba cosmological world view comes from the revelation of Ifa as seen in Odu Ose tura. Ifa divination revealed that Olódùmarè, the Supreme Being, sent seventeen primordial deities to inhabit the earth. However, one of them, Osun, was female and all the sixteen male deities functioned as a team but deserted the only female deity in all their functions on earth. The deity Osun was exempted from consecrated knowledge, covenants, and from decision making. Thus, to checkmate the activities of the male deities, Osun congregated all the women on earth and formed a society of powerful women. Anarchy, disorderliness and conflict then broke-out on earth, and all their activities came to a stand-still. Olódùmarè had to intervene and brokered peace among the deities. Osun is the goddess of the Osun River in Yoruba land, and she is worshipped at Oshogbo where she is regarded as the sovereign ruler of the town. Osun as a goddess represents also the sacred dimension of waters; she is thus essential to the daily living of both humans and the deities. She is seen to have a creative spirit and the spiritual dimension of pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing. Her fertility qualities made her to be known as *olomo yoyo* (one with lots of children). She uses her qualities to protect, defend, and bless her adherents, who are both males and females. Another conspicuous deity among the Yoruba is the goddess of the wind and storms known as Oya. She was a human that transformed into a divinity. She goes by the name Oya Akanbi, and she hails from Ira, Kwara state, Nigeria. Oya has two personalities as her adherents believe that she can be either compassionate or malicious. She is seen as a fierce fighter who always engages combat with strong storms and storms. She and her husband Şàngó (who is also a deity) always engages in combats with thunderbolts (Olajubu, 2004).

Şàngó is a primordial divine entity, he was said to have descended from heaven with the rest of the Orisa like Oduduwa who we have discussed above as the creator of humans. Şàngó is seen as the embodiment of thunder, lightning and the fierceness of atmospheric power. Şàngó greatness is seen when Orisa named one of the four days of the week in his honor, Jakuta. Şàngó was never reported to have died but simply disappeared at Ile-ife as Oramfe before the founding of Oyo. The worship of Şàngó and other deities like the mighty Orisas such as Oduduwa, Ogun and Orunmila all have their roots in the formation of Yoruba culture (Tishken, Falola, & Akinyemi, 2009).

Literature on Yoruba divinities have divulged the fact that their cosmology is centered around the presence of a Supreme Being and lesser beings who act as an intermediary and mediator between them and the Supreme Being.

Research Methodology

Data for this work was obtained through homogenous purposive sampling because both the Yoruba and the Chinese have a set of characteristic, which is the existence and belief of a supernatural being. Divinities, deities and supernatural beings serve as the theoretical framework for this research work. This research work was analyzed through typical case sampling in which the study of divinities was divulged in two different cultures.

This research work also approaches this topic from the categorization of religions. This has been divided into monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic and non-theistic forms of religion by scholars. This work intends to examine the works of different ethnologists who have delved into the subject matter of divinities while trying to make a comparative analysis. This work assumes a dynamic and negotiated reality that both the Yoruba and the Chinese hold in high esteem divinities within their societies. It further aims at understanding human behavior in the context of their religious practices. This research work will be text-based therefore it would explore divinities from existing theories and the actions of those that reside in these communities. This work would be purely qualitative in approach because it would offer insights into our target audience (Yoruba and Chinese) perception and behavior as regards divinities.

Findings

One inherent finding from this research work is that both the Yoruba and the Chinese have profound religious nuance. The Yoruba and the Chinese religious belief link themselves directly to their divinities so that they can all accrue the blessings or the gift that is attached to such service. In their worship of their divinities they engage in sacred functions such as chanting, dancing, rituals, dance, myth and carvings as preserved worshipped tradition of their different ethnic group. Awolalu (1979) asserts that the people have always had their cultic functionaries whose main concern is to preserve, among other things, the traditional conduct of worship. These people approach their task with awe and seriousness, always conscious of the fact that any omission in the normal order of service or any wrong word uttered or song not properly rendered during the service, could incur the displeasure of the deity and jeopardize the efficacy of worship...where things depends on what is stored up in human memory. The Yoruba in their religious practice also engage in rituals. Olajubu (2004) declares that the Yoruba scripture includes prescriptions that emanate from daily enactment of ritual through diverse modes of performance and recitations. Often this involves recitation of praise names (oriki) for the Orisa, which may result in spirit possession from which messages are transmitted to worshippers. Hence the content of Yoruba scripture is dynamic and multifarious. Nonetheless, its prescriptions are agreeable and accessible to people worldwide irrespective of nationality or cultural affiliation.

Perhaps one of the reason why the Yoruba presuppose that their divinities should be evoked in all their daily life is because they are attributed with special powers. For instance, Orunmila is one of the higher or benevolent primordial divinities in Yoruba culture. The Yoruba postulate that Olodumare has endowed Orunmila with special wisdom and knowledge to the end that he may be his accredited representative in matters relating to man's destiny: Orunmila possesses

intimate knowledge of matters affecting human destiny. One reason given for his intimate knowledge of matters affecting human destiny is that he was fully present during the time when man was being created which was also the time when each individual's destiny was sealed. Thus, Orunmila can predict the future as well as prescribing remedies for any eventuality. Idowu (1962) affirms that Orunmila knows all the secrets about man. This is why he is called *eleripin* (the witness or advocate of destiny). *Olumoran Okan* (the one that knows the secret of the mind). From the shady to the mysterious, nothing is beyond revelation to him. In fact, the reason why a man adopts Orunmila (as his divinity) is either to make sure that his happy lot is preserved or that an unhappy lot may be rectified.

