

CITATION ON PROFESSOR JACOB KEHINDE OLUPONA

Professor Jacob Kehinde Olupona hails from Ile-Ife, Osun State. Right from his primary education, he showed signs of a brilliant academic future. He obtained his B.A degree at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and his MA and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Boston, USA in Religious Studies. He specialized in African Traditional Religions, with particular reference to Yoruba traditional religion.

Professor Olupona has a distinguished academic career beginning at the Obafemi Awolowo University as a Graduate Assistant and spanning Universities in Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America where he is presently Professor of African Traditional Religions and Chairman of the African Studies Committee of the Harvard Divinity School of the prestigious Harvard University, U.S.A.

Professor Olupona has contributed immensely in the field of African Traditional Religions and has played a key role in the development of his specialization of Yoruba Traditional Religion and Culture. He has brought to the limelight, the significance of primal religions of the world and has focused on Yoruba indigenous religion in the exposition of the intricate nexus of religion, sacred kingship and civil life in traditional Yoruba society. He has brought fresh theoretical insights in

the general area of phenomenology/history of religion to show that African Traditional religion form an integral part of universal religious patrimony. His works are innovative, creative, and contemporaneous and contribute to topical issues of debate or revisit questions in African traditional religion and Yoruba indigenous religion. From the deep root of his research, he has extended his focus to the diverse expressions of such prominent Yoruba Orisas, especially Sango and Ogun in the Diaspora, including the Caribbean, Cuba, South America and some parts of the United States of America.

Professor Olupona has made significant contributions in research. He has over 50 journal articles and has presented over 70 conference papers and lectures. He has authored or co-authored 8 books and is a leading authority in his field. He has also contributed to the academia in his capacity as editor of journals of academic associations and has organized a large number of academic conferences. In recognition of his achievements, he has received many academic honours and distinctions, notably Honorary Doctor of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh in 2000, Fellowship of the Bellagio Rockefeller Centre, Bellagio, Italy in 2005, and the Honorary Degree of Artium Magistrium of Harvard University, USA in 2006.

Mr. President, sir, I present to you Professor Jacob Kehinde Olupona, an accomplished and globally acclaimed scholar, a veritable researcher, teacher and academic facilitator whose works have uplifted the status, understanding and appreciation of African traditional religions generally and Yoruba traditional religion and culture specifically; a man whose academic endeavour and impact for good in his chosen field bestride not only his country, Nigeria, but also the Americas and Europe, for the award of the Nigerian National Order of Merit in Humanities for the Year 2007.