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Epilogue

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EPILOGUE

Louis Ndekha

This volume is divided into five sections: ATR's dynamic history, ATR and Christianity, ATR and Social Transformation, ATR and Ethics and ATR and Health. The breadth of the sections and the diversity of the discussions in the chapters demonstrate that African Traditional Religions are indeed the bedrock on which the totality of the African experience is anchored. Not only is ATR's history dynamic, but the cultural-religious nexus in African religions also confirms the religions' all-encompassing representation of the African experience. This cultural-religious nexus is well illustrated by the contribution of the Re-Negotiating Identity through Pan-Africanist and Esoteric Networks. Thus, the contention of whether African religions qualify as religions in both scholarship and Christian theological discussion is a modern misnomer. It represents a failure to appreciate the dynamics in African Religions and their religio-cultural function. Although the average indigenous African does not use the word religion in everyday rituals, the conception and conflation of the sacred and secular in African ontology demonstrates the all-encompassing nature of the African human experience.

The importance of confirming the cultural-religious nexus in African religions in this volume has been demonstrated by the intricate, abiding and sometimes contentious relationship between African religions and Christianity. From the submissions in this volume, it is evident that because ATR is an unshakable bedrock of what it means to be African, as Chakanza had argued, Christian theology and the church's evangelization strategy have to constantly contend with the abiding influence of African Traditional Religions. Although the submissions in this volume have focused on Christianity, the central thrust of the volume and the submission would be true for any other foreign religion expecting to set its foothold among African peoples.

It is also essential to note that, although African Traditional Religions represent tales of resistance to forces beyond themselves, such as foreign religions, malleability is their characteristic feature. Thus, in the context of the social transformation, African Traditions have continually evolved and

adapted to new social conditions. Thus, although rituals constitute African cultural-religious practice, their continued relevance in a turbulent and constantly changing world has demanded that they continuously transform. Thus, rites of passage, whether puberty, death or birth, have evolved continuously in response to social change. The relationship between African Traditional Religions and Health has also been reflective of the relationship between African Traditional Religions and social transformation. As the submissions have demonstrated, the continuous evolution of traditional doctors' healing practices and their presence on social media represent the continuing resilience of African traditional religions in the context of social change.

Also integral to African Traditional Religions is their influence on values and ethics. Unfortunately, like in the cases of many other religions, these values and ethics have negative and positive implications for social relations and economic development in Africa. As the volume has demonstrated, some African social taboos with roots in African Traditional Religions have been the cause of horrendous suffering in selected social sectors of individuals such as people with albinism, children and older people. Chakanza once argued that even corruption may have roots in African religious and cultural practices. Yet the solution to these social problems, according to the submissions in this volume, can be gleaned from African Traditional Religious heritage and values.

Thus, the revisit of African Traditional Religions in Africa in the 21st Century demonstrates a religious tradition that is there to stay. It is a religion that will continue to profoundly influence African people's adoption and practice of other faiths. It is a religion that will go along with its people as society continually transforms, and, in the process, it will continue to provide fundamental philosophical and ethical values for the masses.