The Chinese religious nature is centered on the worship of many deities, including natural forces and elements such as rain, clouds, rivers, mountains, the sun, the moon, and the earth. Their greatest deity, *Shang Di* (上帝, pinyin: Shàngdì), remains an important god in the Chinese pantheon. People still worshiped the old gods, but ancestor worship became increasingly important. Ancestor worship and reverence to family are fundamental elements of Confucianism. Rituals to honor ancestors are extremely important and must be performed in precise ways. By carrying them out properly, an individual can receive the aid and cooperation of deceased relatives (Yao, 2010). It's on these basis that we can argue that the Yoruba and the Chinese are very religious people who believe in the supernatural and have traditionally designed ways to worship their divinities through sacred rituals, chants, dance and carvings.

Another finding from this research work, the Yoruba and the Chinese all have divinities that serves different areas of their life and existence. For the Yoruba ethnic group, they have:

Aje – goddess of wealth

Ògún - god that presides over iron, fire, hunting, politics, and war;

Yemoja - a mother Goddess; patron deity of women, and the Ogun river.

Ògún - god that presides over iron, fire, hunting, politics, and war;



Òsun - goddess that presides over love, intimacy, beauty, wealth and diplomacy

For the Chinese ethnic group, they have:

Guanyin 观音-"goddess of Mercy". Picture depicted below:



Wangmu Niangniang 王母娘娘-"goddess of happiness and longevity"

Yan Wang 阎王-"god of punishment"

Caishen 财神- "god of wealth"

Fu, Lou and Shou- Fu Shen; Lou (or Lu) and Shou 福禄寿 Fú Lù Shòu form a trinity of deities giving good luck, respectively: Happiness; Prosperity and Longevity. They are often portrayed together in statues; ornaments and paintings. Collectively they are also known as the Three Star Gods.



Chinese religious views of deities shows that moral and ethical basis of the society is very crucial to their survival as people. Chinese believe that through the rituals they use to honor their ancestors, they help their ancestors in the spiritual world while they seek help, guidance and

power from them simultaneously. One unique thing about the worship of the Chinese is that they promote collectivity by giving symbolic, which means it gives spiritual meaning to the unity and loyalty of their group (Dore, 1966).

Some clear identifiable differences between Yoruba and Chinese deities would be illustrated with a table as depicted below:

Table A: Differences between Yoruba and Chinese Supreme Deities

Yoruba Supreme deities	Chinese Supreme Deities
<p>Oludumare - The Supreme Creator;</p> <p>Ọlórún - The ruler of the Heavens;</p> <p>Olofi - The conduit between Orún (Heaven) and Ayé (Earth);</p> <p>Nana Buluku – The androgynous Supreme Creator.</p>	<p>Tiāndì 天帝—The "Deity of Heaven"</p> <p>Tiānzǔ 天主—The "Lord of Heaven"</p> <p>Tiānhuáng 天皇—The "King of Heaven"</p> <p>Tiāngōng 天公—The "Duke of Heaven" or "General of Heaven"</p> <p>Tiānjūn 天君—The "Prince of Heaven" or "Lord of Heaven"</p> <p>Tiānzūn 天尊—The "Heavenly Venerable", also a title for high gods in Taoist theologies</p> <p>Tiānshén 天神—The "God of Heaven", interpreted in the Shuowen Jiezi as "the being that gives birth to all things"</p> <p>Shénhuáng 神皇—"God the King", attested in Taihong ("The Origin of Vital Breath")</p> <p>Lǎotiānyé (老 天 爺)—The "Olden Heavenly Father".</p>

Table B: Differences between Yoruba and Chinese Male Deities

Yoruba Male Deities	Chinese Male Deities
<p>Aganjú - volcanoes, the wilderness, and rivers;</p> <p>Babalú Ayé - the Earth; strongly associated with infectious disease and healing;</p> <p>Erinlẹ̀ - medicine, healing, and comfort, physician to the Gods;</p> <p>Èṣù - trickster, psych pomp,</p> <p>Orisha of crossroads, duality, beginnings, travelers, fertility, and death;</p> <p>Ibeji - twin Orisha of vitality and youth;</p> <p>Kokou - a violent warrior Orisha;</p> <p>Ọ̀bàtálá - creator of human bodies; represents light, spiritual purity, and moral uprightness;</p> <p>Oduduwa - Orisha of humans;</p> <p>Ògún - presides over iron, fire, hunting, politics, and war;</p>	<p>Zhurong-The god of fire</p> <p>Zhongkui -The Demon Queller, is one of the most powerful deities for keeping away evil spirits.</p> <p>Zhāng Qiān was a historical figure from the Han dynasty [164-113BCE].</p> <p>Zhāng Dàolíng or Zhang Ling was a sage of Daoism</p> <p>Zao Jun-The Hearth or Kitchen god</p> <p>Yudi -The Pure August (Yu Huangdi) or Jade Emperor is the Daoist supreme sovereign of the Universe somewhat similar to Shangdi;</p> <p>Yu - A legendary Emperor who succeeded Emperor Shun as the founder of the Xia dynasty</p>

