

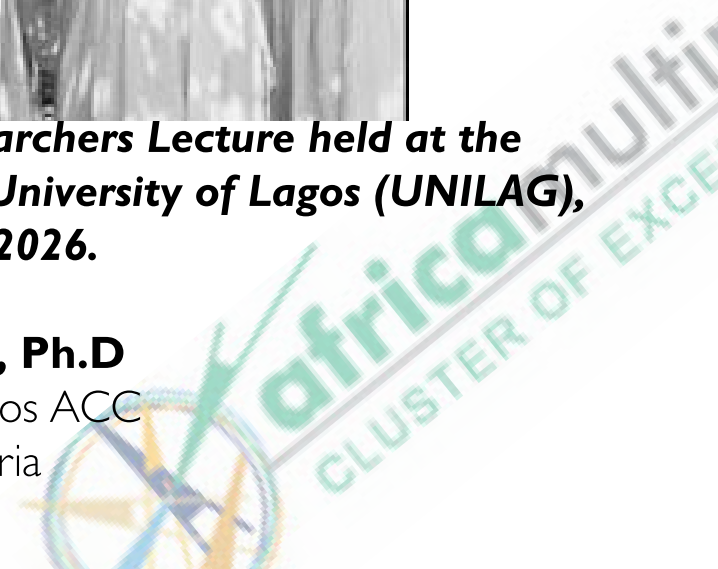
# ***Aladura* Spirituality and the Theological Epistemology of Affect in African Pneumatic Christianity: A Reflection**



***Being a presentation at the Lagos AMRC Researchers Lecture held at the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies (IADS), University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos, Nigeria, June 17, 2026.***

**ANTHONY OKEREGBE, Ph.D**

Department of Philosophy/Lagos ACC  
University of Lagos, Nigeria



# Synopsis

- Motivation
- Aim and Methodology
- Concept Clarification
- African Pneumatic Christianity
- Some Constitutive Elements of Aladura Spirituality
- Senghor's "reason by embrace"
- From Senghor to Affect Theory
- World-making Potential
- Conclusion

# 1. Motivation

- Rise of performative Christianity: sonic excess, bodily intensity, communal rapture.
- Practices once frowned upon now embraced in mainstream churches.
- Fascination: how embodied performance connects to the Transcendent.

## 2. Aim and Methodology

- Aim: Situate Aladura spirituality in the 'politics' of affect.
- Method: Ethnographic observations, worship recordings, interviews.
- Focus: lived experiences, not abstract philosophical criteria.
- Positionality: Believer with no interest beyond academic



### 3. Concept Clarification

- **Aladura:** “People of prayer” (Yoruba revival, 1920s–30s).
- **Spirituality:** lived connection to the Transcendent.
- **Aladura Spirituality:** Lived religious experience of the Aladura centered on prayer, divine healing, prophecy and reliance on the Holy Spirit.
- **Theological Epistemology:** knowledge claims about God.
- **Affect:** bodily feelings, rhythms, moods shaping experience.
- **Affect Theory:** emotions as central to identity, culture, and social relations.

## **4. African Pneumatic Christianity**

- **Spirit-centered Christianity (pneuma = Holy Spirit).**
- **Practices: glossolalia, healing, prophecy, deliverance.**
- **Holy Spirit as experiential, communal force.**
- **God felt in drumbeats, fervent prayers, prophetic utterances, healing rituals.**

## 5. Some Constitutive Elements of Aladura Spirituality

### Prayer

- Embodied, rhythmic, communal.
- Music, drumming, incense create charged atmosphere.



“It’s as if I somehow became two. It’s as if I was working with the Holy Spirit. I saw a part of me observing what was going on. Yes! I was aware of me in a trance.

The atmosphere became charged as the prayer continued... Music also plays an important role. Music and deep worshipping ... involving turari (incense). It’s as if you’re connected to another realm.”

# Constitutive Elements of Aladura Spirituality

## Prophecy

- Guidance for moral, political, social issues.
- Truth-seeking akin to philosophy's epistemic quest (Akinadewo, 2025).



## Healing

- Holistic: biological, social, spiritual, moral.
- Rituals restore relationships, dignity, and balance.

## 6. Senghor's "Reason by Embrace"

- Contrasts Western "eye reason" (analytical, detached) with African "reason by embrace" (rhythm, emotion, communion).
- Knowledge through participation, rhythm, and feeling.
- Famous reworking: "I dance the other, therefore I am."
- Anticipated affect theory's emphasis on emotion and embodiment.



## 7. From Senghor to Affect Theory

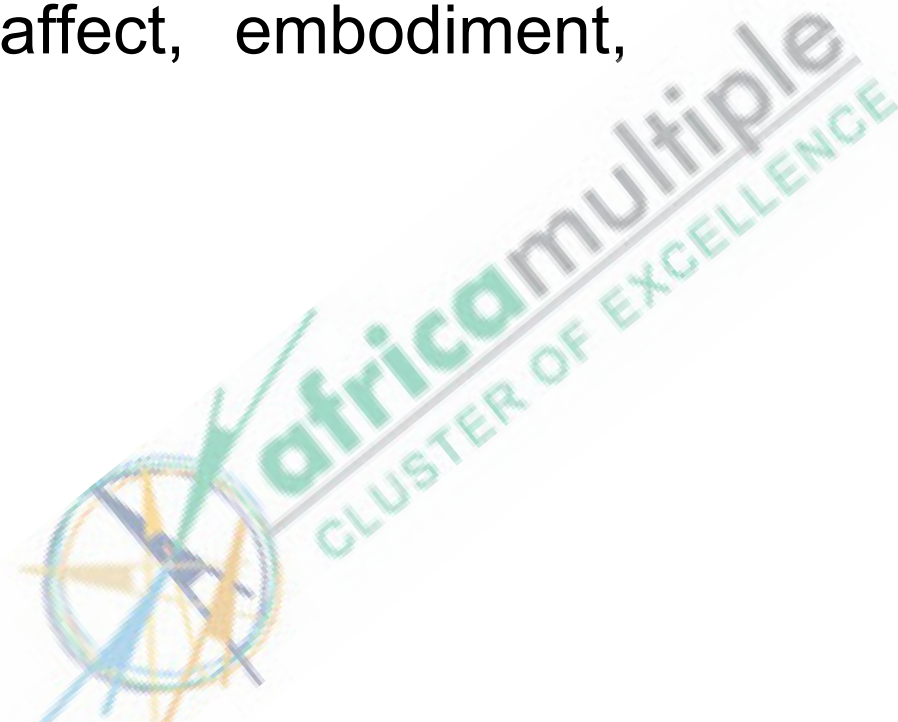
- What might Senghor be responding to? Responded to colonial denigration (Levy-Bruhl's "prelogical" claim).
- Affirmed African epistemology as valid and global.
- Parallels with Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, Brian Massumi:
  - Affect as social force.
  - Rhythm, dance, communal worship as epistemic sites.
- Aladura worship exemplifies this embodied knowledge-making.

## 8. World-making Potential

- The connection with a globalised world: double-edged sword.
  - Risks homogenising Christianity.
  - Offers platform for African voices.
- Aladura spirituality as world-making practice:
  - Affect constructs reality, community, meaning.
  - Dialogue between African spirituality and global modernity.

## 7. Final word

- Aladura Spirituality demonstrates affect as epistemology.
- Senghor's "reason by embrace" enriches theological discourse.
- African Pneumatic Christianity contributes to global conversations on affect, embodiment, and spirituality.



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