<p>Oko - Orisha of agriculture; Osanyin - the forest; Oṣùmàrè - rainbow serpent associated with creation and procreation; Òṣòṣòsì - Orisha of the hunt and forest; Ṣàngó, also Shango - Orisha of thunder and lightning.</p>	<p>Yao Wang -The King of Medicine showed incredible literacy at an early age. Yanluowang -Yan is the king of the fifth court of hell Wen Chang-The God of Culture and Literature Pu Xian-The Buddhist God of Universal Benevolence Lei Zhenzi is separate from Lei Gong but is also associated with thunder. Cai shen-The God of Riches and Prosperity’ is an important and highly regarded deity.</p>
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Table C: Differences between Yoruba and Chinese Female Deities

Yoruba Female Deities	Chinese Female Deities
<p>Female Orishas: Aja - forest, the animals, and herbal healing; Aje – wealth; Ayao – air; Egungun-oya – divination; Mawu - the sun and moon; Ọ̀bà - first wife of Shango and Orisha of domesticity and marriage; Olókun - patron Orisha of the descendants of Africans who were carried away during the Atlantic Slave Trade or Middle Passage; Òṣun - presides over love, intimacy, beauty, wealth and diplomacy; Oya - Orisha of the Niger River; represents wind, lightning, fertility, fire, and magic; Yemoja - a mother Goddess; patron deity of women, and the Ogun river.</p>	<p>Bixia Yuanhun -The first Princess of the Purple and Blue Clouds is associated with childbirth. Chang'e -The Goddess of the Moon Chang'e (or Chang Er) stole the potion of immortality from her husband the Archer God Hou Yi and fled to the Moon. Guanyin -The Buddhist Goddess of Mercy listens to any who will seek her help. Ma gu -Magu or Lady Ma is an auspicious Daoist deity. Ma zu -The Daoist goddess mǎzǔ is of importance along the coastline of Southern China as she is associated with the sea and there is considered the Queen of Heaven. Nuwa (also known as Nügua) is the goddess of matchmakers. Tianhou -Tianhou is the Daoist Empress of Heaven, Xi Wangmu -The Queen Mother of the West Zhinu - Daughter of the sun god</p>

The tables above have illustrated the core differences in Yoruba and Chinese deities, one intrinsic finding is that the conceptualization of deities differ greatly. The Chinese supreme deities reflect a hierarchical form of authority and as such we can see the King, Duke, Lord and Prince of heaven while the Yoruba Supreme deity reflects delegation of powers in heaven, as such we have the Supreme creator, the ruler and the representative (middle agent) between heaven and earth. Further fundamental difference reveals that the Yoruba and the Chinese deity have gender relations. While Yoruba male and female deity’s focus on the affairs of the physical realm most Chinese male and female deities’ focus on the affairs of the spiritual realm.

Conclusion

Attempts have been made in this literature work to identify the similarities and the polarities between the notion of divinities between the Yoruba and the Chinese cultures. One unique conclusion to infer is that divinities in both cultures are craftily embedded in their traditions, values, historical fables and myths. Divinities from these cultures are also seen as supernatural beings and specially identified physical beings which have been transformed into the realm of divinities. Furthermore, divinities in these cultural context has divulged that most of them evolved through the reflections of the forces of the Universe. Divinities in this context has revealed that most of them evolved through the reflections of the forces of the Universe. Central to the belief is that these gods were assumed to have created the world and we humans, they existed to ensure the proper functioning of our universe.

Both Yoruba and Chinese traditional religion are polytheistic, there are many different deities that they worship and they serve different human needs. It is on this basis that we can say that every phenomenon either artificial or natural has one or more deities which are designed in a complex celestial hierarchy. We can also observe that these divinities have their own special area of power and influence, they have their dedicated places of worship such as shrines or temples and their tradition of worship is transferred through generations. It is therefore not surprising to find among these two cultures, the god of thunder, the god of lighting, god of fire, god of iron and much more. While some worship these divinities to achieve transcendence, others engage in this ritual to discover their path in life. They aim at achieving a state where they exist beyond the physical needs and realities of this world, this thriving in a spiritual or a religious realm.

In this research work, it was also observed that both cultures practice the concept of Apotheosis. A traditional situation in which these cultures have glorified certain individuals to a divine status. Scholars have also termed this divinization or deification. Certain individuals in these culture which have distinguished themselves through extraordinary deeds, efficacious legacies, grand selflessness and humane acts have been uplifted to this status. A popular one in the Yoruba culture is Shango and in the Chinese culture we have Guan Yu. These were human mortals both elevated to the realm of divinities.

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